MAEN301CCT

Literary Criticism and Theory-I

M.A. English
(Third Semester)

Centre for Distance and Online Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India

Course: Literary Criticism and Theory-I

ISBN: 978-81-974230-8-6
First Edition: June, 2024
Reprint: November, 2024

Publisher	:	Registrar, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad
Publication	:	2024
Copies	:	1300
Price	:	235/- (The price of the book is included in admission fee of distance mode students)
Copy Editing	:	Dr. S M Fasiullah, CDOE, MANUU, Hyderabad
Title Page	:	Dr. Mohd Akmal Khan, CDOE, MANUU, Hyderabad
Printer	:	S.R. Towers (India) Private Limited, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

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for

M.A. English

3rd Semester

On behalf of the Registrar, Published by:

Centre for Distance and Online Education

Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500032 (TG), India
Director:dir.dde@manuu.edu.in Publication:ddepublication@manuu.edu.in
Phone number: 040-23008314 Website: www.manuu.edu.in

(SLM Based on UGC CBCS)

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Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC accreditation and the mandate of the university is: (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. The non-availability of books in Urdu is a matter of concern and Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national process of providing course material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that could significantly affect the intellectual abilities of the Urdu knowing community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school/college level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. To achieve these objectives, MANUU makes available course material in the form of Self Learning Material (SLM) to the students of Distance Learning. The same is also available for sale to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material and will fulfill the mandate of this University and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes,

Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Vice Chancellor
MANUU, Hyderabad

Message

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at CDOE are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a dual mode university catering to both distance and traditional mode of learning, to achieve its goal in line with the UGC-DEB guidelines, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG programmes containing 6 blocks with 24 units and 4 blocks with 16 units respectively.

The Directorate of Distance Education offers a total of seventeen (17) programmes comprising of UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Directorate of Distance Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Directorate of Distance Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Directorate of Distance Education will play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. In near future, changes will be made in various programmes under the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan
Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education
MANUU, Hyderabad

Introduction to the Course

The M.A. English programme is designed to give a sound knowledge of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory so as to empower the prospective students for higher studies and employment, apart from helping them prepare for competitive exams. It is spread over two years (four semesters) minimum duration. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

a. to provide a sound base in the English language
b. to provide insights into the development of English and the phonological, morphological, syntactical and stylistic aspects of language
c. to provide knowledge in the teaching of English
d. to explore the various literatures in English
e. to provide exposure to the different genres, movements and periods of English literature
f. to facilitate critical and analytical abilities
g. to introduce literary theory and criticism
h. to build confidence among learners with language skills in English
i. to enable the working target group to enhance their qualifications and
j. To facilitate higher education in the open distance learning mode.

At the end of the two-year post graduate programme in M.A. English, the learner would have mastered the theoretical knowledge of the English language and literature. The learners would be able to appreciate literatures in English, take up critical analysis, understand the different movements, periods and concepts in the study of English language and literature. The two-year programme will prepare the learner for competitive examinations, for employment and for research by developing their skills, apart from leading to refinement.

The course "Literary Criticism and Theory-I" aims to introduce the learners to the seminal concepts of literary criticism and theory from the Classical period to the late Victorian period. It also provides them with basic information about literary theory and criticism in the study of English literature. Upon the completion of the course, you are expected to learn literary theory through the ages and how to apply literary criticism to analyse any piece of literary work.

The course is divided into four Blocks and each Block has four Units. Classical and Medieval criticism, Renaissance and Neoclassical criticism, criticism and theory of the Enlightenment, Romantic and Victorian periods are also covered in this course.

This SLM is supplemented by audio-video lessons. You may visit IMC MANUU YouTube channel http://youtube.com/u/imcmanuu for the complete list of AV lessons in English.

With you in your journey through the fields of English language and literature!

Dr. Gulfishaan Habeeb
Professor of English &
Course Coordinator

Literary Criticism and Theory-I

Unit-1: Introduction to Classical and Medieval Criticism

Structure:

1.0 Introduction

The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'criticism' as an act of giving an opinion or judgement about the lacking or good qualities of something or someone, especially books, films, etc. It is derived from an ancient Greek term *krites*, meaning 'to judge.' An author is apparently the foremost critic of his own work; an author tends to make a 'judgement' or 'perception' about the choices regarding the themes and techniques to be used in his work. The act of creating something indeed becomes an act of critical evaluation as well. This evaluation could take place in various forms; the notable techniques would be self-assessment, in-depth contemplation, reflective and perceived judgements. If we skim through the extensive history of literature, we come across literary works with criticism associated with them. Some of the most notable examples would be John Donne's "The Good Morrow" and "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," Shakespeare's "Sonnets," "Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*, P. B. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," and many more. The in-built artistic 'performativity' of such

texts provides a blank canvas to varied critics and philosophers for making a complex painting of criticism, over the long period of time.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to familiarize you with the origin and development of literary criticism. Further, it will also discuss the origin and development of classical and medieval criticism.

1.2 Introduction to Classical and Mediaeval Criticism

1.2.1 Classical Period

Literary criticism could be dated as old as the times of archaic Greece, which is approximately 800 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. But the "classical" period known to us does begin from the time period of great dramatists like Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and great philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. We see a multitude of historical events, literary and cultural trends, and the rise and fall of many empires as well. The commencement of literary criticism trends can be traced to the dramatic festivals held in the courts of ancient Athens. The foremost emphasis of these contests was to keenly evaluate and judge all the authors present, and to elect one as the finest dramatist.

The most striking example of literary-critical discussion is Aristophanes' significant work *The Frogs*. It was performed when Athens was defeated by its rival Sparta before the end of the Peloponnesian war, probably in 405 BC. This play has been a testimony of political and philosophical awareness of not only the playwright but of the audience's intellect as well. The chorus in the play itself acclaims the learnedness of the spectators, and address every citizen to be so "sharp" and "keen" that they would not slip "a single point." Aristophanes' design for this work circled around the point that the current world does not have good poets; the living dramatists are no more than "jabbers," who are the "degraders of their art." And if someone wishes to be a good poet, he must obtain the services of a decent poet by bringing a deceased one back from Hades. A trial was conducted before the god of the underworld, Pluto, to conclude the selection of a suitable one among the dead tragedians, Euripides, and Aeschylus. Dionysus, the patron god of drama, was chosen as the judge for this. It was a composition showcasing a witty

venture of Dionysus along with his slave Xanthias, towards the court and about their assessment of the opinions offered by the two tragic poets. It was supplementary to the basic challenge between the two literary theories, belonging to different generations, younger and older. It was certainly a competition pertaining to poetic art. Aeschylus symbolizes the traditional virtues of long-gone generation, like soldierly skills, valour, and admiration for societal hierarchy, whereas Euripides is more fresh, independent, secular, and of a blunt generation.

The modern approach of critics to focusing narrowly on the "pure" artistic or literary dimension of a text would have been unintelligible to the primeval Greeks. For them, poetry was a means of teaching ethics, faith, and the total range of civic responsibilities. And indeed, poetry itself was a medium for the conversation of larger matters; and it is due to a huge degree of its approval to its civic and dogmatic nature, as well as to its practical or artistic dimension. Henceforth, to comprehend the roots and attributes of literary criticism in the Hellenic world, explicitly in the works of Plato and Aristotle, we really need to know somewhat of the political, societal, and rational forces that moulded their understanding of the world. The democracy predominant at the times of classical Athens was considerably dissimilar from our contemporary democracies. There was a democracy of a direct kind rather than a representational one, and it was extremely restricted as well. It was mostly exclusive for men, especially of high class and standard. Hence, such circumstances instigated the constant ripples of class conflicts within Greek society, and began a persistent struggle between different forms of government. The ideas, values and literary theories of both Plato and Aristotle were inherently designed by the cognizance of such political struggles.

Besides, the other most challenging obstacle pertinent to the political development of literature and criticism is the counter response by an opposite supremacy of Athens in the Greek world, Sparta. Sparta counterbalanced Athens' leadership by the construction of their own defensive coalition known as the Peloponnesian League. There was an ideological struggle between them along with the military one; Sparta branded the supremacy of their oligarchy all over, which was contrary to the Athens' style of democracy. Subsequently, it led to the Peloponnesian War, which lasted for twenty-seven years. Plato lived his initial twenty-four years through this war, and the questions raised by the battle indeed affected his thoughts and his literary theory as well.

This skirmish was mainly between the two unlike conducts of life, a "flexible social and cultural sphere" of Athenian democracy, and the "firmly-controlled and militarist" oligarchy of

Sparta. It was this rivalry which caused the disagreement between Plato's anti-democratic and the slightly authoritarian philosophical vision and the more sceptical, fluid, and accurate visions articulated by poetry, sophistic, and rhetoric. Thus, it somewhere resulted into the predominant Western philosophy that we know nowadays.

1.2.1.1 Hellenistic Period

The preliminary incongruities were followed by a prolonged period, which could be marked as a "Hellenistic" period. It witnessed a spread of Greek culture through the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Such dispersion was augmented massively by the conquest of these lands, initially by the hands of Alexander the Great, and later by his skillful army after his demise. This Hellenized period was actively marked by the prevalence of "inherited class-conflicts" as well. There was a common ruling-class culture, and they tended to practice a common vernacular and a shared education system. Alexander founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt in 331 BC, and made it the epicenter of letters and scholarship, along with its massive library and galleries.

This phase concluded with the battle of Actium in 31 BC, and the remaining land of Alexander's empire, Egypt, was occupied by the Roman Empire. After the conquest of Actium, the whole Roman world fell under the command of Octavian, nephew of Julius Caesar. Later on, he was followed by the foremost emperor of Rome, Augustus. The era of positive expansion of literature and criticism occurred from this time onwards. And for nearly a thousand years, philosophers, poets, rhetoricians, grammarians, and critics intellectualized many of the basic terms, questions, and ideas; it expanded the future of literary criticism and aided it in getting fully advanced. One of the most crucial examples of a concept which had its origin in this era, is "mimesis" or imitation.

1.2.1.2 Pan-Hellenistic Period

The Hellenistic period was followed by a phase of prolific literary and philosophical writings. Later, the trends and setups of this period were collectively termed "Pan-Hellenism." The most important works of this period are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. They were the outcome of an oral tradition, collectively composed over an extended period. The most significant trend of this period was the restoration of a text by another critic or poet. They would take up a text whose basic content was already familiar and then adjust it in the progression of their own retelling. Sequentially, they would pass these poetic expertise and tradition down through their

own lineage. Pan-Hellenism could be defined as an idea indicating everything that Greeks have in commonality.

The restoration of epics or any literary work was more than just an expression or sacramental re-enactment of all the local folklore. The word *aletheia* was used to express the conjunction of such structures, and it meant 'truth.' Consequently, poets became the purveyors of truth; they became more than a local tool of literary restoration. The next consequence of pan-Hellenism was the progression of a particular group or "canon" of writings into the grade of classics. This era of Alexandrian scholarship confirmed the usage of the concept of "criticism" or "judgment." It was used to distinguish works that deserved to be counted within a canon. But, the most imperative result of pan-Hellenism was the expansion of the idea of imitation or *mimesis* into a "concept of authority." The concept of *mimesis* becomes a convincing one, as it grants such a fluid space to an author to speak with the authority of myth which later gets accepted as not local but universal, everlasting, and invariable.

Check your progress:

1. Pan-Hellenism could be defined as an idea indicating everything that Greeks have in commonality.
2. The most important works of the Pan-Hellenism period are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

1.2.2 Introduction to Medieval Criticism

1.2.2.1 Early Middle Age

The most perceived notions attached with the period of "Middle age" (medium aevum) would be darkness, ignorance, and superstitions. These ideas were formulated by the Italian humanist thinkers, who wished to demarcate their own period from the preceding one, as of renaissance, rebirth, and reawakening of classical thinkers. It was the age of commencement of budding Christianity, and direct viewing of the social and political patterns of the Germanic tribes who besieged the Roman Empire. We witness the remnants of the Roman administrative and legal system, and their contact with the heritage of the classical world.

Latin continued to be a language of scholarship and ruling during the Middle Ages. The Germanic tribes elected Latin as their language of communication wherever they settled. Perpetually, Latin persisted in its position of being a language of instruction, of science, of

administration, of rules, and of diplomacy. And it undoubtedly influenced the great movements and trends of the modern period. In the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Church's "other-worldly" character inclined was to subordinate the worth of literature and the arts, in comparison to some other acclaimed matters of redemption and of preparation for subsequent life. Generally, the prevalent uncertainty, diffidence, and illiteracy actively intensified the feeling of devotion and encouraged the ideals of withdrawal from the world. There was an outpouring of certain opinions concerning the denunciation of earthly life as insignificant and simply a means to reach the next life of everlasting salvation and bliss.

O. B. Hardison classified everything that falls under the rubric of medieval criticism into a number of sections. According to his classification, the foremost period of the Middle Ages overlays with the later times of the classical period, which would be in between the first century BC to the seventh century. The traditions of criticism took a contradictory direction in this era, acutely towards the grammatical, Neo-Platonic, and allegorical. There was a surge of the supporters of Neo-Platonism; it could be seen in the works of writers like Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus. The most noteworthy texts of this era for medieval criticism were the innumerable annotations and collections that were cohesive in the grammar curriculum. These comprised the commentaries of Donatuson Terence, Serviuson Vergil, Diomedes' *Ars Grammatica*, and Isidore's *Encyclopaedia*. Hardison's definition of grammatical criticism was conventional, fixed on practical supports to comprehend and imitate, and secondarily, on the ethical function of literature. Neo-Platonism encouraged poetry to be viewed as a storehouse of abstruse but refined wisdom.

The early Middle Age witnessed the downfall of the Roman Empire and the monopolization of Roman administration and government, with a weakening of its market, business, and cultivation. And in many areas, it saw the decline of tribal customs and local laws. It had chiefly been left to the Church and some sovereigns, such as Charlemagne, to attempt societal and ethical cohesion. They were responsible for the preservation and transfer of various intellectual and literary traditions.

1.2.2.2 Carolingian Period

The next period, the Carolingian, occurred from the eighth century to the tenth. It is related to the arts, script, or values of the Carolingian period, mainly characterized by a revitalization of the methods of classical antiquity altered by religious necessities. It did offer us

a plenty of commentaries, including the works by Remigius of Auxerre, Scotus Eriugena and Rabanus Maurus. The sole critical document from this period is the *Scholia Vindobonensia*, a dialogue on Horace's *Ars Poetica*. It was envisioned as an encouragement for reading Horace in the grammar curriculum. Poetry was defined as the "art of making fictions and composition." It backs the morals of fairness, restraint, and authenticity; a caution against the formation of impossible events.

Check your progress:

1. Neo-Platonism encouraged poetry to be viewed as a storehouse of abstruse but refined wisdom. (True/False)
2. The sole critical document from the Carolingian period is the *Scholia Vindobonensia*, a dialogue on Horace's *Ars Poetica*. (True/False)

1.2.2.3 High Middle Age

The High Middle Ages was the succeeding period, starting from the eleventh century and including most of the thirteenth centuries. It is viewed as the kindling of interest in Neo-Platonism, and which ultimately generated rational tumult in numerous directions. This started at the end of the tenth century with John Scotus Eriugena's translation of the works of Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. He did confuse this writer with the Dionysius of Athens who had talked with St.Paul on the Areopagus Mountain.

The acclaimed apostolic influence of Dionysius' writings had an impact on medieval theology, which was essentially shaped around the end of the 5th century. These writings were the basis of the forthcoming synthesis of Christian doctrine and Neo-Platonism. Alongside the works of Boethius, Calcidius, and Macrobius, they insisted on following treatises on mysticism. Dionysius' works expressed a spiritual growth from the material world towards God, laying a renewed emphasis on inspiration, and fanciful skills communicable only through symbols.

However, the Middle Ages were beaded with a single strand of thought, but contending with the canons of other multiple theologians. Boethius was one such thinker of the early medieval period, who continued to have a deep impact, chiefly through his translations of Aristotle's *logical treatises* into Latin. His commentaries were also very effective on both of these discourses and on their interpretation by the Neo-Platonist intellects. Similarly, some streams of literary criticism of the early medieval period either continued into, or were revived, in the later Middle Ages.

From the late ancient era onward, the tradition of grammatical criticism and textual interpretation had been largely continuous. Both exegesis and critique of allegory in literature from paganism and Christianity experienced a similar continuity. In the twelfth century, Neo-Platonism, one of the most significant schools of thought of the early Middle Ages, saw a resurgence. Despite this continuity, the later Middle Ages saw the development of new intellectual movements, most notably various kinds of humanism and scholasticism. They emerged from within the knowledge structures and divides that had arisen in the later medieval institutions of learning, mainly from the cathedral schools and the universities.

We must consider the greater social and economic processes that characterised the later medieval era in order to comprehend these new forms of thinking about literature, which were inextricably linked to larger movements of thought. From approximately around 1050, the later Middle Ages saw significant advancement on a variety of fronts. Fundamentally, there was an upswing in the economy. The system of feudalism reached a somewhat stable formation during this time.

The word "feudalism" comes from the medieval word "fief," which refers to a plot of land held in "fee;" in other words, the land was not owned, but a person had the right to cultivate it in exchange for payment of rent or other services rendered to the landlord. It caused the creation of numerous dominance sub-sections.Before this independence, tensions between Church and state power were "endemic in the mediaeval epoch," particularly from 1050 to roughly 1350, having significant ramifications for later intellectual growth.The expanding trade, the growth of cities, and the greater employment prospects in cities, which encouraged peasants to relocate to the towns, were further factors that undermined the feudal system. The Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), which strengthened the monarchy in France, and the Crusades, which got underway in 1096 and inspired peasants to break free from their ties to the land of absent landlords.A pandemic known as the Black Death swept through Europe, creating a labour scarcity; the advent of numerous Protestant sects after 1517, which accelerated latent trends towards the endorsement of worldly activities. All these elements helped economic activity soar beyond the shackling confines of feudalism, as well as their justification by political and religious ideologies.

These were the major historical developments that underpinned the later Middle Ages' intellectual currents. The three main currents were a variety of humanism based on classical grammar, the legacy of Neo-Platonism and allegorical critique, and the scholasticism movement,

which was mostly founded on a revived Aristotelianism filtered via Islamic philosophers like Ibn Rushd (Averroes). These subsequent intellectual streams were made possible by advancements in education, particularly the growth of cathedral schools and universities, and they started with Boethian reasoning. Universities began as organisations or institutions for the purpose of training teachers, and they typically included faculties of liberal arts in addition to colleges of medicine, law, and theology.

The Sophist Hippias of Elis, a contemporary of Socrates, as well as the rhetorician Isocrates, who disagreed with Plato's insistence on a strictly philosophical education with a more comprehensive system of education, are the first sources for the idea of the liberal arts. Seneca, a Roman philosopher, labelled these arts "liberal." This letter is considered significant in the study of liberal arts. The number of the liberal arts had been set at seven by the end of antiquity, and they had been arranged in the order that was maintained through the Middle Ages.The last four mathematical arts—arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy—had been referred to by Boethius as the "quadrivium" ("four highways"), subsequently known as the "quadrivium." The first three—grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (or logic)—were known as the "trivium" ("three roads") from the ninth century onwards.

As was already said, the many forms of medieval criticism can be divided into the numerous branches of knowledge that were represented by the educational institutions. The three components of the medieval trivium—grammatica, rhetorica, and dialectica—were all sciences of language and discourse that focused on interpretation and connotation. Its boundaries were frequently crossed and, in certain cases, were the source of debate. Horace's *Ars Poetica*, which medieval authors considered to be a component of grammar rather than rhetoric, was the most significant work in this regard. One of the main writers cited in the grammar curriculum is Horace. The Latin translation of Longinus' *On the Sublime* was not available until the sixteenth century, and it had little discernible impact during the Middle Ages. The two late-classical rhetorical works that were available during the Middle Ages were Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and Tiberius Claudius Donatus' analysis of Virgil. Throughout the Middle Ages, Martianus Capella's romance titled *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii (The Wedding of Philology and Mercury)*, which served as a depiction of the liberal arts, was considered the most accurate. The trivium of the seven liberal arts were the most widely practised, and grammar, which included the study of both language or proper speech and the interpretation of literature, was the most thoroughly studied of these.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) and some other theologians served as the catalysts for this rebirth in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. The movement of medieval thinking known as scholasticism was effectively founded by these thinkers. To provide a logical and consistent understanding of Christian teaching derived from the Bible, the Church Fathers, and Church decrees, they drew on Boethius' reasoning. Roscelin and his student Peter Abelard were the two early scholastic philosophers who had the most influence. The latter's book *Sic et Non (For and Against, or literally, Yes and No)*, which offered several antitheses intended to expose the incoherence of arguments based on authority, had a significant impact on later scholasticism. Despite advocating for the Bible's supremacy as the final authority, Abelard also urged the daring use of dialectic as a path to knowledge, seeing logic as the primary branch of Christian science. The *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*, written by Peter Lombard, often known as "Master of the Sentences," is a collection of reputable "judgements" on the incarnation, trinity, and sacraments that eventually became a standard work of Catholic theology.

The widespread expansion of universities was even more significant in this intellectual "renaissance" of the twelfth century. Much of the time spent in ancient universities was spent teaching grammar and rhetoric. Our current conception of a university—complete with different faculties, a set curriculum, and a system of degrees—was developed during the Middle Ages. The oldest universities can be found in Bologna (1158), Oxford (about 1200), Paris (1208–1209), and Naples, which are all in Italy, France, and England (1224). Ibn Rushd was the most prominent Arab Aristotelian thinker, and his beliefs could not be reconciled with those of the church. The study of the "new" Aristotle was outlawed in 1215 at the pope's urging, although the policy had little impact. The Dominican academics tried to meld Greek philosophy and Christianity. Therefore, the great scholastic impulse was born, reaching its pinnacle in Albertus Magnus and later in his pupil Thomas Aquinas. The Dominicans at the University of Paris worked to "purify," rehabilitate, and legalise the dangerous Aristotle.

The *accessus* tradition was another important school of criticism prevalent at this time that was classified as grammatical exegesis. The *accessus* was a formal introduction to a curricular author that adhered to a format that spread through the writings of authors like Bernard of Utrecht and Conrad of Hirsau, whose *Didascalon* is the most complete example. The components of an *accessus* were the author's name, the book's title, its genre, the author's intention, the number of books in the text, the order in which the contents were organised, the book's pedagogical and moral value, an explanation or interpretation of the text, and the field of

knowledge to which it belonged.The scholastic phase of medieval criticism, profoundly influenced by Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, was marked by a tendency to view poetry as a branch of logic rather than of grammar or rhetoric.

Late classical commentators on Aristotle had established a connection between poetry and logic, but during the early Middle Ages, this connection was permitted to fade in favour of rhetorical and grammatical analyses of poetry. Another set of humanistic currents that begins with Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, which asserts that the vernacular is an appropriate medium for great poetry, follows the academic phase. Dante's successors, including Petrarch, Mussato, and Boccaccio, can be thought of as transitional personalities, associated with either the waning Middle Ages or the emerging Renaissance. In any case, they are humanistic advocates of liberal studies and defenders of poetry against its late scholastic detractors, though they often deploy scholastic arguments toward their own ends. Humanisms awa revival not only in Italy but also in France, where the tradition of *artes poeticae* is renewed in the works of Deschamps; the tradition of allegorical interpretation continues in the works of Petrus Bercorius, John de Ridevall, and Christine de Pisan.

1.2.3 Let Us Sum Up

Literary criticism can be described as "a system of ideas or a hypothesis intended to explain anything." When applied in the context of literature and literary criticism, the phrase is similar yet different. Literary theory, which is the collection of methods, ideas, and presumptions that we employ while reading literature, serves as the basis of literary criticism.Moreover, if we analyse the trends of classical and medieval criticism, we would witness how the entire assemblage of religious texts was frequently the target subject of criticism. Also, there were numerous theological schools of hermeneutics and textual exegesis which had a significant impact on the study of secular literature.

The major themes of this critique include the idea of beauty and its relationship to goodness and truth, the ideal of the organic unity of a literary work, and the social, political, and moral purposes of literature. Further, it discusses the relationship between philosophy, rhetoric, and literature. Language's character and status, as well as its influence on literary performance or an audience, are equally prevalent. It also discusses the meaning of literary devices like metaphor, metonymy, and symbol as well as the idea of a "canon" of the

greatest literary works. In the light of unwavering literary critique, we would see the emergence of numerous genres, including epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric poetry, and song.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

- Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to know about the origin of literary criticism and trace the development of classical and medieval criticism.

1.4 Glossary

- **Canon:** It denotes an assemblage of literary works that are thought to be of really high quality and perpetual worth for a culture or civilization.
- **Rhetoric:** The art of effective or convincing speaking or writing, particularly the manipulation of figures of speech and other compositional methods.
- **Logic:** The reasoning directed or evaluated rendering to firm principles of validity.
- **Grammar:** The entire system of a language, generally taken as consisting of syntax and sound structures; sometimes contains phonology and semantics as well.
- **Hellenism:** The study or imitation of primeval Greek culture.
- **Oligarchy:** A small community having control of a nation or organization.

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. The play *The Frogs* was written by _____.
    a. Aristophanes
    b. Plato
    c. Aristotle
    d. Socrates
2. The Peloponnesian War was won by _____.
    a. Athens
    b. Sparta

c. Persia

d. France

3. What is the meaning of *Ars Poetica*?

   a. "a poetry as art"

   b. "the art of poetry"

   c. "art and poetry"

   d. "poetry within art"

4. *On the* Sublime is written by _____.

   a. Horace

   b. Plato

   c. Longinus

   d. Aristotle

5. What does the phrase *utpictura poesis* from Horace's *Art of Poetry* means?

   a. "poetry beggars pictorial description"

   b. "as in poetry, so in painting"

   c. "picture above all poetry"

   d. "as in painting, so in poetry"

Answer Key: 1. (a) **2.** (b) **3.** (b) **4.** (c) **5.** (d)

6. Horace's *Ars Poetica* is considered by medieval authors to be a component of grammar rather than rhetoric. (**True**/False)
7. Neo-Platonism encouraged poetry to be viewed as a storehouse of abstruse but refined wisdom. (**True**/False)
8. The sole critical document from the Carolingian period is the Scholia Vindobonensia, a dialogue on Horace's Ars Poetica. (**True**/False)
9. In the twelfth century, Neo-Platonism, one of the most significant schools of thought of the early Middle Ages, saw a resurgence. (**True**/False)
10. Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd were marked by a tendency to view poetry as a branch of logic rather than of grammar or rhetoric. (**True**/False)

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write brief notes on the concepts of the "quadrivium" and "trivium."
2. How is the conflict between Aeschylus and Euripides particularly humorous in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*?
3. What was the political cause of the Peloponnesian War?
4. What does the word 'canon' refer to in medieval criticism?
5. Write a short note on *accessus* tradition.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the origin of literary criticism and its effects on the development of English Literature.
2. What lessons can be learned from the play *The Frogs*? How does the play convey these messages?
3. Examine in detail the literary and political differences between the Hellenistic and Pan-Hellenistic periods.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, UK, 2017.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 4th edition, Viva Books, 2018.

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Unit-2: Plato: the forms, mimesis, poets and the *Republic*

Structure:

2.0 Introduction

Plato, an important Greek philosopher, is widely known as the founder of present-day Western philosophy. He asked several vital questions whose echoes are still resounding in the present world. What is the basis of the difference between goodness and evil? And if we can distinct between the above-mentioned notions, then what would be their most-appropriate definitions? How do we attain truth and knowledge? What could be the most ideal political state for human beings? Of what use are literature and the arts? There are no limits to such questions. But Plato has indeed revealed a pathway and made it easier to scrutinize such questions in a better way. He tried to facilitate the cognitive state of any human for not getting stuck in the complexities of this world and institutionalized setups around us. Obviously, there were alterations and criticism of Plato's ideas and theories in the succeeding times.

At the age of twenty, Plato experienced a significant transformative event upon encountering Socrates, a philosopher renowned for his contentious discourse. This encounter precipitated a fundamental reorientation in Plato's life trajectory, prompting his abandonment of political aspirations in favor of a steadfast commitment to philosophical pursuits. Subsequently, in Plato's literary corpus, such as the Apology, he elucidated upon the purported declaration of an

ancient oracle proclaiming Socrates as the paragon of wisdom, an event that served as a catalyst for Socrates' lifelong quest for epistemic and moral enlightenment. Plato, distinguished by his own intellectual prowess, commanded widespread admiration across various societal strata, including statesmen, poets, and artisans. Nonetheless, Socrates met a tragic fate, facing accusations of impiety and eventual execution in 399 BC.

With the passing of his beloved teacher, Plato departed for Italy, Sicily, and Egypt. Afterwards, he came back and helped Theaetetus, an Athens-based mathematician, create an academy. The entrance's inscription, "Let none without geometry enter," suggests that geometry, mathematics and philosophy, was the focus of curriculum. In addition to philosophical discourse, the curriculum encompassed discussions on political theory, biology, and astronomy. Aristotle, a prominent figure associated with the Academy, developed much of his philosophical framework through a critical evaluation and expansion of Plato's doctrines. Moreover, the influences of numerous pre-Socratic thinkers, who challenged the notion of sensory perceptions as the sole arbiter of reality, significantly shaped Plato's philosophical outlook. These philosophers endeavoured to elucidate the underlying reality beyond superficial appearances. For instance, Parmenides posited a conception of reality as unchanging and unified, contrasting sharply with Heraclitus' proposition that universal flux characterizes existence. Additionally, Plato was influenced by mathematical principles attributed to Pythagoras, which left a lasting imprint on his philosophical inquiries.

Plato acquired from Socrates the dialectical method, characterized by the systematic interrogation of established beliefs to ascertain truth. The term "dialectic" derives from the Greek word *dialegomai*, meaning "to converse." Additionally, Plato inherited Socrates' primary focus on ethical concerns and the meticulous examination of moral principles, evident in his early dialogues, often referred to as Socratic dialectical works. It is noteworthy that the majority of Plato's philosophical works feature Socrates as the primary interlocutor.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with a prominent classical critic, Plato
- introduce you to the theory of forms
- explain the theory of mimesis

- examine the role of the poet in the Republic
- discuss Plato's contribution to literary criticism

2.2 Plato: the forms, mimesis, poets, and the *Republic*

The early, middle, and later phases of authorship are used to categorize Plato's dialogues. The majority of academics appear to concur that Socrates' primary philosophical concerns and method are best explained in his early dialogues. The *dialogues*, including *Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Gorgias*, *Euthyphro*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Protagoras*, *Lysis*, and the initial segment of the *Republic*, are dedicated to the exploration and delineation of concepts such as courage, virtue, and justice. These early works demonstrate a natural inclination to scrutinize and often challenge the conventional interpretations bestowed upon these concepts by established authority and tradition. Instead, they endeavor to elucidate the essence of these concepts through rational inquiry. For instance, in *Euthyphro*, Socrates refutes the notion that piety is defined by actions that please the gods, positing instead that actions please the gods because they are pious, thereby suggesting that the essence of piety lies elsewhere.

Socrates and Plato fundamentally dissent from the disorderly, irregular, and unpredictable representation of the universe portrayed by Homer, Sophocles, and other poets. This perspective is marked by its moral incongruity. To grasp the deep irrationality inherent in this poetic portrayal, one need only reflect on the perplexing web of contradictions enveloping figures like Achilles, Oedipus, and other mythological characters. This irrationality is further accentuated by the arbitrary links it establishes between the divine and mortal realms. Plato ultimately leverages this irrationality as a basis for his critique of the entire domain of poetry.

2.2.1 *Republic*

Undoubtedly, among Plato's works, The *Republic* is the most read and taught. It is not a play, novel, narrative, or essay in the strictest sense, despite having dramatic moments and using certain literary forms. A major argument, advanced by the argument's proponent, Socrates, is the focus of this form of extended discourse. The *Republic* may be viewed as a form of discussion, which would apply to the majority of the Dialogues. In this discussion, Plato seeks to philosophically define the ideal state, one that would serve as a template for all budding or established societies operating in Plato's day and continuing into our own. Therefore, it follows

that any proposed modifications to the way justice is carried out in any state must comply with the ideal state's requirements, which is the *Republic*. It has historically been published in 10 books since it first appeared; most likely because it was originally divided into ten "books" in its manuscript form.

Socrates alludes to "an ancient dispute" between philosophy and poetry towards the end of this essay. But this contradiction is already apparent in the first few pages of Plato's dialogue, both as his starting point and as the text's structural foundation. Socrates is debating the definition of "justice" with a man by the name of Polemarchus. Polemarchus claims that justice is the giving of each person their proper compensation by quoting the "learned and inspired man" Simonides. This prompts Socrates to comment that Simonides' notion of justice "was a riddling definition of justice given in the manner of the poets." Even this is merely the opening statement of a more thorough attack on the complete Hellenic poetic knowledge. At the onset of Book II, Socrates emphasizes the importance of cherishing justice for its inherent value rather than solely for its outcomes. He delves into the dichotomy between truth and surface appearances, emphasizing how the pursuit of knowledge and virtue differs from immediate worldly endeavours.

Socrates posits that poetry fails to thoroughly explore the essence of justice because it tends to focus solely on surface-level appearances. Adeimantus supports this viewpoint by arguing that poetry often glorifies the rewards associated with appearing just rather than emphasizing the intrinsic value of justice itself. To illustrate his argument, Adeimantus draws examples from the works of Homer and Hesiod, albeit with his own interpretations. In addition to this critique, Adeimantus highlights poetry's tendency to romanticize vice while downplaying the importance of virtue. He also criticizes poetry for depicting gods as easily influenced, which further muddles the understanding of justice and morality. Adeimantus further suggests that poetry perpetuates the belief among the youth that it is more advantageous to merely seem just rather than to genuinely embody justice. This belief, he argues, leads to societal decay, evident in the rise of secretive organizations and manipulative tactics. According to Socrates, poetry's failure to distinguish between justice and its external trappings significantly influences the perception and pursuit of justice within society, shaping the approach taken in the Republic to understand and uphold justice.

Throughout this text, poetry plays a crucial structural role that extends beyond the initial two books. The Greek term "mousike," encompassing various art forms under the influence of

the Muses, including poetry, literature, and music, underscores its significance. Plato's assertion that "instruction in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take the greatest grasp upon it," indicates his acute awareness of the profound impact of this entire domain on the ideological shaping of childhood. Furthermore, Plato anticipates Gramsci's notion that such hegemony isn't achieved haphazardly but necessitates a deliberate and intentional strategy. He suggests that poetry, being the most articulate expression of ideology, demands ongoing scrutiny to prevent it from unleashing forces that could destabilize the political, economic, and legal spheres. Plato's framework implies that he attributes to poetry an inherent subversiveness, reflective of his broader conceptualization of the entire realm of poetry.

Plato posits that the overarching goal of philosophy is to reconcile the disparate elements of the world into a cohesive and transcendent whole. In his view, this unified perspective should be presented to the guardians, even if it diverges from the actual complexity of reality. Poetry, on the other hand, is criticized for its tendency to distort truths, particularly in matters of great significance. Plato argues that poetry often portrays unjust individuals as content, while depicting just ones as discontent. Moreover, it can obscure the true nature of injustice by presenting it as beneficial, and it introduces confusion with its varied depictions of the gods. Plato's argument underscores the importance of unity, both on an individual and societal level. He contends that multiplicity is associated with disorder, excess, and moral decay, while unity represents an inherent good. For Plato, the existence of countless manifestations of evil contrasts with the singular nature of perfection. He warns that a fragmented state, characterized by multiplicity rather than unity, poses the greatest threat to its well-being. Thus, Plato advocates for the pursuit of unity as a fundamental principle for both individual and societal constitution.

2.2.2 Mimesis

Mimesis, originating from the Greek term for "imitation," occupies a significant place in the discussions of both Plato and Aristotle, revolving around the representation of nature in artistic creations. Plato conceptualizes mimesis as the act of replicating reality, with all artistic endeavors considered as imitations of the ideal forms existing in the realm of ideas. According to Plato, these ideal forms, crafted by a divine creator, serve as the true essence of reality, while the physical objects in the world are mere imperfect reflections of these ideal types. Consequently,

artists such as musicians, dramatists, and painters are seen as imitating these imperfect copies, resulting in representations twice removed from the ultimate truth.

Plato's view of mimesis suggests that all forms of art inherently mimic and replicate life, seeking to capture the essence of reality itself. He employs the analogy of a chair and a carpenter to illustrate this concept: the carpenter conceives the idea of a chair and brings it into existence, while the painter subsequently imitates this chair in their painting, creating a secondary level of imitation. Plato asserts that philosophy, with its focus on abstract concepts, takes precedence over poetry, which he perceives as further distanced from reality due to its reliance on illusions and subjective interpretations. In contrast, Aristotle defends poetry precisely because of its mimetic nature. He argues that poetry imitates actions rather than moral or philosophical doctrines, presenting beauty through its portrayal of human experiences and interactions.

Plato's later dialogues, such as the Gorgias, Meno, Republic, and Symposium, expand beyond the ethical inquiries associated with the historical Socrates. They delve into a myriad of philosophical topics, including epistemology, metaphysics, political philosophy, and art. These dialogues showcase Plato's development of the theory of Forms, which serves as a unifying principle connecting various philosophical inquiries. Particularly emphasized in works like the Phaedo and the Republic, the theory of Forms underscores Plato's growing fascination with mathematics as an archetype of human inquiry and understanding. Through these dialogues, Plato systematically elaborates on his philosophical framework, highlighting the centrality of the theory of Forms in his exploration of reality, knowledge, and the nature of existence.

2.2.3 A Theory of Forms

Plato's philosophical perspective is deeply rooted in a tradition of skepticism, particularly influenced by his teacher, Socrates, who serves as the central figure in Plato's dialogues. Early Greek philosophers recognized the inherent challenge in attaining true knowledge within a world characterized by constant change and flux. Heraclitus, among others, famously expressed this idea with his statement that one cannot step into the same river twice, highlighting the transient nature of existence and the difficulty in grasping immutable truths. Building upon these foundational ideas, Plato develops a nuanced understanding of reality. He argues that the material world, with its perpetual state of flux, is inherently unstable. However, Plato proposes the existence of a higher realm beyond the physical world, which he terms the "world of Forms"

or "the world of Ideas." In this realm, abstract concepts such as justice, beauty, and the perfect triangle exist independently of the material world.

Plato contends that the Forms serve as the ultimate reality, immutable and eternal, in contrast to the impermanent and imperfect world of appearances. For example, while a painter may attempt to depict a perfect triangle, their representation will always fall short of capturing the true essence of the Form. Despite this inherent limitation, Plato argues that the existence of Forms is essential for our understanding of reality, providing a framework through which we interpret the world around us. According to Plato, genuine knowledge can only be attained by those who can perceive the true reality behind ordinary experiences—the realm of the Forms. This insight requires rigorous intellectual inquiry and philosophical contemplation. Plato's philosopher-kings, depicted in works like the Republic, exemplify this ideal, as they must grasp the Form of the Good to govern wisely and justly.

Plato employs allegories, such as the famous Allegory of the Cave, to illustrate humanity's limited perception of reality and the transformative power of philosophical enlightenment. In this allegory, individuals trapped within a cave are only able to perceive shadows cast by objects outside the cave, symbolizing the limited understanding derived from sensory experience alone. Only by ascending beyond the cave and perceiving the Forms directly can one attain true wisdom and enlightenment. In sum, Plato's philosophy emphasizes the transcendent nature of reality, positing the existence of eternal Forms that underlie the mutable world of appearances. Through rigorous philosophical inquiry and contemplation of the Forms, Plato believes that individuals can achieve genuine knowledge and understanding of the true nature of reality.

Imagine a group of men living in what resembles a subterranean cavern with a wide entrance that is exposed to the light on all sides. Imagine them as having their legs and necks restrained since they were little, causing them to stay in the same position, only able to look forward, and unable to swivel their heads. Imagine a fire that is blazing higher up and farther away behind the captives, and imagine a road that has a low wall built along it between the fire and the prisoners. Moreover, observe men carrying objects past the wall that rise above it, including tools of all types. Human and animal figures crafted from stone, wood, and other materials. Some of these bearers are ostensibly conversing, while others appear to be mute. The men can only see the shadows of the people and items passing behind them since they are facing the cave wall with their backs to the opening. This wall has been painted red by the fire. When

these people speak anything, they would hear the resonance from beyond the wall and falsely believe that the speakers are the moving shadows.

Plato's philosophical stance asserts that only individuals capable of comprehending the genuine reality—the Forms—should be entrusted with positions of authority. This position reveals Plato's skepticism towards the democratic system prevalent in ancient Greece, as he argues for governance by philosopher-kings rather than through popular suffrage. According to Plato, these philosopher-rulers, possessing the intellectual capacity to perceive the Forms, are best equipped to lead the state effectively.

Plato's allegory of the cave serves as a powerful metaphor to elucidate this concept. He suggests that individuals, akin to prisoners confined within a cave, are unable to grasp the true nature of reality until a philosopher-king assumes leadership. Only then can they emerge from the confines of their limited perspective and perceive the genuine light of truth represented by the Forms. Plato underscores the inherent challenge in accepting this truth, as individuals may initially struggle to reconcile it with their long-held perceptions of reality. However, Plato's own exploration of the theory of Forms undergoes intense scrutiny in subsequent dialogues like the *Philebus*, *Sophist*, and *Parmenides*. In the *Parmenides*, Plato delves into the potential complications and paradoxes within the theory, questioning its logical consistency. The Sophist introduces a new perspective on reality, emphasizing the dynamic interplay of causation and interaction, which appears to challenge the static nature of the Forms. This complexity reflects Plato's evolving understanding of reality and its philosophical underpinnings.

Plato's later dialogues, including Timaeus, Theaetetus, and The Laws, further contribute to the elaboration of his philosophical views on cosmology, knowledge, and governance. These works provide nuanced insights into Plato's evolving perspective, highlighting the ongoing dialogue within his philosophical framework and the multifaceted nature of his inquiries into truth, governance, and the human condition.

Check your progress:

1. Plato conceptualizes mimesis as the act of replicating reality, with all artistic endeavors considered as imitations of the ideal forms existing in the realm of ideas. (True/False)
2. Plato proposes the existence of a higher realm beyond the physical world, which he terms the "world of Forms" or "the world of Ideas." (True/False)

2.2.4 Plato on Poetry

Many of Plato's discussions include comments on poetry. In *the Apology*, Socrates asserts that inspiration, not wisdom, is the source of poetry. He also makes a comment about the trickery of poets regarding their knowledge that they might lack. Poetry has its importance in education and such orientation of virtue is examined in *Protagoras*. The *Phaedrus* makes a distinction between creative inspiration that is fruitful and creative inspiration that is not, as well as between the respective merits of speaking and writing.

But, two works that are written by Plato and separated by a number of years contain his most thorough criticisms of poetry. In the first, Socrates inquires a rhapsode, a singer, about the nature of his artistic work. Whereas, a more in-depth critique appears in the *Republic*, and some of it is repeated in the laws in a more realistic setting. Socrates duly talks with Ion, a rhapsode who was a singer and interpreter, in his first dialogues. According to Socrates, the art of the rhapsodist consists primarily of two elements: knowledge of the words of a particular poet must be accompanied by knowledge of his ideas. The majority of Socrates' discussion on rhapsody focuses on its interpretative and critical role rather than its musical and emotional impact. Therefore, Plato has already drawn a clear distinction between the fields of philosophy and poetry in this early dialogue, which was written before the *Republic.* The former has its roots in a separation from reason, whereas the latter is characterized by emotional transport and a lack of self-possession by its very nature. Despite this, Plato nevertheless treats poetry with respect in this earlier debate, describing the poet as "holy" and having received inspiration from the gods.

In the *Republic*, Plato presents a much less favorable theory of poetry. Many defenses of poetry, most notably those by Sidney and Shelley, have been influenced by Plato's text.

Plato's philosophical outlook was notably influenced by the pre-Socratic tradition of naturalism, which sought to offer a rational understanding of the universe grounded in natural processes rather than mythological or traditional narratives. This marked a significant departure from the poetic and mythical explanations prevalent in ancient Greek culture. Plato's engagement with this tradition represented a turning point in Greek thought, as it ushered in an era where logical reasoning was applied to various facets of human life, challenging the hegemony of poets like Homer in matters of morality and societal reflection.

Plato's critique of poetry, a central aspect of his philosophical discourse, stems from several key points. Firstly, he criticizes poetry for its inherent tendency towards deceit, arguing that it often distorts truth rather than revealing it. Secondly, Plato takes issue with poetry's

reliance on imitation, suggesting that it produces mere copies of reality rather than genuine insights. Thirdly, he highlights poetry's multifaceted nature, which combines various functions and messages, sometimes leading to confusion or ambiguity. Moreover, Plato contends that poetry appeals primarily to the lower aspects of the human psyche, such as emotion and appetite, rather than engaging with higher faculties of reason and intellect. Finally, he critiques poetry for its emphasis on irreducible particularity and plurality, which he sees as detracting from the pursuit of unity and universal truths. These criticisms reflect Plato's broader philosophical concerns about the nature of art, truth, and knowledge. By contrasting philosophy with poetry, Plato underscores the importance of rational inquiry and dialectical reasoning in the search for genuine understanding. His critique of poetry has left a lasting impact on literary theory and criticism, shaping discussions about the role of art in society and its relationship to truth and morality.

2.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

Plato's nuanced perspective on poetry stems from the dynamic intellectual milieu of his time and his broader philosophical concerns. Poetry, during Plato's era, held a revered status as a medium for conveying cultural values, ethical principles, and universal myths. It served as a repository of knowledge, transmitting wisdom through artistic expression. However, Plato's engagement with poetry was marked by skepticism and critique, driven by his philosophical inquiries into truth, morality, and the nature of reality. Plato's critique of poetry was influenced by the philosophical currents of sophistry and rhetoric prevalent in ancient Athens. Sophistic thought, epitomized by figures like Protagoras and Gorgias, challenged traditional notions of truth and morality, advocating for relativism and subjectivity. Rhetoric, meanwhile, emphasized the art of persuasion over the pursuit of objective truth, often manipulating public opinion through rhetorical devices.

Plato's criticism of poetry, rooted in his opposition to sophistry and rhetoric, centered on several key points. Firstly, he questioned poetry's claim to truth, arguing that its reliance on myth and metaphor could lead to deception and misunderstanding. Secondly, he critiqued poetry's role in appealing to emotions and desires rather than engaging with reason and intellect. Thirdly, he challenged poetry's ability to provide a coherent and unified understanding of reality, often presenting a fragmented and subjective view of the world. Moreover, Plato's philosophical project aimed to establish a framework of permanence and transcendence amidst the transient

flux of human existence. His dialectical method, characterized by rigorous questioning and logical inquiry, stood in contrast to the rhetorical and sophistic approaches, which he saw as lacking in intellectual rigor and moral integrity.

In summary, Plato's critique of poetry reflects his broader philosophical concerns about truth, morality, and the nature of knowledge. By challenging the authority of poetry and rhetoric, Plato sought to establish philosophy as the true path to enlightenment and understanding, grounded in objective and eternal truths. His engagement with poetry exemplifies the complex interplay between philosophy and literature in ancient Greece, highlighting the enduring relevance of Plato's inquiries into the human condition. The following are some of the most salient points that we may draw:

1. Plato contends that art, by imitating reality, remains detached from absolute Truth. It merely presents a semblance of objects, which are never identical replicas. However, Plato overlooks how art offers an additional dimension absent in reality. Artists strive to capture this "more," relying on observation and intuition. From this perspective, art does not detract from Truth; rather, it directs us toward the essential reality of life.
2. Plato claims that terrible art is anything which does not teach morality or inspire virtue. Plato evaluates poetry first from an educational perspective, then from a philosophical perspective, and last from an ethical perspective. He does not, however, care to view it from its own particular perspective. He disregards the fact that each thing should be evaluated according to its own goals and standards of value and decency.
3. It is not fair to say that music or painting are inferior because they do not depict a scene in color or with sound. In a similar vein, we cannot dismiss poetry as terrible because it does not impart moral or philosophical principles. How could poetry, philosophy, and ethics be different subjects if they all served the same purpose? It is obviously foolish to dismiss poetry because it is not a philosophy or an ideal.

2.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know about the origin of literary criticism

- understand Plato as a classical literary critic
- critique varied approaches mentioned in *Republic*

2.4 Glossary

Socrates: He was a Greek philosopher from Athens, and widely acknowledged as the founder of Western philosophy.

Rhetoric: The skill of eloquent or convincing expression, particularly through the adept utilization of rhetorical devices and other strategies in speech or writing.

Dialogue: It is a written or spoken conversational exchange between two or more people. As a theoretical or moralistic device, it is chiefly associated in the West with the Socratic dialogue as developed by Plato.

Mimesis: It could be defined as- imitation, representation, receptiveness, the act of expression and mimicry.

Sophistic: It is an adjective form of Sophist; paid teacher of philosophy and rhetoric in Greece, teaching popular moral scepticism and hollow reasoning.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. In which city, did Plato die?
    a) Sparta
    b) Stagira
    c) Athens
    d) France
2. Which of the following best explains how the "visible world" and the "intelligible world" differ from one another?
    a) The visible world is based on opinion, whereas the understandable reality is based on sense.
    b) The visible world is made up of material objects, but the intelligible world is made up of ideal forms.
    c) The visible world depends on knowledge, but the intelligible world depends on opinion.

d) Whereas the visible world has logic, the intelligible world contains shadows and images.

3. Under what conditions will Plato or Socrates permit poetry to enter the state?
    a) Should it demonstrate a long-term positive impact on human life and society.
    b) If it is discovered to be a source of both profit and pleasure.
    c) If it turns out to be highly valuable and true.
    d) All the above
4. Which of the following statements about the Form of the Good is FALSE?
    a) A false reality and illusion.
    b) Government oversight.
    c) Heavenly wisdom.
    d) Absolute reality.
5. As per Plato/Socrates, who are the "saviours of our society"?
    a) Artists
    b) Women
    c) Men
    d) Musician

Answer Key: 1. (c) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5. (a)

6. Plato conceptualizes mimesis as the act of replicating reality, with all artistic endeavors considered as imitations of the ideal forms existing in the realm of ideas. (**True**/False)
7. Plato proposes the existence of a higher realm beyond the physical world, which he terms the "world of Forms" or "the world of Ideas." (**True**/False)
8. Plato claims that terrible art is anything which does not teach morality or inspire virtue. (**True**/False)
9. Plato overlooks how art offers an additional dimension absent in reality. (**True**/False)
10. In the *Republic*, Plato presents a much less favorable theory of poetry. (**True**/False)

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Describe Plato's belief that art is two steps removed from reality.
2. How does Plato feel about mimesis?
3. For what reason does Plato characterize the poet's work as subversive?
4. Describe Plato's conception of justice.
5. Examine "mimesis" considering Aristotle and Plato's theories.

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How did Plato and Aristotle vary in their approaches to education?
2. How does Plato feel about poetry and the poet? Do you share his opinion? Reason for your responses.
3. How does Plato differentiate between truth and opinion?

2.6 Suggested Readings

Cross, R. C., A. D. Woozley, and Plató. *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary*. Palgrave Macmillan, UK. 1993.

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Unit-3: Aristotle: *Poetics* (tragedy and its elements)

Structure

3.0 Introduction

In the preceding units of this Block, you studied the background of classical criticism. You also studied about Plato and his critical concepts like mimesis. Now in this Unit, we will study another great western literary critic. The period that witnessed the birth of great western critics and philosophers like Plato also witnessed the arrival of another outstanding person i.e Aristotle. He was a student of Plato. One of his important works is *Poetics.* It is probably the imperative document of Western criticism. It is believed to have been composed around 330 B.C. Though written in the distant past, there can be no denying that its themes and discussions are of great value and central to aesthetic and literary criticism. It contains 26 chapters. It is one of the seminal works of western literary criticism. The *Poetics* of Aristotle mainly deals with tragedy. Although there are several aspects which are debatable yet the contribution of *Poetics* to influence the literature is simply undeniable. Aristotle considers tragedy as the highest poetic

form. He has defined a set of rules for writing a tragedy. He emphasized various aspects of tragedy including the building of the plot, traits of the protagonist, unity of time, unity of place, unity of space, diction, poetic truth, catharsis etc.

Aristotle in *Poetics* compares tragedy with other metrical forms like epic and comedy. He states that tragedy is an imitation like poetry. However, he states that tragedy has a serious purpose, therefore, uses direct action instead of any narrative to achieve its end. The purpose of tragedy is to bring catharsis among spectators. The aim is to evoke feelings of compassion and apprehension, ultimately cleansing the audience of these emotions, and leaving them uplifted with a deeper comprehension of both divine beings and humanity. This sort of catharsis results because of some significant or disastrous change in the fortune of the protagonist of the play. Aristotle concedes that change may not be necessarily disastrous however; he also declares it is disastrous because most of the tragedies have shown it so. This can be understood from *Oedipus Complex* which is considered a tragedy but does not have any unhappy ending.

In this Unit, we will discuss Aristotle's definition of tragedy and the main elements of tragedy as mentioned in the *Poetics*.

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote the famous book *Poetics?*

_____

3.1 Objectives

This Unit has the following objectives:

- learn the definition of tragedy
- look at Aristotle's view of tragedy
- understand the implication of the definition of tragedy
- know the elements of tragedy
- understand the concept of *catharsis*
- learn about the terms like *hamartia, exposition, climax and resolution etc*.
- understand *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*
- appreciate the importance of elements of tragedy

3.2 Aristotle: *Poetics* (tragedy and its elements)

Let us begin with a definition of tragedy by Aristotle:

> "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, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." (51)

The concept of modern tragedy is different from ancient Greek tragedy. In Greek tragedy, we observe that drama is serious but not necessarily ending with any bloodshed. The basic principle of tragedy was that it dealt with the serious action of serious people while comedy lacked serious action and was mainly concerned with comic characters.

The concept of tragedy naturally splits into two components. The initial segment of the definition, spanning from "an imitation of an action" to "not of narrative," delves into tragedy as an art form of imitation, pinpointing its medium, subject, and method of replication. The subsequent part focuses on the operation and emotional impact of tragedy.

3.2.1 Implications

The definition sets tragedy apart from comedy or other poetic forms by highlighting its portrayal of serious actions, contrasting with comedy's focus on non-serious ones. Additionally, tragedy diverges from Epic in its approach to imitation; while an Epic typically narrates, tragedy represents through action. Finally, in terms of the medium of imitation, tragedy differs from lyric by employing diverse embellishments, such as verse in dialogue and song in choric segments.

3.2.2 Elements of Tragedy:

Aristotle has identified six main elements of tragedy: plot character, thought, diction, spectacle, and song. All these elements are essential for our understanding of tragic form and for creating a powerful or moving experience for the audience. Aristotle has discussed them in order of their significance.

Medium	Object	Mode
Diction Song	Plot Character Thought	Spectacle

3.2.2.1 Plot (Mythos in Ancient Greek)

Aristotle observes the plot of the tragedy and states that the action of the play is of prime importance among all the six elements. For ancients mythos simply means story which is translated in English as plot. The plot simply means the arrangement of events. Usually, a plot is divided into five acts and then these acts are subdivided into scenes. One of the primary skills lies in the skill of arranging the plots in acts and scenes in such a way that they are capable of initiating the maximum scenic effect in a natural environment. He said that "All human happiness or misery takes the form of action…Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions–what we do–that we are happy or miserable." He states that tragedy imitates action and there is a logical sequence of events in it. Therefore, the action that it imitates is its plot and must be complete. In other words, a plot must have a beginning, middle and end. **Exposition** or **Beginning** is simply that form where the action starts. The follow-up action flows from the beginning by being intelligible in it and does not bank on any previous situation. The **middle** follows what has happened in the beginning and leads to some predictable conclusion. **Resolution** or end refers to what has gone before but does not lead to any further action, thereby marking the completion of a tragedy. At all stages, Aristotle points out that "tragic action must be in accordance with laws of probability and necessity."

The action in tragedy must possess a certain magnitude and duration. It should be long enough to facilitate the systematic development of events leading to the catastrophe. An action that is too brief would lack visibility in its various parts, while one that is overly prolonged risks not being perceived as a cohesive artistic whole in memory. Hence, it must maintain a proportional relationship with other elements and the entirety of the work, forming an organic unity.

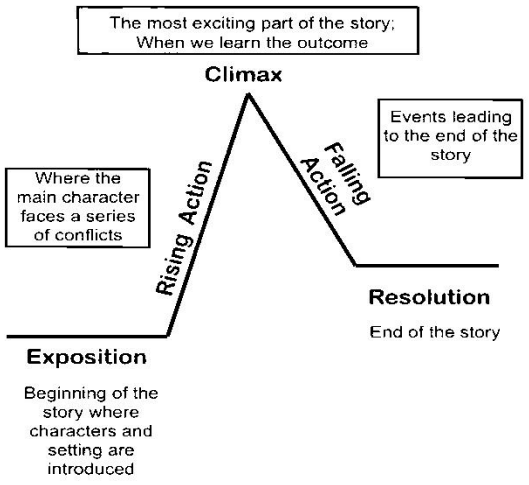
Aristotle introduces two types of plots: Simple and Complex. These terms carry technical distinctions. Simple plots exhibit consistency without significant or abrupt changes, whereas complex plots involve peripety (peripeteia) and anagnorisis, also known as Discovery or Recognition. Peripety denotes a sudden reversal in the story, marking a pivotal turning point where the protagonist's fortunes shift from good to bad. It underscores how human actions can yield unexpected outcomes, diverging from anticipated results, akin to a misstep taken in ignorance. Among all tragedies, those rooted in errors are often deemed the most profound.

Similarly, anagnorisis, or recognition, entails the revelation of truth—an awakening akin to a sudden illumination in darkness. Aristotle's concept of tragedy hinges on anagnorisis, which

represents a moment of realization for the protagonist, prompting a decision that ultimately leads to their downfall. For instance, when Oedipus learns of his patricide and incestuous marriage, he blinds himself and departs from Thebes, embodying the consequences of his newfound understanding.

Anagnorisis is an important aspect of Aristotle's tragedy. It is the main reason for bringing catharsis among the audience or purgation of emotion. Aristotle states that tragedy must evoke feelings of pity and fear to produce catharsis. These emotions must be released for the audience to attain a sense of cleansing and purification. Aristotle's idea of a tragedy is wherein the main character or protagonist usually of a high birth experiences a fall from grace. The audience should also sympathize with the condition of the protagonist. One perfect example of tragedy can be Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* We see Macbeth doing fine and is a good soul in the beginning. But sooner his ambition overtakes him and he becomes a murderer. This brings about his downfall and death. We as the audience empathize with him and experience pity and fear for Macbeth as he turns from a good man to a murderer.

The plot must be systematically arranged to evoke the emotions of pity and fear among spectators, a fundamental function of tragedy. Consequently, all episodes must hold significance to the main storyline. Therefore, a tragic plot should not depict a perfectly virtuous individual descending from happiness to misery, nor should it portray a wicked character ascending from misery to happiness. Similarly, an extremely depraved individual plummeting from happiness to misery fails to elicit pity or fear. The first scenario would evoke repulsion rather than empathy, the second lacks the essence of tragedy altogether, and the third fails to evoke the intended emotional response.



(Source: http://diagramscharts.com/tag/plot-diagram/fig: 1)

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote the famous Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex?*

3.2.2.2 Character (Ethos in Ancient Greek)

Aristotle's next important element of tragedy is character. Characters refer to men and women who work in a play. The hero and heroine are the most important characters in a play. Every character has some natural quality and is revealed in the plot. The hero must clear his moral purpose to the audience. Aristotle views a protagonist or tragic hero as a person of high grace who falls from grace because of his faults. This reversal of fortune is what makes him a tragic hero or what makes the story even more appealing and compelling. For our understanding of a tragic hero, we can take the example of Oedipus from Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*. We know his fortune as he belonged to a royal family but fate had some other plans for him. His fate intervenes and leads him to kill his father and marry his mother. This unfortunate event leads to a series of events and ultimately brings the downfall of Oedipus. While Oedipus is himself responsible, it is the tragic flaw of hubris (pride) that finally lands him in such a ruining situation. We can see many examples of Aristotle's tragedy both in ancient and modern times. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is another example of a tragedy. Romeo and Juliet love each other despite being members of a rival family. Their relationship soon turns into a tragedy when Romeo kills Juliet's cousin and Juliet kills herself in the grief of the cousin.

3.2.2.3 Thought

It means what do characters feel or think in the course of their development in the plot. Thought is normally expressed through their speeches and dialogues. Thought is the act of communication. Do the lines that are spoken by the character make any sense or not? Are characters able to convey whatever is to be communicated at every moment of the play? Aristotle believed that tragedy is not merely a story about someone's death or suffering. On the other hand, it is a story that brings catharsis to the audience. Catharsis is the release of emotions; Aristotle firmly assumed that no other form of art can produce this catharsis other than tragedy. As discussed already, Oedipus Rex is one of the famous plays of Sophocles. We can see when Oedipus is informed about the incidents that he has killed his father and married his own mother. This revelation causes him to blind himself and leave the kingdom. The audience can experience catharsis as they watch Oedipus suffer because of his actions.

Aristotle's concept of tragedy is different from what we understand of tragedy in today's world. However, his concept of tragedy is indeed influential even today. We see many plays like Romeo and Juliet or Death of a Salesman mainly focus on the suffering of the main character.

3.2.2.4 Diction

Diction serves as the medium through which characters reveal their innermost thoughts and emotions, encompassing the composition of the lines they deliver. While "thought" refers to the substance of what is being conveyed, "diction" pertains to the manner in which it is expressed. There exist various methods of articulating a message, and a skilled playwright crafts lines that communicate with exceptional precision. In exceptional plays, certain lines are often constructed in such a way that they linger in the minds of the audience, ripe for quotation. Thus, diction should be adorned with artistic elements, among which song and spectacle hold significant sway.

3.2.2.5 Song

This is another accessory of tragedy. A fair portion of the text of the play is conveyed through the singing of the chorus.

3.2.2.6 Spectacle

Song and Spectacle are considered accessories for tragedy. The spectacle includes all aspects of the tragedy that contribute to its sensory effects, costumes, scenery, and gestures. Therefore, it must be in accordance with the theme of the play. Let's understand this with an example; suppose we have a death scene in the play, we expect the background of the stage to be set in such a way that it matches with the scene like having loud lamentation, or the scenes of physical torture. Aristotle ranks spectacle as the last element of tragedy.

Check your progress:

1. Which element was considered primary by Aristotle for tragedy?

_____

3.2.3 Comparative importance of plot and character:

Concerning the importance of plot or character, Aristotle clearly stated plot is more important than the character. He holds the view that there can be a tragedy without a character but there cannot be a tragedy without a plot. To offer a comprehensive understanding of the importance of the plot, he compares the plot with the outline of a painting. Just like colours however beautiful have no meaning without an outline in a similar fashion, tragedy has no soul

and significance without a plot. It is indeed a plot which offers significance and meaning to the plot.

By plot, Aristotle does not mean merely the sequence of events but also a way in which action proceeds at every point. It is more subtle and fuller than simply the story or myth on which it is based. It works in itself in such a fine way that the entire casual chain of events or episodes leads to the conclusion. Character is a casual element and therefore a secondary element of tragedy. Aristotle substantiates his argument by giving two reasons. Aristotle says there can be a tragedy without a character but not without a plot, in his first reason he is simply referring to modern tragedies. He hints at modern tragedies having a mechanical plot and poor characterization. Most modern tragedies are devoid of character. His second reason is that *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* are parts of the plot, therefore plot is the first essential element of tragedy. There is certainly a great sense in what he is saying. Without a good plot, the entire characterization can be a flop. Even today people enjoy a good plot rather than a good character in any work of art, especially tragedy.

3.2.4 Function of tragedy

Let's recall the definition of tragedy again: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude…through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation of these emotions."

According to Aristotle's definition, the primary purpose of tragedy is to evoke feelings of 'pity' and 'fear' in the audience, serving both moral and aesthetic objectives. This concept, presented in Chapter Six of his work "Poetics," has sparked considerable debate. The pivotal statement is: "Tragedy through pity and fear affects a purgation of such emotions." Thus, tragedy not only stirs powerful emotions within the spectator but also brings about a cathartic effect; following the climax and tumult, there emerges a sense of tension release and tranquility.

3.2.5 Terms related to Tragedy

There are few terms that we should remember for a better understanding of the tragedy. These are: catharsis, dramatic unities, hamartia, climax, or catastrophe or denouement etc.

Catharsis: Aristotle describes "catharsis as the purging of the emotions of pity and fear that are aroused in the viewer of a tragedy. Debate continues about what Aristotle actually means

by catharsis, but the concept is linked to the positive social function of tragedy." To understand catharsis further, it is important to quote F.L Lucas:

> "First, there has been age-long controversy about Aristotle's meaning, though it has almost always been accepted that whatever he meant was profoundly right. Many, for example, have translated Catharsis as 'purification', 'Correction or refinement' or the like. There is strong evidence that Catharsis means, not 'Purification', but 'Purgation' - a medical term (Aristotle was a son of a Physician.) Yet, owing to changes in medical thought, 'Purgation' has become radically misleading to modern minds. Inevitably we think of purgatives and complete evacuations of water products; and then outraged critics ask why our emotions should be so ill-treated. "But Catharsis means 'Purgation', not in the modern, but in the older, wider English sense which includes the partial removal of excess 'humours'. The theory is as old as the school of Hippocrates that on a due balance … of these humours depend the health of body and mind alike."

Thus, catharsis refers to an emotional discharge and helps to attain the renewal of moral or spiritual state from anxiety or depression. It is a Greek word which means cleansing. In literary sense it is used for cleansing the emotions of the character. Catharsis often leads to some emotional rejuvenation of a person.

The Three Dramatic Unities: Aristotle mentions three dramatic unities; they are unity of time, unity of action and unity of place.

1. *Unity of action*: A play must have a single plot to sustain the interest of the audience.
2. *Unity of time*: The action of a play must not go beyond the single revolution of the sun.
3. *Unity of place*: it means that a play must be set at a single place or one stage. It should represent more than one place.

Hamartia: It is a literary device which aims to reflect the 'tragic flaw' or error of judgement of character that eventually brings his downfall. This term originated with Aristotle as a means of describing an error or frailty that brings about misfortune for a tragic hero.

Climax: In Greek terminology it means the 'ladder'. This is the point in the narrative where tension or conflict hits the highest point. It is a part of the plot and can be very decisive. It is rather the turning point of the story line from where rising action shifts to falling action. Thus climax is the point in a story when the conflict or crises touch the highest peak.

Catastrophe or Denouement: it refers to the final resolution of a narrative plot. It exposes the mystery by bring a logical conclusion or end of a story. For example if it is a tragedy, it could be the death of the main character or protagonist or some other character. However, in comedy it could simply be a reunion of lovers or major characters. Catastrophe is synonym to denouement.

Check your progress:

1. What is *Catharsis*?

   _____

2. Define *Hamartia*?

   _____

3.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, learners are able to gain an insight into the fundamental ideas of classical criticism by Aristotle. Learners are able to know tragedy and its elements. They can familiarize themselves with the function of tragedy, and six dominant elements of a tragedy-plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle and song. They are also able to understand the comparative importance of plot and character. They are able to comprehend complex and simple plots, learn about the terms like *hamartia*, *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis catharsis,* climax, resolution, etc.

3.4 Glossary

Aesthetic: Concerned with the appreciation and understanding of beauty.
Catharsis: The process of purging or purifying emotions.
Diction: The unique style of language, expression, and wording used.
Denouement: The resolution or unraveling of plot complications, typically occurring at the end of a play or story.
Embellished: Decorated or adorned with ornamentation.
Hamartia: A tragic flaw or error in judgment that leads to a character's downfall.
Imitation: The act of representing or portraying.

Magnitude: The length or size of something.

Spectacle: Stage properties or elements of visual presentation.

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Aristotle says that _____ is the underlying element of tragedy**.**

    a) **plot**

    b) thought

    c) diction

    d) none

2. Aristotle was a disciple of _____ .

    a) **Plato**

    b) Socrates

    c) Karl Marx

    d) none

3. Thought is generally expressed through:

    a) speeches and dialogues

    b) music

    c) song

    d) narration

4. Songs have _____ value.

    a) metrical

    b) philosophical

    c) **ornamental**

    d) none

5. Aristotle's *Tragic Hero* is _____.

    a) good man meeting good end

    b) bad man meeting a bad end

    c) both of the above

    d) **none of the above**

6. What is the time limitation given by Aristotle for the action of tragedy?

a) **single revolution of the sun**

b) single revolution of the moon

c) single revolution of the earth

d) all of the above

7. Which chapter of *Poetics* mentions Catharsis?

a) 5

b) **6**

c) 7

d) 8

8. Catharsis means _____.

a) purgation

b) purification

c) **both of the above**

d) none of the above

9. *Poetics* is written by _____.

a) Plato

b) Socrates

c) Karl Marx

d) **Aristotle**

10. 'Climax' in a tragedy refers to _____.

a) **turning point**

b) beginning of the tragedy

c) end of the tragedy

d) none

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How has Aristotle defined tragedy?
2. Name the main elements of a tragedy?
3. Write a short note on catharsis.
4. Write a note on the function of tragedy.
5. Define catastrophe or denouement.

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss in detail the dominant elements of tragedy as proposed by Aristotle.
2. Critically comment on the comparative importance of *Plot* and character in a tragedy.
3. Explain the terms *Perpeteia* and *Anagnorisis.*

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Abrams, M.H. Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Delhi: Akash Press, 2007.

Daiches, David. *The Penguin Companion of English Literature*. London: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2005.

Unit-4: Thomas Aquinas: Brief excerpts from *Summa Theologica* (Question 1: Articles 9 and 10)

Structure:

4.0 Introduction

The most influential thinker in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and among the scholastic philosophers was Thomas Aquinas. Eventually, Aquinas was acknowledged as the Church's "doctor" and his writings served as the vehicle for orthodox thought. His system is still a main subject taught in Catholic schools. There are two key works by Aquinas known for his best-known contribution. Between 1259 and 1264, first book *the Summa contra Gentiles*, was written. Its main goal was to argue or defend Christianity's truth against non-Christians who did not recognize the inspiration of the Bible. According to Aquinas, "God is the end of each thing, and hence each thing desires to be joined to God as its last end to the greatest extent conceivable to it." The ultimate aim of human knowledge and endeavor is to comprehend the divine, as the human intellect yearns, cherishes, and delights in understanding matters of the divine, albeit its limited capacity to fully grasp them.

In his second major work, Summa Theologica, Aquinas lays out five arguments for the existence of God. The first argument, known as the unmoved mover, posits that to avoid an infinite regress, there must exist something that moves other things without being moved itself. The second argument contends that there must be a cause that is uncaused, following a similar

line of reasoning. Thirdly, there must exist a fundamental source for all necessities. Fourthly, there must be a perfect source for the various levels and types of perfection found in the world. Lastly, even the deceased serve a purpose that must be directed towards a being superior to them.

Thomas Aquinas, a renowned philosopher-theologian, intricately weaves together the realms of philosophy and theology to construct a comprehensive understanding of faith and revealed knowledge. His monumental work, the *Summa Theologica*, serves as a testament to this endeavor, embodying both philosophical inquiry and theological discourse. While the *Summa* contains elements of philosophical reasoning, it primarily functions as a theological treatise, reflecting Aquinas's profound commitment to Catholic doctrine and theological inquiry. Aquinas and his contemporaries, often referred to as Scholastics, maintained a clear demarcation between philosophy and theology, recognizing the distinct paths pursued by each discipline. Theological study, in Aquinas's view, delves into truths believed to be revealed by God, transcending the limitations of human reason. Philosophy, on the other hand, engages in rational examination grounded in sensory experience, seeking to derive universal principles through logical deduction.

Throughout the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas employs philosophical methods to elucidate theological concepts, offering logical justifications for matters of faith. However, he remains steadfast in his adherence to Catholic doctrine, viewing theology as the ultimate pursuit of divine truths. Aquinas's philosophical analysis serves to complement and enrich his theological arguments, providing a deeper understanding of theological mysteries. Despite his deep-rooted Catholic faith, Aquinas acknowledges the universal capacity for reason inherent in all individuals, irrespective of their religious beliefs. He asserts that reason is an essential attribute of humanity, reflecting his reverence for Aristotle's conception of rationality as a defining characteristic of human nature. In essence, Aquinas's synthesis of philosophy and theology in the *Summa Theologica* represents a profound exploration of the intersection between faith and reason. Through his meticulous inquiry and rigorous intellectual discourse, Aquinas endeavors to reconcile the mysteries of faith with the principles of philosophical inquiry, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of human existence and divine revelation.

Aquinas adopts Aristotle's concept of the Four Causes to underpin much of his theological and philosophical thought. These causes encompass the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the ultimate cause. The material cause refers to the substance or matter that constitutes the universe, embodying its potential or capacity. Conversely, the formal

cause represents the shape, structure, or essence that defines a specific entity, often referred to as its essence. For instance, the formal cause of a human being is their humanity, encapsulating the essence of what it means to be human. God, as the supreme being embodying pure actuality and existence, serves as the sole pure formal cause. The efficient cause denotes the active agent or force responsible for bringing about change or influence. Lastly, the ultimate cause signifies the purpose or goal toward which something is directed. It represents the ultimate aim or function guiding an entity's existence. By employing this framework, Aquinas integrates Aristotelian principles into his theological and philosophical inquiries, offering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying principles shaping the universe and its phenomena.

4.1 Objectives

This Unit has been designed to familiarize you with St. Thomas Aquinas and his work *Summa Theologica*. Further, it comprises a discussion on Articles 9 and 10 of question 1 of the mentioned text.

4.2 Thomas Aquinas: Brief excerpts from *Summa Theologica* (Question 1: Articles 9 and 10)

St. Thomas Aquinas devoted himself to the meticulous completion of the *Summa Theologica* until the twilight of his life, recognizing the profound significance of employing his scholarly prowess in service to the Church. As he approached his final days, Aquinas experienced an unparalleled sense of spiritual fulfillment during the Mass of December 6, 1273, wherein he felt a profound connection to divine revelation. Despite his eventual passing on March 7th, 1274, Aquinas left behind the monumental work, *Summa Theologica*, in an unfinished state. It was Fra Rainaldo da Piperno, a trusted confidant and friend, who assumed the responsibility of completing the third and final section of Aquinas's magnum opus after his demise.

The *Summa Theologica*, structured into three distinct sections, was meticulously crafted to cater to a diverse audience ranging from novices to seasoned theologians, providing a comprehensive exposition on matters of Christian truth. Spanning a vast array of topics, this seminal work delves into the intricacies of Christian morality, theological principles, and the life

and teachings of Christ, offering profound insights and philosophical reflections to address prevailing questions and challenges confronting the Christian faith. Remarkably, many of the beliefs espoused within the *Summa Theologica* continue to be revered and upheld by the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary times.

Organized into numerous subsections within each section, the *Summa Theologica* traverses a broad spectrum of interconnected themes, encompassing discussions on punishment, tolerance, revelation, marriage, despair, and the complex dynamics between the virtuous and the sinful. Scholars speculate that a significant portion of the supplementary content in the Summa Theologica may have been compiled posthumously by Rainaldo da Piperno from Aquinas's earlier works. True to its name, the *Summa Theologica* serves as a comprehensive compendium of theological knowledge, offering profound insights into the divine-human relationship, particularly elucidating the role of Christ in facilitating reconciliation between humanity and God.

Aquinas begins by presenting compelling arguments for the existence of God and expounding upon His divine attributes before delving into an extensive exploration of human nature and purpose. In the latter part of the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas shifts his focus towards a detailed examination of the nature of Christ and the sacraments, illuminating their significance in bridging the gap between the divine and the mortal realms. Within the expansive thematic scope of the text, Aquinas undertakes a rigorous investigation into various facets of theological inquiry, ranging from the intricacies of the body-soul relationship to the complexities of sin and redemption. Through his scholarly endeavors, Aquinas aspires to provide a comprehensive and rational understanding of the intricacies of existence, blending theological insights with philosophical reflections to offer profound insights into the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos.

In this work, Aquinas provided an explanation of allegory that considers the tendencies. He stated that the first meaning, in which words represent objects, belongs to the literal and historical sense. And his take on spirituality, which is predicated on the literal and assumes it, is that signification in which things that are represented by words also have a sense. This spiritual sense now has three distinct parts. The Old Law, according to the Apostle, is a figure of the New Law, and the New Law itself, according to Dionysius, is a symbol of a glorious future. Consequently, there is an allegorical sense in that things of the Old Law represent things of the New Law, and there is a moral sense in that things done in Christ or things that represent Him are models of what we ought to do.

4.2.1 Question 1: The nature and extent of "sacred doctrine," or theology

Aquinas suggests that while theology can stand alone in exploring the nature of God, philosophy can offer valuable contributions to theological understanding. He begins by examining motion in the world, observing that every motion has a cause. However, he argues against an infinite regress of causes, asserting the necessity of a first unmoved mover to initiate the chain of motion. This unmoved mover, according to Aquinas, is synonymous with God. Moving on to causality, Aquinas notes that every effect has a preceding cause. Yet, he contends that an infinite regress of causes is untenable, necessitating a first cause to set the chain of causation in motion. This first cause, identified as God, is crucial for explaining the existence of all subsequent causes. In essence, Aquinas utilizes philosophical reasoning to support the existence of God as the first unmoved mover and the first efficient cause. These arguments illustrate the interplay between philosophy and theology in deepening our understanding of the divine and the workings of the universe.

Finally, we observe in nature the emergence and extinction of entities that are both possible and impossible. But, as something that could hypothetically does not exist at some point, it produces a doubt on its existence at all. Because everything may hypothetically cease to exist, nothing ever existed. But since everything that exists depends on something that already existed, nothing would exist even today if nothing had ever existed. Yet it is ludicrous to assert that nothing exists even now. It follows that there must be something for which the presence of all beings is not merely possible. Now, everything that is necessary either has another item make it necessary or it does not. We must draw the conclusion that there is something that is required since it is not feasible for there to be an unlimited number of causes of necessary things. This thing is referred to as God.

Fourth, all living things have traits to differing degrees. Some are honourable, sincere, and excellent. But each of these categories is evaluated in relation to a maximum. The best, truest, noblest, etc. must therefore exist. According to Aristotle, things that are greatest are also greatest in existence. The beginning of existence, kindness, and every other quality of perfection we see in living beings must therefore exist. We refer to this ultimate cause as God.

Aquinas delves into the relationship between theology and philosophy, acknowledging that while theology can independently explore the nature of God, philosophy can offer valuable insights to supplement theological understanding. He initiates his exploration by analyzing motion in the natural world. Aquinas observes that every motion is the result of a preceding

cause, forming a chain of causation. However, he contends that an infinite regress of causes is logically untenable, as it would imply an infinite series of movers—a notion incompatible with reason. Thus, Aquinas posits the existence of a first unmoved mover, an entity that initiates motion without being moved itself. This first unmoved mover, according to Aquinas, is synonymous with God, serving as the foundation for the chain of motion observed in the world.

Aquinas extends his philosophical inquiry to the concept of causality. He asserts that every effect has a preceding cause, leading to a chain of causation. Yet, he argues that this chain cannot regress infinitely backward, as it would negate the existence of a first cause—the originator of all subsequent causes. Therefore, Aquinas concludes that there must exist a first cause, an entity responsible for initiating the chain of causation. This first cause, which he identifies as God, is essential for explaining the existence of all subsequent causes and effects in the universe. In summary, Aquinas employs philosophical reasoning to support the existence of God as the first unmoved mover and the first efficient cause. Through his detailed analysis, Aquinas demonstrates the complementary relationship between philosophy and theology, highlighting how philosophical insights can enrich theological understanding of the divine and the workings of the universe.

Check your progress:

1. Aquinas utilizes philosophical reasoning to support the existence of God as the first unmoved mover and the first efficient cause. (True/False)
2. The *Summa Theologica*, structured into three distinct sections, delves into the intricacies of Christian morality, theological principles, and the life and teachings of Christ. (True/False)

4.2.2 Article 9: Whether Holy Scripture should use metaphors?

Metaphors should not be used in the Bible, according to Aquinas. This science, which holds the greatest place of all sciences, does not appear to be appropriate for the lowest science. But poetry is the least of all the sciences and has the right to progress with the help of numerous analogies and figures. Thus, it is inappropriate for this science to employ such analogies. Also, it appears that this philosophy is meant to clarify the truth. Thus, a reward is held out to those who manifest it: "Those that explain me shall have life forever". But these comparisons obfuscate the truth. Thus, it is not appropriate for this science to advance heavenly truths by equating them with material objects.

Also, the higher the creature, the closer it is to resembling the divine. Hence, if any creature were to be used to represent God, it should mostly be drawn from higher creatures rather than lesser ones, even though Scripture frequently does so. It says, "I have multiplied visions, and I have employed similitudes by the ministry of the prophets," on the other hand. Yet, using analogies to make a point is a form of metaphor. Thus, analogies are acceptable in this hallowed science. God provides for everything in accordance with what each thing's nature can handle.

Since all of our knowledge comes through our senses, it is now reasonable for a man to reach intellectual truths through perceptible items. Spiritual truths are so appropriately taught in Holy Scripture under the guise of material objects. Dionysius asserts that unless the divine rays are shrouded in a variety of holy veils, we cannot be enlightened by them. It is also appropriate for Holy Writ to explain spiritual principles using examples from corporeal objects, as is stated in the proclamation "To the intelligent and to the unwise I am a debtor," which is made to all without discrimination of persons. This will enable even the simple, who find it difficult to understand intellectual concepts on their own, to comprehend it.

Poetry uses metaphors to create a representation since it is human nature to enjoy representations. Yet metaphors are used in sacred doctrine because they are both necessary and helpful. According to Dionysius, the sensible imagery that hides the light of divine revelation does not extinguish it. Rather, it preserves its truth to the extent that it prevents the minds of those to whom it has been revealed from resting in metaphors and raises them to the understanding of facts. Through the teachings of these individuals, others can also gain insight into these matters. Therefore, concepts that are symbolically conveyed in one part of Scripture are more explicitly taught in other sections. The proverb "Do not cast your pearls before swine" suggests that veiling truth in allegory helps develop analytical thinking skills and serves as a defense against the mockery of the irreverent.

Dionysius argues that there are three reasons why it is preferable to convey heavenly truths using the example of less noble entities rather than nobler ones. Firstly, this approach provides greater protection against errors in human understanding. If these truths were expressed in nobler forms, there might be debates regarding whether these representations accurately reflect divine truths, particularly among those who cannot conceive of anything more noble than physical bodies. Secondly, it aligns more closely with our current comprehension of God. We have a clearer understanding of what God is not rather than what He is. Additionally, conveying heavenly truths through less noble entities helps individuals develop a deeper understanding of

spiritual concepts. By using familiar, tangible examples, individuals can grasp abstract truths more easily and apply them to their lives. This approach encourages spiritual growth and facilitates a deeper connection with divine truths. As opposed to what He is, what He is not is more obvious to us. As a result, we develop a more accurate perception of God within ourselves by drawing analogies from the things that are farthest from Him. Finally, because divine truths are better kept secret from the undeserving.

In essence, every potential occurrence in the world has been preordained with a designated place and purpose within a grander scheme. Any deviation from this plan, any expansion of existence beyond the confines of essence, would introduce the elements of contingency and happenstance. Essentially, humanity strays from the inherent universality and necessity found in the fusion of essence and existence due to its dual nature as both a created being and one prone to sin. This divergence leads to a shift from the absolute to the contingent, from divine favor to external particularity. The degree of this externalization is depicted by the separation between man's existence and his essence. By striving to align the chaotic diversity and specificity of existence with the universal and essential, humanity seeks a return to the divine, to the convergence of existence with essence, and to the union that brings order, harmony, and significance to life. As intellectual beings, humans primarily seek knowledge of God, a journey facilitated by understanding essence and universals.

Eco elucidates Aquinas' perspective on allegory as a pivotal aspect of a broader trend that emphasized the literal interpretation of the secular human world while confining spiritual and symbolic value to biblical narratives. Aquinas regarded poetry as an inferior mode of instruction compared to scripture, labeling it as "infima doctrine." Its perceived inferiority stemmed from its lack of truth, derived from its engagement with fictional or contrived elements rather than actuality.

Poetry, on the other hand, is unable to truly distinguish between literal meaning and symbolic or spiritual meaning, unlike scripture. According to Aquinas, poetry only has a literal meaning; any additional levels of meaning (which he refers to as "parabolic") are merely subspecies of this literal meaning. He believes that the literal meaning of a poem should convey the author's intended meaning. The *Summa Theologica's* grandiose breadth derives from Aquinas' belief that much of theology can be described and arranged in a comprehensive and logical framework.

4.2.3 Article 10: Whether in Holy Scripture a word may have several senses?

It appears that a term in the Holy Scriptures cannot have multiple meanings, including allegorical, tropological or moral, historical, or factual, and anagogical. Because a text with numerous meanings leads to confusion, deception, and the destruction of all argument strength. Hence, no argument can be inferred from many propositions—only fallacies. Yet, Holy Writ should be inclined towards the stating the truth without making any errors. Hence, no word can have more than one meaning in it. The Old Bible, according to Augustine, is divided into four categories: history, aetiology, analogy, and allegory. These four divisions now appear to be completely distinct in the first objection, amongst the four. Thus, it doesn't seem proper to read the same text of Holy Scripture using the four different senses mentioned above.

Additionally to these four senses, there exists the parabolical sense, which is distinct from them. Gregory argues that "Holy Scripture surpasses any science in its style of expression" because it not only portrays truths but also reveals mysteries. The author of Holy Scripture is God, and He can convey His meaning not only through words (a capability humans also possess) but also through the essence of the things themselves. Hence, this discipline possesses the characteristic where the things meant by the words carry their own significance, unlike in all other sciences where things are indicated by words. Consequently, the first sense, the historical or literal, is where words initially denote objects. The spiritual sense, dependent on the literal and assuming it, is the significance in which things represented by words also hold a meaning.

The spiritual sense can be divided into three distinct parts. Dionysius and the Apostle both argue that the New Law serves as a foreshadowing of future glory, while the Old Law symbolizes the New Law.

Additionally, according to the New Law, any action undertaken by our leader serves as a paradigm for our own behaviour. This results in an allegorical sense where the Old Law represents the New Law, and a moral sense where the actions of Christ or those who resemble Him serve as examples for us. On the other hand, the anagogical sense refers to what these representations signify in terms of eternal splendour. Since God, who comprehends all things through His wisdom with a single act, is the author of Holy Scripture, and since the literal sense reflects the author's intention, it is not inappropriate for a single word in Holy Scripture to have multiple meanings, even within its literal interpretation.

These senses are not multiplied because one word can signify many different things, but rather because the things they signify can represent other things. Their multiplicity doesn't lead to ambiguity or any other form of complexity. Therefore, there is no confusion in Holy

Scriptures because all senses are rooted in the literal sense, from which any argument can be derived. However, nothing essential to faith is lost as a result of this, as neither the Scripture in its literal sense nor the spiritual sense presents anything else that is crucial to faith. Within the category of the literal sense, three types are identified: history, etiology, and analogy. Augustine explains that when something is simply recounted, it is termed history; when its rationale is understood, such as when Jesus explained why Moses allowed divorce—due to the hardness of people's hearts—it is referred to as aetiology; and when the truth of one passage of Scripture aligns with the truth of another, it is known as analogy. Among these, only allegory encompasses the three spiritual senses.

Hugh of St. Victor establishes three senses—the historical, the allegorical, and the tropological—and includes the anagogical sense under the allegorical sense.

The literal contains the parabola sense since words can signify things both literally and metaphorically. The accurate sense is not provided by the figure itself, rather by that which is depicted. Scripture never refers to God as having an arm in the literal sense; rather, it refers to what the arm represents, which is operating power. Hence, it is obvious that nothing erroneous can ever be found in Holy Scripture taken literally. The basic elements of Aquinas' metaphysics, which were central to the perception of many mediaeval philosophers, must be understood in order to comprehend his aesthetics.

Aristotle asserts that Aquinas' claim that being as being, or the fundamental characteristics of being, is the subject of metaphysics. Arithmetic, for instance, treats being as a number. Other sciences treat of being under facets. As metaphysics is the only branch of study that deals with universal existence, it follows that knowledge of proper or individual things depends on knowledge of common or universal things. He distinguishes between a thing's existence and essence, just like Aristotle did earlier. Essence and existence are identical only in God. In all created things they are distinct. As a result, existence is God's essence, or to put it another way, God is existence. "God alone is His act of existence," according to Aquinas. The same word (*koinonia*), employed by Plato to describe the relationship between the world of forms and the physical world.

Aquinas contends that individuals have a natural desire to learn about what constitutes their ultimate purpose and happiness, which is the understanding of God, in accordance with Aristotle's well-known assertion that "all men by nature aim to know."

Philosophy and reason are pivotal in the quest for knowledge, but they have inherent limitations

in grasping all facts. While philosophers delve into theological questions, not all are theologians; rather, philosophical understanding falls within the realm of theological knowledge. Theological knowledge, grounded in revealed truth and faith rather than solely on sensory experience and rational deduction, stands on equal footing with philosophical knowledge. However, theological knowledge surpasses philosophical understanding by addressing profound matters and offering a holistic understanding that encompasses all aspects of significance.

Check your progress:

1. The Old Bible, according to Augustine, is divided into four categories: history, aetiology, analogy, and allegory. (True/False)
2. Hugh of St. Victor establishes three senses—the historical, the allegorical, and the tropological. (True/False)

4.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

Thomas Aquinas penned *Summa Theologiae*, often known as *Summa Theologica*, between around 1265 and 1273. It is a comprehensive compilation of theology. He wanted it to be the culmination of all knowledge as defined by the religious creeds of the church and the Arabian commentators on Aristotle's philosophy, which was being introduced to western European thought at the time. The Summa is divided into three parts that could be viewed as addressing Christ, Man, and God (or the God-Man).

Aquinas employs the concept of material cause to clarify how people learn about the outside world in *Summa Theologica* and in his justifications for the existence of God. That also sums up how Aquinas perceives God, who he believes to be whole reality and so without potential.

His theory of knowledge and understanding of human nature are deeply intertwined with the concept of formal cause. He elucidates human actions, driven by will, and his theory of comprehending the physical world in terms of efficient cause. The idea of final cause clarifies the nature of the will, which inherently seeks to achieve its ultimate goal of experiencing the Divine Essence.

Aquinas reaches the same conclusion about Plato's theory as Aristotle, finding it flawed partly because it fails to account for the beginning of existence and rest, as it tends to disdain existence. According to Holy Scripture, God deemed the outcomes of each of the six days of Creation as "excellent" or even "extremely good." Additionally, God says, "I am that I am,"

associating themself with being, in response to Moses' question about how to address him. In other terms, God is the very essence of existence or being. In contrast to attempts to flee from "Being," Aquinas contends that individual's goal is to advance towards "Being." Prior to Aquinas, the conventional church doctrine was that existence was what distinguished humans from God and that this created a unique difference between God and his creations. Aquinas believed that there was a difference in degree between God and his creations, and that this difference made us different from God because we did not possess as much existence as God. According to traditional church thought, our life before Thomas Aquinas was the main obstacle stopping us from achieving our spiritual destiny. According to Aquinas, improving ourselves is precisely what will lead to the fulfilment of our spiritual destiny.

With nearly a million and a half words covering 512 topics and 2,668 articles on a wide range of theological topics, *The Summa Theologica* is a substantial work. Almost 2,500 of its pages make up the English version. There is no denying the work's organisation and thoroughness. There is no denying the author's intellectual prowess. *The Summa* is enormously important and influential; and claims to become a faultless religious doctrine if only it includes exclusive biblical theology.

4.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know about the origin of literary criticism in English
- know about Thomas Aquinas as a literary critic
- critique varied approaches mentioned in *Summa Theologica*

4.4 Glossary

***Summa*:** It can be defined as a summary of a subject.

***Gentiles*:** It is a word that usually means "anyone outside of Jewish religious community."

Doctrine: It is a classification of beliefs, teachings, and principles, as the essence of preaching in each branch of knowledge or in a belief system.

Scripture: It is the holy writings of any religion.

Theology: It is a methodical study of the nature of the divine and of a religious belief.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Which of the following titles best describes Saint Thomas Aquinas?
    a) Doctor
    b) Engineer
    c) Lawyer
    d) Architect
2. Which school of theology did St. Thomas Aquinas belong to?
    e) Patristics theology
    f) Positive theology
    g) Oriental theology
    h) Scholastic theology
3. St. Thomas Aquinas joined which order?
    i) Order of Preachers
    j) Order of Friars Minor
    k) Order of Carmelites
    l) Order of Benedictines
4. How did St. Thomas Aquinas feel about the death penalty?
    m) Supported death penalty
    n) Opposed death penalty
    o) No position
    p) Left to State
5. The most famous book of St. Thomas Aquinas:
    a) *Summa Contra Liber*
    b) *Disputed Questions*
    c) *Summa Theologica*
    d) *Summa Philosophica*

Answer Key: **1.** (a) **2.** (d) **3.** (a) **4.** (a) **5.** (c)

6. Aquinas utilizes philosophical reasoning to support the existence of God as the first unmoved mover and the first efficient cause. (**True**/False)
7. The Summa Theologica, structured into three distinct sections, delves into the intricacies of Christian morality, theological principles, and the life and teachings of Christ. (**True**/False)
8. The Old Bible, according to Augustine, is divided into four categories: history, aetiology, analogy, and allegory. (True/**False**)
9. Hugh of St. Victor establishes three senses—the historical, the allegorical, and the tropological. (**True**/False)
10. The Summa is divided into three parts that could be viewed as addressing:
    a) Christ
    b) Man
    c) God (or the God-Man)
    d) All of the above

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write down two oppositions to Aquinas' natural law theory?
2. What is the central point of Aquinas in "Whether Holy Scripture should use metaphors," Article 9 of Question 1?
3. Discuss Thomas Aquinas's life and religious contributions.
4. Explain Aquinas' claim that it is obvious that God exists?
5. Write Thomas Aquinas' views on reality.

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What connection does Saint Thomas Aquinas see between virtue, natural law, and human law?
2. Discuss the objections in question 1 "the nature and extent of sacred doctrine or theology" in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, and what is the point of this question?
3. Examine Thomas Aquinas' political outlook? How did he discern theology and philosophy?

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Chesterton, Gilbert K. *St. Thomas Aquinas*. Martino Fine Books, US, 2011.

Gilson, Étienne. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Translated by L. K. Shook. University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, 1956.

Wood, Adam, *Thomas Aquinas on the Immateriality of the Human Intellect*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 2020.

Unit-5: Renaissance and Neoclassical Literary Criticism

Structure:

5.0 Introduction

Between the 14th and the mid-17th century, there was a resurgence or rekindling of the values, ethics, and aesthetics reminiscent of classical Greece and Rome. This period, commonly referred to as the "Renaissance," saw a revival in the appreciation and adoption of the cultural principles of ancient civilizations. A large population from Italy, with a humanistic approach, coined this phrase to describe their own era as affirming continuity with the classical humanist traditions. Also, they characterised previous eras with superstition and stagnation. In this view, the Renaissance was supplanted by medieval theological beliefs that were more humanist and secular. They also fostered a reignited interest in the historical world in terms of both economics and science, and they gave the person a new significance. This assertion has been partially contested since the term "Renaissance" itself has come under scrutiny and is commonly substituted with the more broad and vague term "early modern," which tends to distance itself from the conscience of Renaissance writers.

Neoclassicism, spanning from the early seventeenth century to approximately 1750, represents a significant literary and artistic movement. Although the specifics of this movement varied across cultures, it typically shared several common concerns and characteristics. Essentially, neoclassicism entailed a return to the traditional models, literary techniques, and

moral values of ancient Greek and Roman literature. In this sense, neoclassicists can be viewed as the heirs to Renaissance humanism. However, many neoclassicists reacted negatively to what they perceived as the excessive aesthetics, superfluous ornamentation, and overly complex linguistic styles found in certain Renaissance works. They also criticized the lavishness of Gothic and Baroque artistic styles.

5.1 Objectives

This unit has been designed to familiarize the students with the origin and development of literary criticism. The main objective is to introduce you to the origin and development of Renaissance and Neoclassical Criticism.

5.2 Renaissance and Neoclassical Literary Criticism

5.2.1 Renaissance Criticism

Scholars from various disciplines have recognized that many advancements during the Renaissance were extensions or adaptations of medieval ideas. Medieval thought often demonstrated reverence for and familiarity with classical works, with periods like the Carolingian Renaissance in the ninth century and the twelfth-century Renaissance exhibiting humanistic tendencies. The Renaissance, as a concept, helps in understanding how modernity reshaped society, even though this unity was retrospectively imposed. The term "humanism," derived from Cicero and adopted by Italian intellectuals to distinguish themselves from medieval scholastics, has traditionally been regarded as the defining characteristic of this era. Although the specifics of humanistic inclinations varied among cultures, they typically shared common concerns and attributes. Neoclassicism, at its core, involves a revival of the classical patterns, literary techniques, and values of ancient Greek and Roman authors, making neoclassicists akin to heirs of Renaissance humanism. The term "humanism" transcends social and political boundaries and has been widely utilized. Generally, it promotes a set of values and a worldview centered more on humanity than divinity, embracing a coherent understanding of human nature and placing greater emphasis on actions and possibilities over religious debates and doctrines.

The Renaissance brought about profound transformations, notably in the realms of economics and politics, which challenged the established institutions of the later Middle Ages.

These changes eroded the foundations of feudalism, the unquestioned authority of the pope, the Holy Roman Empire, and the medieval guild-based commercial system. The rise of new urban centers such as Florence, Milan, Venice, and Rome, renowned for their wealth and cultural vibrancy, led to a gradual shift of economic activity away from the feudal lords' manorial estates.

This transition was facilitated by substantial investments of capital, the growth of manufacturing, and the expansion of trade and commerce. Crucially, the Renaissance played a pivotal role in shaping our modern conception of the state, influencing its social, theological, and literary currents. Florence, Milan, and Venice—three of the most influential Italian states at the time—rejected the idea of the state serving as a place of worship and emphasised its independence and secular nature. The pursuit of the nation's political and economic interests as a standalone objective was also encouraged, along with a new "civic consciousness" concerning civic responsibility. Instead of being solely based on military strength and service or inherited rank, the humanist values of rhetorical ability, literary accomplishment, and various forms of administrative and ideological service to the court were becoming more and more significant in determining status and social advancement. The sphere of official patronage grew, and royal politics became inescapably entwined with the fortunes of great literary luminaries. Most of the poets of this time were politically engaged and played a significant role in the development of the "public sphere," the setting for public discourse that emerged in the later Renaissance.

The writings of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other humanists played a crucial role in challenging the supremacy of Latin as the dominant language in academic discourse and literature. They advocated for the modification of grammar and composition rules to accommodate vernacular tongues, thus establishing a framework and techniques for analyzing literature from both classical and popular traditions. Humanists emphasized the moral significance of rhetoric and poetry, as well as worldly accomplishments, thereby overturning academia's previous disdain for these subjects. Humanism experienced a resurgence across various regions of Europe, with figures like the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus gaining widespread recognition for their works, which opposed dogmatic theology and scholasticism, advocating instead for a straightforward, devout religion based on Christ's teachings and humanistic principles of reason, naturalism, tolerance, and the inherent goodness of individuals.

Humanists generally rejected scholastic philosophy due to its emphasis on logic, theology, and its Aristotelian foundation. Poets such as Sidney and Milton argued for the elevation of poetry above prose languages like philosophy and history, drawing on Plato's style to support

their views. Humanists focused on the formal aspects of language, the cultivation of eloquence, and the moral effects of discourse, looking to classical rhetoricians for guidance and advocating for the revival of Platonism and other ancient ideologies. Prominent philosophers like Pico Della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, who were members of the Platonic Academy at Florence, exerted significant influence during this period as Neo-Platonists. Sir Francis Bacon, a leading English philosopher, made groundbreaking contributions to philosophy through works like Novum Organon and The Advancement of Learning. Bacon pioneered empiricism in Britain, promoting the use of the inductive method and direct observation over reliance on deductive reasoning, authority, and faith.

The Protestant Reformation, which erupted in 1517, marked a significant and widespread shift in the Christian world during the early modern era. This movement led to a major division, with much of Northern Europe breaking away from Roman Catholicism and the authority of the pope. Concurrently, the Catholic Reformation, also known as the Counter-Reformation, gained momentum in the mid-16th century, signifying a notable departure from medieval Catholicism. These reformations represented a substantial departure from medieval institutions and thinking, surpassing many of the changes brought about by other humanist currents. In 1517, Martin Luther sparked the Reformation by publishing his 95 theses opposing indulgences, which he famously nailed to the door of the Wittenberg church. Luther advocated for the German princes to reform the Church independently of the pope, challenging doctrines such as the Catholic view of the Eucharist and the supremacy of the Church over the state.

At the core of Luther's beliefs was the doctrine of "justification by faith," which emphasized salvation through faith alone, not through good works. Luther stressed the importance of personal conscience and the direct relationship between individuals and God, free from the mediation of priests, saints, relics, or pilgrimages. Due to his views being deemed heretical, Luther was excommunicated in 1521. His ideas sparked a series of revolts, including the Peasants' Revolt of 1524–1525 in Germany. Meanwhile, figures like Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin played significant roles in the Protestant revolution in Switzerland. Calvin staunchly upheld the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, asserting that God had predetermined the salvation of his elect while consigning others to damnation.

Catholic doctrines underwent a significant redefinition during the Council of Trent (1545–1563), convened by Pope Paul III, which addressed various issues independently of the Protestant Reformation. The Council affirmed several claims made by Protestants, including the

necessity of good works for salvation, the sacraments as the means of receiving divine grace, papal supremacy, and the equality of the Bible and apostolic teachings. The Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534, played a crucial role in the Catholic Reformation through its efforts in education, seminaries, and missionary work. The Jesuits significantly contributed to the revitalization of Catholicism. Furthermore, the Protestant Reformation not only led to theological changes but also had broader social impacts. It promoted individualism, nationalism, and the legitimacy of bourgeois thought and behavior. Moreover, it facilitated wider access to higher education for the general public. Principles such as self-control, hard work, and intellectual achievement, shared by both Protestantism and humanism, intersected and mutually reinforced each other during this period.

The foundation of contemporary literary criticism and the concept of criticism as an independent field can be traced back to the early modern era, much like many of our existing institutions. The rise of humanist culture and national identity was greatly aided by the emergence of independent states and a growing liberal bourgeoisie. Unlike classical literature, modern literary works and criticism often mirror civic values, national identity, and a keen sense of historical context. The widespread adoption of printing during the Renaissance fundamentally altered the landscape of reading, allowing for the editing of ancient texts and vastly expanding the readership base. Renaissance literary criticism brought about fresh perspectives on language, departing from the scholastic allegorical structure to view language as dynamic and subject to historical evolution, as observed by Glyn P. Norton. This shift necessitated new approaches to reading and interpretation, as well as an awareness of the social context shaping literary critique.

Although Renaissance literary criticism may appear hesitant and occasionally frustrating, it provides valuable insights into the broader literary culture of the time. Key texts such as Sir

Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* and Joachim DuBellay's *La Défense et illustration de la langue française* shed light on the literary programs of their respective eras. However, these texts are often influenced by polemical agendas and lack universal applicability. Commentary on ancient authors and Renaissance writers primarily takes the form of humanist annotated editions, focusing on philological and antiquarian interests. Despite reverence for classics, coherent interpretations remain scarce. Responses to English popular plays, now considered esteemed Renaissance literature, were inadequate in their contemporary context, reflecting a lack of appreciation for these works. The origins of literary criticism in England can be attributed to various factors, including changes in education, the pursuit of accessible public education, the

expansion of the literary market, and the influence of poets as public figures. Renaissance critics frequently defended poetry and literature against accusations of immorality and frivolity, highlighting their social relevance and reliance on rhetorical devices.

A significant portion of Renaissance criticism aimed to reconcile classical treatises like Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. These discussions focused on truth-value, mimicry, the instructional role of literature, the use of vernacular language, the definition of poetic genres, and the role of rhyme in poetry, reflecting the evolving understanding of literary artistry during the period.

Check your progress:

1. The Protestant Reformation, which erupted in 1517, marked a significant and widespread shift in the Christian world during the early modern era. (True/False)
2. Renaissance criticism aimed to reconcile classical treatises like Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. (True/False)

5.2.2 Neoclassical Criticism

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, literary works flourished with a diverse array of themes, often incorporating fantastical and mythological elements. Esteemed authors such as Dante Alighieri, Ludovico Ariosto, Sir Thomas More, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton crafted intricate narratives that transported readers to fantastical realms inhabited by mythical creatures, blending elements of reality with imaginative fiction. These authors drew upon rich cultural traditions and folklore to create captivating stories that resonated with audiences of their time. The inclusion of weird and mythological creatures in medieval and Renaissance literature served various purposes. These creatures often symbolized abstract concepts, moral virtues, or vices, adding layers of meaning and allegory to the narrative. For example, the infernal creatures encountered by Dante in his *Divine Comedy* represent various sins and punishments, serving as moral lessons for the reader. Similarly, the fantastical creatures found in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* embody abstract virtues and vices, contributing to the allegorical nature of the poem.

Defense of the romance genre, which often featured fantastical elements, was articulated by writers such as Giovanni Battista Giraldi, who argued for the literary merit and entertainment value of incorporating imaginative elements into literature. These defenses emphasized the importance of literature as a means of storytelling and entertainment, challenging the notion that

literature should adhere strictly to realistic portrayals of the world. In contrast to the idealistic and romantic tendencies of medieval and Renaissance literature, the neoclassical movement represented a shift towards rationality, order, and restraint in literary expression. Neoclassical authors, influenced by classical ideals and the writings of ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Horace, sought to emulate the clarity, balance, and harmony of classical literature.

Neoclassical literary criticism emphasized the importance of adherence to established rules and principles, valuing craftsmanship and precision over novelty and individual creativity. Neoclassical authors viewed literary creation as a disciplined process, governed by strict guidelines and standards inherited from classical antiquity. They upheld the distinction between poetry and prose, adhering to the hierarchy of genres and often privileging epic poetry over other forms. The preferred poetic forms of neoclassicism, such as the alexandrine in France and the heroic couplet in England, reflected the movement's commitment to order and symmetry. These forms provided a structured framework for expressing neoclassical ideals of clarity, balance, and harmony in literature. In philosophical terms, neoclassicism grappled with the complexities of human nature and reason. While influenced by Enlightenment principles and the rationalism of thinkers like René Descartes, neoclassical thought often exhibited a conservative outlook, looking to the past for guidance and stability. Neoclassical authors believed in the rationality of literary composition and the existence of universal truths, viewing literature as a rational and orderly pursuit grounded in timeless principles.

In summary, neoclassicism represented a synthesis of classical ideals with Enlightenment rationalism, tempered by a conservative respect for tradition and order. It sought to establish a rational and orderly approach to literature, drawing on the wisdom of the past while engaging with the intellectual currents of its time.

Neoclassicism's general trend towards clarity, order, and uniformity was evident in attempts to control language usage and word meanings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Neoclassical poetry, which was frequently discursive and argumentative and sought to avoid ambiguity, was influenced by this ideal of clarity, which saw language as the visible manifestation of the operations of reason. Theorists have offered a variety of explanations for this movement towards clarity, including the emergence of bourgeois hegemony, a reaction to the Renaissance's overabundance of vocabulary and meanings, and a shift away from medieval allegorical thought towards an attempt at literalization of language.

It is also obvious that there were significant changes in the conditions under which literature and criticism were produced as a result of Europe's general transition from a feudal to an absolutist state. According to academics like Robert Matz, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an increase in the division of these domains of power, which had previously been combined under the control of the feudal lord. The artist was given more freedom to express themselves, which had profound literary and literary-critical ramifications. These cultural changes, which had a humanist façade, were linked not just to the rise of the bourgeoisie but also to the aristocracy's metamorphosis from a "military elite into a civil elite."

The Renaissance and the neoclassical age share resemblances in their approach to literary and artistic traditions, particularly in their reverence for past works as models for present achievements. However, neoclassicism is often characterized by more stringent attitudes, both in literary expression and social demeanor. It embodies a balance between enthusiasm and practical wisdom, a preference for tried-and-tested methods, and a gentlemanly sense of propriety and equilibrium. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly in France, these principles dominated literary criticism. Figures such as Pierre Corneille and Nicolas Boileau advocated for strict adherence to established norms, emphasizing the importance of craftsmanship and rejecting the notion that artistic brilliance exempted one from following established standards. They championed the ideals of decorum, balance, and unity, regarding deviation from these principles as a descent into barbarism.

However, in England, the influence of neoclassicism was somewhat tempered by the lingering aversion to secular art, a legacy of English Puritanism. English authors, more attuned to popular tastes than their courtly French counterparts, found themselves grappling with the example set by Shakespeare, whose genius often defied conventional rules. Consequently, neoclassicism had a less pronounced impact in England compared to France. Even prominent classicists like Ben Jonson couldn't dispute Shakespeare's magnificence, acknowledging his exceptional talent despite any perceived technical flaws. Influential British critics such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson celebrated Shakespeare's genius, emphasizing the universal appeal of his works. In England, neoclassical concepts underwent modifications influenced by scientific and philosophical developments. Newton's physics and Locke's psychology prompted adjustments to neoclassical principles, introducing new perspectives on nature and human behavior. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711), while echoing Horatian principles,

also hinted at divergent literary interpretations of nature, reflecting evolving philosophical currents.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, another influential figure, promoted morality and "mediocrity," advocating for qualities that were broadly shared rather than exceptional. He expressed frustration with complex literary traditions such as the pastoral elegy, preferring direct sincerity over-elaborate conventions. In summary, while neoclassicism shared certain ideals with the Renaissance, it also exhibited distinct characteristics shaped by its historical and cultural context. Despite its influence, neoclassicism encountered resistance in certain cultural milieus, leading to diverse interpretations and adaptations across different regions and periods.

The decline in popularity of Neoclassicism over time can be attributed to significant changes in artistic, political, and intellectual spheres spanning two centuries. As the 18th century unfolded, the emergence of the novel as a prominent literary genre captured the attention of a growing bourgeoisie audience, whose interests diverged from the aristocratic ideals upheld by neoclassicism. This shift marked a departure from the Neoclassical emphasis on proportion and moderation, as a new focus on subjective emotional experiences, influenced by Longinian aesthetics, began to take hold across various European nations.

In this evolving literary landscape, the subjective states of both readers and authors gained precedence over rigid adherence to predetermined criteria. Nationalism also emerged as a key factor in literary criticism, prompting scholars to examine the origins and development of their own local literary traditions while appreciating non-Aristotelian elements such as the "spirit of the age." Within the realm of literary theory, diverse perspectives coexisted, with some asserting that turbulent or "barbarous" times were conducive to poetic inspiration. This diversity of thought led to the emergence of various literary tastes, characterized by an increasing appreciation for unconventional themes such as foggy sublimity, macabre atmospheres, medievalism, Norse epics (including forgeries), and Eastern narratives.

Prior to the 19th century, influential neoclassical critics included notable figures such as Denis Diderot in France and Gotthold Lessing, Johann von Herder, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller in Germany. These critics engaged in speculative and innovative research, seeking to uncover extraliterary influences that shaped the literary sensibilities of their era. Overall, the decline of Neoclassicism paralleled broader cultural shifts and evolving literary tastes, as writers and intellectuals embraced new forms of expression and explored diverse thematic concerns reflective of changing societal norms and values.

Check your progress:

1. Neoclassicism represented a synthesis of classical ideals with Enlightenment rationalism, tempered by a conservative respect for tradition and order. (True/False)
2. Neoclassical authors, influenced by classical ideals and the writings of ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Horace, sought to emulate the clarity, balance, and harmony of classical literature. (True/False)

5.2.3 Characteristics, Sydney and Dryden

Critiques from the Renaissance and Neoclassical periods reflect their respective intellectual and cultural eras. As critics, Sydney and Dryden contributed to their respective periods.

Renaissance Criticism: Writers like Sir Philip Sidney emphasized the replication and resuscitation of classical literary principles within modern circumstances, and they held great regard for classical writings, particularly those written by Aristotle and Horace. It was believed that literature was a moral force that could help readers grow and learn in accordance with humanist principles. Opponents promoted coherent storylines, coherence of action, time, and location, and the decorum principle, which aims to fit style to substance and audience. Sidney argues that poetry serves both as a form of instruction and pleasure, refuting claims that it is frivolous and immoral. He supports both creative adaptation and classical models, emphasizing poetry's capacity to imaginatively communicate moral truths beyond intellectual debate.

Neoclassical Criticism: In contrast to the alleged excesses of the Renaissance and Baroque styles, this era prized logic, order, and clarity. John Dryden and other neoclassical critics rigorously followed classical principles, such as the unities of time, place, and action, believing that literary excellence could only be attained by imitating ancient models. Their goal was to promote moral and social ideals by using established conventions to illustrate universal truths and human experiences. In his critical writings, Dryden argues in favor of a flexible strategy that honors traditional conventions while modifying them to suit new preferences, so defending modern English theater. While acknowledging the validity of the unities, he is in favor of the dramatic freedoms that enrich contemporary theater.

Sidney exemplifies Renaissance criticism by championing poetry's moral and imaginative power, while Dryden represents Neoclassical criticism by balancing respect for classical rules

with adaptation to evolving literary forms. Both highlight the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in literary criticism.

5.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

During the Renaissance period, critics engaged with a wide array of sources beyond literary texts to inform their analyses. These included theological disputes, numerological pamphlets, manuals on courtly behavior, rhetorical guides, and mythographic treatises. By drawing insights from such diverse sources, critics aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intentions and context behind contemporary works. A significant focus of religious controversy during this period revolved around the precise linguistic status of the Eucharistic host, leading to intense debates on issues such as idolatry and sacramentality. These debates, often ferocious and technical, not only shaped religious discourse but also contributed to the development of vocabulary in modern semiotics. Additionally, they provided valuable insights into the historical context and origins of modern questions.

In contemporary literary criticism, scholars have sought to build upon the foundation laid by Renaissance critics, particularly in analyzing seminal works of Renaissance culture. Frances Yates, for example, dedicated her scholarly endeavors to exploring Renaissance cultural works, notably Shakespearean plays, within a broader intellectual framework that incorporated Neoplatonic philosophy, esoteric knowledge, scientific thought, and magic. Even skeptics of Yates' interpretations acknowledge the profound impact of Neoplatonic ideas on Renaissance imagination, particularly in emphasizing the boundless potential of the human mind. References to poets as divine creators, crafting worlds beyond nature, reflect a Romantic faith in the power of poetic invention and intuition. However, these Neoplatonic allusions in Renaissance literary criticism often prove intricate and intertwined with other motives, requiring careful analysis and interpretation.

Viewed as a distinct body of texts, Renaissance criticism emerges as a less developed but independent project within the broader history of literary criticism as an intellectual discipline. In sixteenth-century Italy, there was a growing interest in literary history, leading to the codification and dissemination of knowledge and fostering a tradition of commentary and debate on literary theory themes. This intellectual endeavor builds upon earlier attempts to categorize literary discourse within medieval arts frameworks and aligns with the humanist revival of classical rhetoric. Key texts such as Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Aristotle's *Poetics* exerted significant

influence, shaping the intellectual framework for Renaissance literary criticism. Despite efforts at harmonization, Renaissance criticism remains marked by unresolved conflicts and combative scholarly discourse. Even Aristotle's authority faces challenges within this dynamic intellectual landscape, contributing to a history characterized by ongoing debate and contention over fundamental questions of literary theory and interpretation.

5.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to know about the origin of literary criticism, trace the development of Renaissance and Neoclassical criticism, review varied critique and philosophers based on the themes, techniques, and diction of their works.

5.4 Glossary

Carolingian: A dynasty related to a Frankish dynasty. It was founded by Charlemagne's father, Pepin III.

Reformation: An action or a process of reforming an institution or practice.

Utilitarianism: Theory that refers to the suggested activities that maximize well-being and happiness for all affected persons

Semiotics: Semiotics is the methodical examination of sign processes. It encompasses any action, behaviour, or procedure involving signs, with a sign being broadly defined as anything conveying a message or meaning to its interpreter.

Barbaric: It means extreme cruelty or brutality.

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Poetic diction was taken to be the standard language for poetry in _____.
    a) The Neo-classical Age
    b) The Victorian Age
    c) The Elizabethan Age
    d) The Romantic Age

2. Which of the following critics preferred Shakespeare's comedies to his tragedies?
    a) Pope
    b) Dryden
    c) Dr. Johnson
    d) None
3. Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* is addressed to:
    a) Queen Elizabeth I
    b) King James I
    c) King Henry V
    d) Galileo
4. Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote _____ dictionary.
    a) Webster's Dictionary
    b) The Oxford English Dictionary
    c) Dictionary of the English Language
    d) The American Standard Dictionary
5. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon encourages _____ as a way of knowing about the universe.
    a) Science
    b) Philosophy
    c) Mathematics
    d) Astronomy

Answer Key: 1. (a) 2. (c) 3. (b) 4. (c) 5. (a)

6. The Protestant Reformation, which erupted in 1517, marked a significant and widespread shift in the Christian world during the early modern era. (**True**/False)
7. Renaissance criticism aimed to reconcile classical treatises like Aristotle's Poetics and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. (**True**/False)
8. Neoclassicism represented a synthesis of classical ideals with Enlightenment rationalism, tempered by a conservative respect for tradition and order. (**True**/False)
9. Neoclassical authors, influenced by classical ideals and the writings of ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Horace, sought to emulate the clarity, balance, and harmony of classical literature. (**True**/False)

10. Texts such as Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Aristotle's *Poetics* exerted significant influence, shaping the intellectual framework for Renaissance literary criticism. (**True**/False)

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How do poetry and Renaissance literature relate to one another?
2. How can one define Sir Francis Bacon as a Renaissance man?
3. What made John Dryden, according to Dr. Johnson, "the father of English Criticism"?
4. What motivated neoclassical authors to support traditionalism?
5. Why is John Dryden's work considered "Neoclassical"?

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. In his essay *Defence of Poesy*, Philip Sidney extols poetry. How does he justify this?
2. What fundamental parallels and contrasts exist between classical and neoclassical thought?
3. Discuss renaissance and neoclassical criticism.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Blamires, H. *A History of Literary Criticism*. Macmillan, London, 1991.

Bressler, C. E. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Prentice-Hall Inc, Englewood Cliffs, 2007.

Habib, M. A. R. *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Highet, G. *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976.

Unit-6: Sir Philip Sidney: Excerpt from *An Apology for Poetry*

Structure

6.0 Introduction

Sir Philip Sidney is an important writer in the Renaissance period of English literature. He wrote poetry and critical essays. His contribution as a literary critic becomes evident in *An Apology for Poetry*. In fact, with him, literary criticism is introduced into English literature. Sidney derived his models of literary criticism from classical Greek and Roman masters, particularly Plato and Aristotle. He explains the argument raised by Plato in *The Republic* and the way it was refuted by Aristotle in *Poetics*. He configures his understanding of poetry based on their notions. He not only uses their understanding of poetry but reconciles their differing viewpoints in his definition of poetry. The essay, therefore, is important for two reasons: First, it balances these two contradictory takes on poetry. Second, he provides a fresh perspective for looking at poetry in English literary criticism.

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- illustrate the significance of Sir Philip Sidney's essay *An Apology for Poetry*
- explain Sidney's reception of literary criticism from Plato and Aristotle
- help in understanding the development of literary criticism in English
- help you understand the role played by Sidney in literary criticism in English

6.2 Sir Philip Sidney: Excerpt from *An Apology for Poetry*

6.2.1 Background to *An Apology for Poetry*

Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* marks the development of literary criticism in English literature. It was composed in the late 16th century. Written between 1579 and 1581, the essay was not published during Sidney's lifetime but circulated in manuscript form. It was eventually published posthumously in 1595. Sidney's defense is a response to Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse*, a work that criticized poetry and the stage. In this context, Sidney sought to vindicate poetry as a noble and valuable art form. His "Defence" is not a systematic treatise but rather a passionate and eloquent articulation of the poet's role in society.

6.2.2 Different Titles of the Essay

This essay was published with two different titles and with minor differences in other titles. The multiple titles associated with Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*, contribute to its significance, reflecting the evolving perceptions of the work and its broader implications. The title, *A Defence of Poetry*, underscores the central concern in the essay. It indicates its defense of poetry against contemporary criticism. Sidney aims to assert the value and legitimacy of poetry as a noble art form with moral and educational significance. The directness of this title highlights the essay's polemical nature, addressing the need to counter prevailing negative views on poetry. The other title, *An Apology for Poetry*, does not imply an admission of fault; rather, it is used in its archaic sense, meaning a defense or justification. This title emphasizes Sidney's intent to apologize for poetry, defending it against attacks and asserting its merits. It conveys a sense of urgency in responding to the criticism directed at poetry during the Renaissance. The title, *A Defence of Poesy*, using the variant spelling of "poesy" instead of "poetry", reflects the linguistic

nuances of the time. This title hints at the aesthetic appeal of the essay suggesting Sidney's alignment with the poetic tradition. "Poesy" carries a more archaic and artistic connotation, emphasizing the creative and imaginative aspects of poetry that Sidney seeks to celebrate. The use of the definite article "the" in *The Defence of Poesie*, imparts a sense of authority and universality to Sidney's defense. It suggests that this is not merely a defense but "the" defense – a comprehensive and definitive argument in favor of poetry. The singular form also reinforces the essay's status as a singular, influential contribution to the discourse on literature.

These titles collectively reveal the nuanced nature of Sidney's work. They showcase the various facets of his defense, from responding to specific criticisms to asserting the broader significance of poetry. Each title offers a different entry point into understanding the purpose of Sidney's essay, allowing readers to approach it from diverse perspectives. The varied titles also reflect the evolving literary and linguistic conventions of Sidney's time, adding layers of historical and linguistic significance to the work.

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote *A Defence of Poetry?*

   _____

2. Mention the alternate titles used for *An Apology for Poetry.*

   _____

6.2.3 The Art of Poetry and Other Subjects

An Apology for Poetry begins with a reference to an occasion when Philip Sydney and Edward Wotton were in the Emperor's court. There they came across John Pietro Pugliano who was an esquire in the stable. Pugliano was filled with praises for his profession and people with such talent. Sidney shows his wit and humour by hinting at the convincing power of Pugliano who would "have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse." He then shifts to his own role as a poet and attempts to "make a pitiful defence of poor poetry."

The first argument that he raises is that it is very ungrateful to all those people who are engaged in learning and remain hostile to poetry. Sidney argues that poetry in the "noblest nations and languages ...hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk ...enabled them to feed afterward of tougher knowledge." He emphasizes that all knowledge and disciplines have initially originated from poetry. From ancient Greece, Musaeus, Homer, Hesiod, to Orpheus, Linus, and others, from Livius Andronicus and Ennius in Rome, Dante,

Boccaccio, and Petrarch in Italy, to Gower and Chaucer in English, all shared the same skills of poetry. But with time, the sweetness of poetry was overshadowed by an admiration of knowledge.

According to Sidney, poetry was intrinsic to all other knowledge. The philosophers presented themselves to the world "under the masks of poets." He gives examples of Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides who presented "their natural philosophy in verse", Pythagoras and Phocylides framed their moral counsels in verse, Tyrtaeus inscribes war matters, and Solon policy matters in poetry. Plato continued the legacy of Solon and though his works were philosophical, they had the skin and beauty of poetry. For philosophers and historiographer the entry into popularity was found through poetry.

Sidney attempts to unearth the meaning of the word *poet*. In the Roman language, poet is called a *vates* meaning "a diviner, foreseer, or prophet." In this light, David's *Psalms* are but poetry, they are prophetic and poetical. In the Greek language, they call him a poet, which has been used in other languages. It is derived from the Greek word "poiein" meaning "to make." English retains the same meaning, calling him a maker, a creator. The argument in the essay then shifts to the fact that no work can exist without nature as its principal object. Astronomers, geometricians, mathematicians, lawyers, grammarians, logicians, and physicians all deal with one thing nature in some form or the other. They remain tied to the real, the natural, the obvious, the factual. However, only poets can take the liberty of deviating from the natural, setting themselves free of such subjection. With this advantage, poets can project "things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies" and others. Poets make use of their wit, intelligence, and imagination along with the gifts of nature.

Check your progress:

1. How does the essay *A Defence of Poetry* begin?

   _____

2. Why does Sidney consider the people who criticize poetry as ungrateful?

   _____

6.2.4 The Role of Poet and Poetry

The essay enters into an antiquarian debate that exists between Plato and Aristotle. Sidney refers to the Platonic concept of "original idea." Plato criticized poetry as an inferior form of art because it is imitative and it "feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up." He

also asserts that poetry gives nothing substantial in the socio-cultural and educational sphere. Poetry contaminates the mind of the audience, which fails to differentiate between the real world and the imaginary world presented in poetry. Therefore, he advocated that poets should be banished from his ideal state. Aristotle, on the other hand, hailed poetry as a superior form of art as it gets closer to reality without claiming that it is true. It creates and suggests the possible and probable. He believes that poetry exists in the realm of aesthetics for the audience and the readers.

Sidney tries to balance these contradictory points of view. He defines: "Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight." In his objective and function of poetry, Sidney conforms to the ideals of Horace who emphasized its purpose is to "instruct and delight."

Further in the essay, Sidney illustrates three types of imitative poetry. The first are those that imitate the excellency of God. This can be seen in David's *Psalms*, *Songs* of Solomon, and *Hymns* of Moses and Deborah. The second are those that deal with philosophical matters involving morals, nature, astronomy, history, and others. The third is the category that imitates "teach and delight". This category includes poetry like heroic, tragic, lyric, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and others. However, Sidney opines that verse is mere ornament but not essential for poetry. .

Of particular importance is the third type of poetry. Such poetry helps in "enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit", thus enhancing learning. The ultimate objective of such poetry is to "draw us to as high a perfection." The aim of the poet should be to broaden, enlarge, and expand the scope of human knowledge and intellect. In this way, poetry helps the audience uplift from the physical confinement of the body to enjoy their divine presence. Therefore, a poet becomes worthy among all competitors by realizing "virtuous action" as the ultimate end of all learning.

Sidney then describes that moralists, historians, and philosophers all engage in the dissemination of knowledge but they tend to remain limited in their approach and effect. A moralist tries to develop judgments based on the idea of vices and virtues. The problem with the historian is that he indulges only in records, factual details, and histories. He reflects merely on what has happened in the past. The philosopher explains things by giving examples. On the other hand, a poet combines "the general notion with a particular example." A poet makes use of facts

and facts, combines the moral lesson with the narrative, and makes it easy for the audience to understand. Without making use of the complicated language of philosophy, a poet can illustrate the idea and concepts. Sidney then refers to Aristotle in claiming that poetry is more philosophical than history. Though the historian uses imagination to refer to "images of true matters," it remains relevant to particular matters, whereas poetry extends to universal themes. A historian may merely explain through examples, but a poet "with his imitation makes his own, beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting." A poet, thus, surpasses historian and philosopher because he blends facts, morals, and imagination.

The essay shifts its focus to the role of the poet. Plato banished poets from his ideal state because he believed that poetry corrupts the audience. However, Sidney shifts the criticism from poetry to a poet. Poetry as an imitative art is not inferior, nor is its approach, inclination, or impact adversely. It is a poet who sometimes misuses or abuses the art of poetry, bringing criticism to the art itself, than to a poet. Sidney declares that a poet is a monarch among all sciences because of the way a poet introduces its audience to the prospect of its content. A poet can delight the mind more effectively than any other art. In his discussion ahead, Sidney explains various kinds of poetry that have developed with time like tragical, comical, tragic-comical, pastoral poems, elegiac, and lyric.

Check your progress:

1. What are Sidney's views on Plato's criticism of poetry?

_____

2. What are the three kinds of poetry discussed by Sidney?

_____

6.2.5 The Defense of Poetry

The essay extends its defense of poetry. Sidney addresses the objections made against the art of poetry. First, he mentions the "poet-haters" who want to seek praise for themselves by criticizing others. They just "confute others' knowledge before they confirm their own." Second, poetry is often criticized because of its rhyme and verse form. To this, Sidney clarifies that versification and rhyming alone do not make poetry. Poetry can exist without rhyme and verse. Third, it is believed that poetry is only suitable for music. To this, Sidney explains that poetry helps in the retention of knowledge through memory. Memory can retain those words that can be remembered and thus help a person to carry forward that knowledge. So the art of memory is

best practiced through poetry. Thus, poetry can act as a medium for explaining and remembering "logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest." He sums up the charges thus:

> First, that there being many other more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them than in this. / Secondly, that it is the mother of lies. / Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies…/ And, lastly and chiefly, they cry out with an open mouth,…that Plato banished them out of his Commonwealth.

In the subsequent paragraphs, Sidney conveys his defense. He says that as far as learning is concerned, nothing else can teach better about virtue than poetry. In the second charge, he confronts that poets are the least liars of all, as a poet never claims that he is stating the truth. As poetry is written allegorically and figuratively, it makes no claim to truth. Not being true does not make it false. "Their naming of men is but to make their picture more lively, and not to build history." To the third charge, Sidney asserts: "Not say poetry abuseth man's wit, but man's wit abuseth poetry." Poetry in its proper intention cannot contaminate man's mind. Instead, they are the bad intentions of man which are used in poetry to contaminate the audience. So that "poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused…can do more hurt than any other army of words." Poetry in itself does not pollute its audience. To the fourth charge that Plato banished poets, Sidney explains, "Plato found fault that the poets of his times filled the world with wrong opinions of the gods" and this would have depraved the youth. So when he banished poets, he wanted to "drive out those wrong opinions of the Deity."

Check your progress:

1. What are the various charges made against poetry?

   _____

2. How does Sidney contend with the notion that poetry is an "art of lies"?

   _____

6.2.6 The Development of Poetry in England

Sidney traces the development of poetry in England. He refers to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as an excellent piece of work for its times. *The Shepheardes Calender* has beautiful portions of poetry. However, *Gorboduc* seems to lag as a perfect model of tragedy because of the

lack of unity of time and place. He also criticizes comedy in that it tries to strike laughter through sinful things. On the contrary, he believes that delight in comedy can be created even without laughter by making use of wit and ideas. He talks of the advantage that English as a language has in poetry. While other languages sometimes fail in rhyme, English has this advantage in versification.

Sidney praises poetry for its ability to uplift and inspire, arguing that poetry has a moral and educative function. He contends that poetry is not merely an indulgence in fancy but a powerful tool for moral instruction and the cultivation of virtue. The essay also reflects Renaissance humanism, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various forms of knowledge and the importance of literature in shaping a well-rounded individual. The work is structured as a dialogue, with Sidney exploring the virtues of poetry through the voices of various interlocutors. He defends poetry's ability to stimulate the imagination, arguing that it enables readers to envision better worlds and ideals. Sidney's eloquence in depicting the imaginative power of poetry has contributed to the enduring appeal of his "Defence." Additionally, Sidney touches upon the idea of poetic inspiration, drawing on classical and Renaissance notions of the poet as a *vatic* figure. He discusses the concept of "phrenesis," an inspired madness that drives poets to create profound and meaningful works. This aspect of his argument adds a mystical and almost divine dimension to the poet's craft. Thus, the charges against poetry not only appear futile but also pointless. Poetry transcends time and place. It helps with learning. As a medium, it helps in propagating even other subjects. As a form, it helps in embodying human emotions and experiences. As a tool, it helps in teaching moral lessons, philosophizing about abstract concepts, and connecting to historical events.

Check your progress:

1. Name the literary works mentioned by Sidney.

   _____

2. Why is poetry important as a medium for Sidney?

   _____

6.2.7 Sidney's Contribution to the Development of Literary Criticism

Sidney's primary concern was to elevate the status of poetry in the face of emerging challenges from puritans and critics who dismissed it as frivolous. In *An Apology for Poetry*, he defends poetry by asserting its moral and educational value. Sidney contends that poetry, far

from being a corrupting influence, serves as a powerful medium for moral instruction, providing readers with examples of virtue and vice. One of Sidney's notable contributions lies in his formulation of the concept of "poetic imitation." He argued that poets, by drawing inspiration from nature, imitate the ideal forms found in the works of God. This idea reflects his belief in the harmonious relationship between art and nature, influencing subsequent literary critics and theorists.

Furthermore, Sidney's emphasis on the didactic function of poetry aligns with Renaissance humanism. He believed that literature should not only entertain but also instruct, guiding readers toward a virtuous life, an idea derived from Horace's *Ars Poetica*. This perspective mirrors the Renaissance fascination with classical learning and the belief in the transformative power of art and education. In terms of style, Sidney's writings exhibit eloquence and rhetorical brilliance, characteristic of the Renaissance period. His commitment to the ideals of beauty, truth, and virtue in literature echoes the broader cultural and intellectual milieu of the time.

Sidney's impact on English literary criticism is enduring. His defense of poetry as a noble art form provided a foundation for subsequent generations of poets and critics. The concept of "poetic imitation" influenced later discussions on creativity and originality, leaving an indelible mark on the evolution of literary thought. Sidney's contributions to Renaissance literary criticism and English literature are substantial and multifaceted. His defense of poetry, advocacy for moral instruction through literature, and conceptualization of poetic imitation have left an indelible mark on the trajectory of literary history and criticism.

Check your progress:

1. Sidney's emphasis on the _____ function of poetry aligns with Renaissance humanism.
2. What is Sidney's idea of poetic imitation?

_____

6.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to know about the contribution made by Philip Sidney to English literary criticism. You should know the background to Sidney's essay and his views on Plato and Aristotle.

6.4 Glossary

Mimesis: It means imitation. Plato criticized mimetic or imitative forms of art, claiming they are inferior. Aristotle defended it by stating that it exists in the realm of aesthetics. Sidney balances both viewpoints and declares that poetry does not lie as it does not claim truth or fact.

Poetry: In Sidney's essay, poetry extends to include many literary genres, particularly drama and verse. He talks of tragedy, comedy, pastorals, elegy, and lyrics.

Poet: The term used for a poet in Roman is *vates* which means prophet. In English, the term poet has been derived from Greek *poietes*, which means to make. Sidney refers to the meaning of both the terms in describing the role of the poet.

Renaissance Literary Criticism: This literary criticism was a product of the interaction of many continental currents in English. English was in its formative stage. Therefore, it derives its models of criticism from classical philosophers from ancient Greece and Rome.

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* was eventually published posthumously in _____ . (**1595**)
2. Sidney's defense is a response to Stephen Gosson's _____ , a work that criticized poetry and the stage. (***The School of Abuse***)
3. *An Apology for Poetry* begins with a reference to an occasion when Philip Sydney and _____ were in the Emperor's court. (**Edward Wotton**)
4. According to Sidney, poetry was intrinsic to all other knowledge. (**True**/False)
5. Sidney illustrates _____ types of imitative poetry.
    a. **three**
    b. two
    c. one
    d. none
6. Sidney explains that poetry helps in the retention of knowledge through memory. (**True**/False)

7. According to Sidney, poetry is an art of ‘imitation' and its chief function is to _____ and _____ . (**teach, delight**)
8. Poet is the monarch of all sciences, and Poetry is superior to philosophy and history. (**True**/False)
9. Three things are necessary for producing good poetry:
    a. Art
    b. Imitation
    c. Exercise
    d. **All of the above**
10. Stephen Gosson makes four charges against poetry. (**True**/False)
    a. Poetry is a waste of time.
    b. Poetry is the mother of lies.
    c. It is a nurse of abuse.
    d. Plato had rightly banished the poets from his ideal world

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are Sidney's views on Plato's criticism of poetry?
2. What are the three kinds of poetry discussed by Sidney?
3. What is Sidney's idea of poetic imitation?
4. Why does Sidney consider the people who criticize poetry as ungrateful?
5. According to Sidney, how is a poet better than a philosopher and a historian?

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the role of Philip Sidney in the development of literary criticism in English.
2. What are the various charges on poetry by Stephen Gosson and how Sidney refuted them?
3. Explain the role of poets in the art of poetic creation, with reference to *An Apology for Poetry*.

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. UBSPD, 2003.

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature.* 4 volumes. Allied, 1979.

Peck, John, and Martin Coyle. *A Brief History of English Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1994.

Sidney, Philip. *An Apology for Poetry. English Critical Texts: 16th to 20th Century*. Edited by D. J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera, Oxford University Press, 1962.

Unit-7: John Dryden: Excerpt from *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

Structure

7.0 Introduction

English critics before Dryden contended themselves with setting models of Greek and Roman literature before English writers exhorting them to emulate the Ancients. John Dryden was the first to open a new field of comparative criticism. He was proud of the quality of English writers and English critics before Dryden contended themselves with setting models of Greek and Roman, holding them to be superior to the Ancients in some respects. His famous statement: "It is not enough to say that Aristotle had said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides and, if he had seen ours, he might have changed his mind." John Dryden was a revolutionary in the 17th century and believed that literature was an organic force which developed with the development of a nation. *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* contains his views on literary forms. This work has an important place in the history of English literary criticism.

The basic objective of this work, in the words of Dryden, is "to vindicate the honor of (our) English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them." John Dryden was a pioneer voice of English literary criticism because his contemporary and a

renowned critic, Dr. Samuel Johnson praises him as " the father of English criticism." He also declares that English prose starts with Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. John Dryden was a versatile writer as he wrote epics, poetry and plays. The substantial contribution of John Dryden later influenced the critics like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot etc. Dryden is popularly known for his works, such as *All for Love*, *Mac Flecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Aurangzeb* etc.

The critics in England flourished during the reign of the Stuarts. The text *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* deals with the views of major critics and their taste of contemporary time. The work is in the form of semi-drama and making abstract theories concrete. In the 17th century, in the literary world, Shakespeare was often criticized for his careless approach towards genre mixing, but John Dryden was the first man who justified the literary merits of Shakespeare. John Dryden elevated Shakespeare to his true height. The essay is written in the form of a debate among four friends whose real names have been masked. The participants in the debate are as follows:

1. Eugenius: Charles Sackville, Lord Bucharest, to whom the essay is dedicated.
2. Crites: Sir Robert Howard. (in defense of the Ancients)
3. Lisideius: Sir Charles Sedley. (in defense of the French)
4. Neander: John Dryden. (in defense of the English - Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Fletcher)

Before the actual debate among the friends takes off, each of the four participants comments on the bad state of contemporary dramatic poetry. Three of them persuade Lisideius to defend a play, which should serve as the basis for the debate.

7.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as to:

- acquaint you with literary criticism in the Age of Dryden
- explore the merits and demerits of Dryden as a critic
- comprehend the literary views of participants in the debate
- establish the literary value of the essay entitled as *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

7.2 John Dryden: Excerpt from *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

7.2.1 Arguments of Crites

The discussion of four friends begins with the definition of a play as 'a just lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humors and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and intrusion of mankind.' After this definition, it was agreed that everyone would defend the drama of a particular period. Crites begins his defense of Ancient Greek and Romans saying that though the English may feel they are equal and superior to the Ancients in some respects, the Greeks and Romans have been the models for literature in the world. No literature of any territory can surpass the Ancients. He further says in his defense of the Ancients, the entire Europe imitated the Ancients for two centuries because none other had written like them. He gives the example of some ancient writers, such as Homer, Seneca, Sophocles and Euripides. He blames England for the production of poor quality literature, and their biased approach towards the Ancients.

Crites further substantiates his argument, saying that the Ancients greatly emphasized the application of the unity of time, place and action. They produced plays embodying the natural environment. The unities of time and place were considered subservient to the unity of action. In the conclusion of his argument, Crites challenges the contemporary European literary corpus for not equaling Sophocles, Euripides and Seneca in tragedy and Aristophanes, Plautus in comedy. The production of contemporary European plays clearly defines huge differences between them and the Ancients. Crites concludes that imitating the Ancients is a virtue and slander or malice against them is an admission of imperfection.

Thus, Crites opens up the debate and presents his views in defense of ancient literature and writers.

7.2.2 Arguments of Eugenius

Eugenius i.e. Charles Sackville begins his defense in favor of contemporary English drama. Eugenius admits that the English have been imitators and admirers of the Ancients. But, mere imitation is detrimental to the very identity of English art. He argued that the English have imitated nature faithfully and represented reality. Hence, it is not wrong to consider the English as better than the Ancients. Eugenius precedes his argument by saying that the Ancients were unaware of the division of a play into act. One could know the acts in Greek plays from the

Stasimons-Choric songs at the end of each episode. This was difficult because the chorus could be more than five times. The chorus did not have a fixed number of songs, hence, it is difficult to categorize their plays into divisions and acts. Eugenuis laid emphasis on the demerits of ancient plays by exploring the merits of contemporary English plays.

Eugenuis continues his argument by expressing the demerits of the Ancients, saying that stories of Ancient plots were very familiar and common, such as Thebes, or Troy. The elements of surprise and suspense were totally lacking in their plots. In addition to their tragedies, their comedies were also stereotypical, depicting the stories of a little girl stolen or wandering away from her parents and finally through some box she carried with her while running away or being stolen, becoming the cause of reunion. They observed the three unities through artificial improvisations. Eugenuis presented a very novel opinion that neither Aristotle nor Horace insisted on adopting the three unities. The unity of action was all important for the Ancients. The plays of the Ancients often maintained the continuity of scenes i.e. relation between one and the other. The basic elements of a play such as plot, character and other meets failure due to the mismanagement.

The English writers could handle multiple forms of literature, like tragedy, comedy and others, at one time. The Ancients lacked this quality and we do not find a single classical writer who had handled both tragedy and comedy. The great ancient writers Plautus, and Terence wrote only comedies, while Sophocles and Euripides wrote only tragedies. Hence, it is proved that the ancient writers lack the versatility of genre that is strongly embedded in the English writers. Eugenuis considered Ovid as a superior writer than Seneca because the genius of Ovid shines out. Eugenuis criticizes the Ancients and their tragedies for the excessive emphasis on lust, cruelty, revenge, than on love. They shocked their audience rather than soothing them. Tenderness was largely absent, though in comedies a scene or two of tenderness did appear.

7.2.3 Arguments of Lisideius

After the discussion of Crites and Eugenius, Lisideius takes his turn to defend his arguments and views about the superiority of French plays and how these plays are becoming models of English man. A point that has to be noted is that all the four men explore and defend different writers. There is a strong disagreement amongst them about the literary merits. Lisideius begins his argument saying that in contemporary Europe French writers are producing quality plays than English. He concedes that forty years ago, the English were better than the

French because Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont and Fletcher were at their best. After Cardinal Richlieu came to hold the authority of France, writers like Corneille came to the fore. Lisideius claims that the French writers observe the three unities closely and their plots are well organized. French writers did not complicate the plot as English writers did in most of their plays. The use and experiment of subplot by the English often disrupts the main plot because, in the fourth or fifth act of a play, the plots are fused. The experiment of tragic-comedy by the English is not appreciated.

In the construction of plot, the French writers are far better than the Ancients. The French writers never mixed tragedy with comedy and they assigned the roles of characters as central and subservient. The French, like the Ancients, made a messenger do the job of narration, and made the narrator a character that was in some way involved in the main design. Unlike the contemporary English writers, French writers avoid tumult or melodrama. Lisideius feels the presentation of a person's death on stage is ridiculous; instead, it should be left to the narrator to describe it for a deeper impression.

Lisideius further argues that no play ends with a conversation, since it is an imitation of an action. Every character must make an appearance in scenes only when his appearances have a purpose. It is absurd that an actor leaves the stage because he has nothing to say. In conclusion of his argument for the French, he appreciates the use of rhyme in French plays to blank verse in English plays. Thus, Lisideius makes his attempt to defend the superiority of French plays. He criticizes the Ancients and the English for lacking merit.

7.2.4 Arguments of Neander

After the argument of Crites, Eugenius and Lisideuis, Neander is the last to defend his side. He begins his argument by agreeing with Lisideius in respect to plot construction, observance of laws and decorum on the stage. He strongly condemns the argument that the plays of Ben Jonson and Fletcher are less superior to Corneille. Neander pointed out to Lisideius that after the death of Cardinal Richelieu, the French had begun to imitate English plays. Neander expresses disagreement with Lisideius by defending the intermingling of tragic and comic, but disapproves in a manner some English writers did. He supported his argument by saying that gravity in tragedy needs to be relieved with a refinement of a lighter mood. The variety of English plays is lacking in the French plays. Neander also approved that subplot in English plays because the subplot is different from the main plot.

In defense of English comedies, Neander argues that the sullen nature of the British favoured comedies, while the happy temperament of the French welcomed tragedies. He asserts that wit has a tradition in English comedy. He defends the love of tumult or melodrama on the stage as a custom or tradition or a natural trait of Englishmen. He expresses the credibility of English plays saying that this credibility clearly lacks in the plays of Corneille. He further added, if Lisideuis finds fault with too much action on the stage in English plays, the French plays suffered from less of it. The adherence to the three unities in French plays was criticized by Neander as reflecting the dearth of plot and narrowness of imagination. Neander considers English plots full of variety and promises to the other participants of the debate that he will examine Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman* for the exploration of its imitation of French plays and at the same time surpassing it.

Check your progress:

1. The great ancient writers Plautus, and Terence wrote only comedies, while Sophocles and Euripides wrote only tragedies. (True/False)
2. After the argument of Crites, Eugenius and Lisideuis, Neander is the last to defend his side. (True/False)

7.2.5 Views on Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher

Neander argues that William Shakespeare is the greatest soul among the Ancients and the English. He drew his images from nature and so described them that he made the reader not only visualize but also feel the pictures and objects. Neander expresses the greatness of Shakespeare saying that he was a naturally born genius and needed no education to prove his scholarship. He considers Beaumont and Fletcher superior to Shakespeare and Jonson in respect of wit as a natural gift. Their serious plays possessed pathos to a high degree and the comedies gaiety. Moreover, Ben Jonson's wit falls short of theirs and Shakespeare's language is a little absolute. Neander praises Ben Jonson, considering him as the most learned and judicious of all dramatists of his time. He was a severe judge of himself and of others as well. While comparing Jonson with Shakespeare, Neander argues that Shakespeare was a more correct poet and a greater wit. He considers Shakespeare the Homer of England and Jonson the Virgil.

7.2.6 Examination of Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman*

Neander examines *The Silent Woman,* saying that the plot of the text is compact and three unities are observed. There is a unity of action. The intrigues are natural, as they appear in comedies. The characters are many and they are represented with their humors. The play has plenty of wit and acuteness of fancy. Though the plot is an elaborate but easy to grasp. Ben Jonson adopts the method of describing characters before they appear on the stage which in a comedy is more appealing since we have longing expectations of the characters and when they actually take the stage we feel acquainted with them.

Neander defends the use of rhyme and says that it is not unnatural if only the dramatist handle it with special care. Dr. Samuel Johnson for the exceptional contribution of John Dryden, considers him as the father of English criticism.

7.2.7 Critical Gist of the Essay

John Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* explicitly states at the beginning that the aim of this essay is to have our English writers to stay away from those who prefer French over English. The essay is a debate on the use of rhyme in drama that took place originally between Sir Robert Howard and John Dryden. However, the discussion and debate revolves between four friends i.e. Crites, Lisideuis, Eugenuis and Neander. The debate begins with the superiority between the ancients and moderns. The neoclassical believes that modern society has corrupted man. The moderns, on the other hand, break away from the traditional chain, adopting the new rules of life and literary taste. The essay shows a shift in the definition of drama from classical to modern with Lisideuis. On the other hand, Crites believed in drama inaugurated by Aristotle and the Greeks. Neander i.e. John Dryden himself defended the merits of English writers such as Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Ben Jonson. Every participant in the debate and discussion tries his best to explore his stand that how the literary merits he is expressing are different from others and exceptional. The arguments of John Dryden are more appropriate and close to the words, as he provides ample examples in favor of English writers and literary merits. The best part of the essay is that this is a first scientific attempt in such a place where four literary men come together to discuss the literary merits and shortcomings. Further, it is also an attempt by these four men to consolidate the exceptional qualities of their favorite writers, era, genre and counter. Crites express his views in a scientific way to explore and explain the significance of ancients.The construction of plot, use of subjects, stage and all literary devices of ancient Greeks were praised by him. Similarly, Eugeneius and Lisideuis present their views by providing ample references

where they showed their favorite literature as great and superior. The dominance of every critic is determined by some lack of knowledge and awareness because they were unknown about the present state of world literature. Neander, who stands for John Dryden presents his views in defense of English literature and he provides enormous points to consolidate his argument. He elaborates the significant contribution of British men towards literature and literary values. His argument seems more scientific, accurate and valid. Thus, this essay is a debate of four friends discussing the merits of literature and literary value. It stands as a milestone in the life of John Dryden as a critic.

7.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to explore criticism in the Age of Dryden, recognize the arguments in favor of Ancients, Moderns, French and British, comprehend the literary value of the present text, and understand the universal literary value of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

7.4 Glossary

Eugenius – Charles Sackville, Lord Bucharest
Crites – Sir Robert Howard
Lisideuis – Sir Charles Sedley
Neander – John Dryden, the author of the present essay
Malice – A biased, prejudiced views for someone
Imitation – Following the essence of something as it is.
Soothe – Making Simplify
Francis Beaumont – Elizabethan Dramatist
John Fletcher – Elizabethan Dramatist
Ben Jonson – A prominent literary figure of Elizabethan age
Criticism – Scientific Analysis

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Who is disguised as Neander in the present essay?
   a. John Webster
   b. **John Dryden**
   c. Ben Jonson
   d. John Marriet
2. Who argues in favor of French literary merits?
   a. Crites
   b. Eugenius
   c. Neander
   d. **Lisideuis**
3. Who among the following explores the credibility of the Ancients?
   a. Lisideuis
   b. Neander
   c. **Crites**
   d. Eugenuis
4. The present text *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* was written in _____.
   a. 1660
   b. **1668**
   c. 1670
   d. 1669
5. Who explores the literary merits of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson?
   a. Crites
   b. **Neander**
   c. Lisideuis
   d. Eugenuis
6. John Dryden regarded William Shakespeare as ' the largest and the most ……
   a. **Comprehensive**
   b. Genuine
   c. Original

d. Talented

7. "If I would compare Ben Jonson with Shakespeare…" who expressed this remark ?
   a. **Neander**
   b. Lisideuis
   c. Crites
   d. Eugeneuis
8. Which observance is praised by Crites in drama?
   a. Stage
   b. Three Unities
   c. Plot
   d. Setting
9. The present essay highlights the literary approaches such as mimetic, objective, affective and _____.
   a. Creative
   b. Thematic
   c. **Expressive**
   d. Speculative
10. Eugenieus cites many places where classical plays violate_____.
   a. Setting
   b. Plot
   c. Three unities
   d. Themes

7.5.2 Answer Type Questions:

1. Who speaks on the limitations of classical plays?
2. Who praises the poetical talent of Ben Jonson?
3. Who appreciates the creative talent of contemporary British writers?
4. Who begins the argument in the present essay?
5. Who examines Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman*?

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the arguments of Neander in detail.
2. Critically appreciate the argument of Crites.
3. Illustrate the significance of the essay from the perspective of criticism.

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Hooker, J.A. *The Works of John Dryden*. The University of California Press, 1956.

Kingsley, J and Kingsley. H. *Dryden the Critical Heritage*. 1987.

Paul, Ramsey. *The Art of John Dryden*. The University of Kentucky Press, 1969.

Ward, E.E. *The Life of John Dryden*. The University of North Carolina, 1961.

Winn, J.A. *John Dryden and His World*. Yale University Press, 1987.

Unit-8: Samuel Johnson: Excerpt from *Preface to Shakespeare*

Structure

8.0 Introduction

Samuel Johnson, an 18th century English writer, lexicographer, and critic, made substantial contributions to literary criticism, particularly within the context of neoclassical criticism. Neoclassicism sought inspiration from classical Greek and Roman literature, emphasizing order, reason, and restraint. Johnson's critical works, notably his *Preface to Shakespeare* and *The Lives of the Poets*, exhibit his nuanced understanding of literature and have a significant influence on the development of English literary criticism.

Johnson was born on September 18, 1709, in Lichfield, Staffordshire, England. He emerged as a towering intellectual and literary giant of the 18th century, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural and literary landscape of his time. His early life was marked by financial hardship and health issues. He suffered from scrofula, which left him with visible scars, and he faced economic difficulties throughout his youth. Despite these challenges, his insatiable thirst for knowledge and his innate literary talents shone through.

In 1728, Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford, but his time at the university was cut short due to financial constraints, and he had to leave without completing his degree. His departure from Oxford marked the beginning of a period of struggle and uncertainty. He worked as a teacher, tried his hand at various forms of writing, and even spent time as a freelance writer in London.

Johnson's breakthrough came in 1747 with the publication of *A Dictionary of the English Language*. This monumental work was a pioneering effort in lexicography, providing not only definitions but also etymological and historical information about words. The dictionary was widely praised for its comprehensive scope and linguistic rigor, and it secured Johnson's reputation as a leading scholar and man of letters.

In addition to his lexicographical pursuits, Johnson was a prolific essayist. He contributed essays to several periodicals, most notably *The Rambler* and *The Idler*. In these essays, he tackled a wide array of subjects, including morality, politics, literature, and human nature. Johnson's essays showcased his erudition, wit, and moral sensibilities, earning him recognition as a literary critic of great insight.

Another significant work by Johnson was his satirical novel, *Rasselas*, published in 1759. The novel explored themes of human happiness and the quest for a meaningful life and was widely read and discussed in its time. He also wrote a play, *Irene*. One of Johnson's most enduring literary achievements is *The Lives of the English Poets*, a collection of biographical and critical essays on major English poets. Published between 1779 and 1781, these biographies provided valuable insights into the lives and works of poets such as Milton, Dryden, and Pope. Johnson's critiques were known for their candor and depth of analysis, making them essential reading for generations of scholars. But it is his *Preface to Shakespeare* which has endured as a major factor in understanding Shakespeare beyond the Elizabethan Age, and making him relevant to future generations.

Samuel Johnson was a central figure in the intellectual and literary circles of 18th century London. He hosted a renowned social gathering known as "Johnson's Club" or "The Club," which brought together leading intellectuals, including James Boswell, Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, and Oliver Goldsmith. His life and work exemplify the intellectual and literary vibrancy of the 18th century. He passed away on December 13, 1784, leaving a lasting legacy as a lexicographer, essayist, critic, and influential figure in the Age of Enlightenment. His contributions to English literature and language continue to be celebrated and studied.

8.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- illustrate the significance of Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*
- explain Johnson's reception of literary criticism from Plato and Aristotle
- understand the development of literary criticism in English
- examine the role played by Johnson in literary criticism in English

8.2 Samuel Johnson: Excerpt from *Preface to Shakespeare*

8.2.1 Background to *Preface to Shakespeare*

Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* is a seminal work that reflects both the literary landscape of the 18th century and Johnson's profound insights into the works of William Shakespeare. Published in 1765 as the preface to his edition of Shakespeare's plays, Johnson's *Preface* serves as a comprehensive exploration of Shakespeare's genius and the challenges faced in editing his works during that time.

The 18th century was marked by a shift in literary taste and criticism. Neoclassicism, with its emphasis on reason, order, and adherence to classical models, was a dominant force. Johnson, a towering figure of this period, approached Shakespeare's plays with a critical eye shaped by these neoclassical ideals. He sought to reconcile the apparent irregularities and inconsistencies in Shakespeare's writing with the neoclassical standards, often defending the bard against perceived shortcomings.

One key aspect of Johnson's background influencing his preface was the state of Shakespearean editing at the time. The plays had been subjected to numerous alterations, interpolations, and corruptions over the centuries, leading to a lack of standardized texts. Johnson undertook the monumental task of providing a meticulously edited version, striving to present Shakespeare's works in a form as close to the author's intentions as possible.

In his *Preface*, Johnson addresses the criticism that Shakespeare's plays lack adherence to classical rules. He acknowledges the deviations but argues that Shakespeare's genius transcends these constraints, asserting, "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life."

Johnson's *Preface* also delves into Shakespeare's character delineation, praising the depth and authenticity of the bard's portrayals. He contends that Shakespeare's characters are not bound by rigid moral distinctions, embodying the complexities of human nature. Johnson states, "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion."

Furthermore, Johnson grapples with the issue of Shakespeare's supposed lack of decorum in language and representation. While acknowledging instances of coarseness, he defends Shakespeare's choice of expression as true to life, stating: "His drama is the mirror of life, but distorted with exaggeration." This reflects Johnson's belief that Shakespeare's language authentically mirrors the diversity of human expression.

Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* serves as a pivotal text in the history of literary criticism. Rooted in the neoclassical ideals of the 18th century, Johnson's background as a scholar, lexicographer, and critic greatly influenced his approach to Shakespeare. His *Preface* not only provided a meticulous edition of the plays but also defended and celebrated Shakespeare's unique genius, leaving an indelible mark on the appreciation and interpretation of the bard's works for generations to come.

Check your progress:

1. What does the title, *Preface to Shakespeare* indicate?

   _____

2. When was the *Preface* published?

   _____

3. Mention two works by Dr Samuel Johnson.

   _____

8.2.2 Renaissance Drama and Neoclassical Criticism

During the Renaissance period, spanning from the 14th to the 17th century, dramatic literature underwent a remarkable transformation across Europe. This era witnessed a revival of interest in classical Greek and Roman texts, sparking a renaissance (meaning "rebirth") of intellectual and artistic endeavors. The development of drama during this time was marked by several key features.

Firstly, the Renaissance saw a shift from the religious and morality plays of the medieval era to a more secular and humanistic approach. Playwrights like William Shakespeare in England

and Molière in France began exploring complex human emotions and relationships, departing from the strictly moralistic themes of earlier works.

Furthermore, the Renaissance embraced a renewed appreciation for classical ideals, particularly those found in Aristotle's "Poetics." Aristotle's principles, which included the unity of time, place, and action, influenced the structure of many Renaissance plays. This was, however, tempered by the concept of "verisimilitude," or the imitation of life, which became a guiding principle in crafting realistic and believable characters and situations. Shakespeare, for instance, masterfully blended tragic and comic elements within the same play, showcasing a nuanced understanding of human nature. His works, such as *Hamlet* and *Othello*, are prime examples of the complexity and psychological depth that Renaissance drama achieved.

However, the Neoclassical period that followed, roughly from the late 17th to the 18th century, brought with it a shift in dramatic tastes and a resurgence of classical principles. Neoclassical critics, heavily influenced by Aristotle's principles, sought to impose order and restraint on dramatic works, in strict adherence to "the Ancients."

One prominent Neoclassical critic was the French playwright and philosopher Jean Racine. In his dramatic theory, Racine advocated an adherence to the "three unities" — unity of time, place, and action. This strict adherence aimed to create a more focused and controlled theatrical experience, emphasizing rationality and moral instruction.

The Neoclassical critics, including Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux and André Dacier, championed clarity, decorum, and didacticism in drama. They believed that plays should teach moral lessons and follow established conventions, dismissing the sprawling, multi-plot narratives characteristic of many Renaissance works.

This led to a divergence in dramatic styles, with Neoclassical tragedies favoring nobility and purity of language, often exploring the consequences of violating moral codes. On the other hand, comedies tended to uphold social order through humor, steering away from the irreverent and chaotic elements often present in Renaissance comedies.

The development of drama in the Renaissance period had witnessed a departure from medieval conventions, embracing secularism, humanism, and a revival of classical principles. The Neoclassical criticism that followed, while acknowledging the achievements of the Renaissance, sought to impose stricter rules and moralistic frameworks on dramatic works. This tension between creative freedom and classical restraint marked a dynamic period in the evolution of dramatic literature.

Check your progress

1. Name two Renaissance writers.

   _____

2. Name the major Neoclassical critics.

   _____

8.2.3 The Role of Shakespeare in the Development of English Drama

In the *Preface*, Johnson offers a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare's works, examining their thematic depth, linguistic brilliance, and enduring impact on the theatrical landscape. According to Johnson, Shakespeare is a towering figure in English literature, shaping the course of drama with his unparalleled creativity. Johnson emphasizes Shakespeare's ability to capture the essence of human nature in all its complexities. The Bard's, i.e, Shakespeare's keen insight into the human psyche, reflected in characters like Hamlet and Macbeth, elevated English drama to new heights.

One of Shakespeare's distinctive contributions lies in his language mastery. Johnson marvels at the richness of Shakespeare's vocabulary, the beauty of his verse, and the inventiveness of his expressions. The playwright's linguistic prowess, as highlighted by Johnson, not only captivated audiences but also enriched the English language itself. Shakespeare's words became a source of inspiration for generations of writers and contributed significantly to the evolution of the English language.

Moreover, Johnson explores Shakespeare's versatility in encompassing various genres and themes. From tragedies to comedies, historical plays to romances, Shakespeare demonstrated a remarkable range that showcased the diversity of human experience. This versatility, according to Johnson, broadened the scope of English drama, setting a precedent for future playwrights to experiment with different forms and genres.

Johnson also acknowledges the universality of Shakespeare's themes. The timeless nature of the issues explored in his plays, such as love, power, jealousy, and betrayal, ensures their relevance across centuries and cultures. Shakespeare's exploration of the human condition transcends temporal and spatial boundaries, making his works accessible and resonant to diverse audiences.

Furthermore, Johnson discusses the impact of Shakespeare's characters on the theatrical tradition. The playwright's ability to craft complex, multi-dimensional characters challenged the

conventions of his time. Characters like Othello and Iago, with their psychological depth, paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of human behavior in drama.

Thus, Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* highlights the indelible mark left by William Shakespeare on the development of English drama. Through his profound insights into human nature, linguistic brilliance, thematic diversity, and timeless appeal, Shakespeare revolutionized the theatrical landscape. Johnson's analysis serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Bard, whose contributions continue to shape literature and drama to this day.

Check your progress:

1. What type of plays did Shakespeare write?

_____

2. Mention two issues presented in Shakespeare's plays.

_____

8.2.4 Features of the Plays of Shakespeare

Shakespeare had to be defended against charges of being an upstart, a nobody and a ignoramus who wrote plays without understanding any rules. It was Johnson whose defence preserved Shakespeare for future generations. So much so that Shakespearean theatre is a genre in itself, with distinct features.

Shakespeare's plays are renowned for their complex characters endowed with rich psychological depth. Characters like Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello are examples of individuals grappling with inner conflicts, moral dilemmas, and the complexities of human nature. Shakespeare goes deep into the psyche of his characters, exploring their motivations, fears, desires, and vulnerabilities. His use of soliloquies, dialogues, and actions, make these devices instruments to unveil the intricate layers of human consciousness, inviting audiences to empathize with the characters' struggles and dilemmas.

Shakespeare's plays tackle universal themes that transcend time, culture, and societal norms.Themes such as love, jealousy, ambition, betrayal, power, and the human condition resonate with audiences across generations.The exploration of these themes allows Shakespeare's works to maintain their relevance and appeal centuries after they were penned. Whether set in ancient Rome, medieval Scotland, or Renaissance Italy, the themes explored in Shakespeare's plays remain pertinent to contemporary society, reflecting the enduring complexities of the human experience. His comedies explored the rules of society and also established some mores

of compatibility and romance in marriage alliances, which were mostly social contracts for the rich and politically active families.

Shakespeare's mastery of language and poetry is unparalleled, elevating his plays to the realm of literary artistry.His use of iambic pentameter, metaphors, imagery, and rhetorical devices enhances the beauty and lyricism of his blank verse.Shakespeare's plays are filled with memorable lines, quotable passages, and poetic flourishes that enriched a newly formed national language, giving it a vast vocabulary and a context that covered the expanding horizons of the known world. The richness and versatility of Shakespeare's language contribute to the immersive experience of his plays, drawing audiences into the intricacies of his narratives and characters..

In addition, Shakespeare employs a variety of structural and dramatic techniques to engage and entertain his audience. His plays often feature intricate plot lines, subplots, foreshadowing, dramatic irony, and symbolism, adding layers of depth and complexity to the narrative. Shakespeare skillfully weaves together multiple story-lines and thematic elements, creating a cohesive and compelling dramatic tapestry.The use of dramatic techniques such as asides, dramatic monologues, and dramatic irony enhances the theatricality of his plays, heightening tension and suspense.

Shakespeare's plays serve as a mirror to human nature and society, offering profound insights into the complexities of human relationships, politics, and social dynamics. Through his characters and narratives, Shakespeare explores the intricacies of love, friendship, loyalty, betrayal, and power dynamics. His plays deal with the flaws and virtues of human nature, exposing the depths of human ambition, greed, and folly. Shakespeare's plays also reflect the social and political realities of his time, addressing issues of class, gender, race, and justice that continue to resonate in contemporary discourse.

Central to Shakespearean drama are the intricate dynamics and relationships between characters. From romantic entanglements to familial conflicts and political alliances, Shakespeare intricately portrays the complexities of human relationships. The interactions between characters drive the plot forward, revealing their intentions, conflicts, and transformations. Shakespeare's portrayal of friendships, rivalries, and betrayals adds depth and nuance to his characters, underscoring the interplay of love, ambition, and power in human relationships.

Like a philosopher, Shakespeare grapples with the age-old debate between fate and free will in many of his plays. Characters often find themselves torn between the dictates of destiny

and the exercise of personal agency. Through tragic heroes like Hamlet and Macbeth, Shakespeare explores the consequences of choices and actions, highlighting the tension between fate and individual responsibility. The exploration of fate and free will adds a philosophical dimension to Shakespeare's plays, prompting audiences to ponder the nature of existence and the human quest for meaning.

Shakespeare's neglect of classical rules of drama was held against him, but his plays made him immensely popular as they connected with the people at the particular time. This popularity was not a shallow diversion but has stood the test of time.Shakespeare's plays are characterized by their complex characters, universal themes, poetic language, structural complexity, exploration of human nature and society, dynamic character dynamics and relationships, and philosophical inquiries into fate and free will. Through his timeless works, Shakespeare continues to captivate and inspire audiences, inviting them to explore the depths of the human experience and the mysteries of the human soul. This is in no small amount due to the *Preface* and Johnson's endorsement of Shakespeare.

Check your progress

1. What are the main features of Shakespearean drama?

_____

2. How does Shakespeare deal with history and folklore?

_____

8.2.5 Merits of Shakespeare as a Dramatist

In the *Preface to Shakespeare,* Samuel Johnson discusses the profound impact and enduring merit of William Shakespeare as a dramatist. Johnson engages in a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare's works, expounding upon the playwright's remarkable qualities and contributions to the world of literature. One of Johnson's primary commendations is Shakespeare's ability to capture the intricacies of human nature. Johnson notes that Shakespeare's characters are not merely archetypes but dynamic representations of the diverse facets of humanity. He writes, "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion."

Johnson emphasizes the universality of Shakespeare's themes, asserting that they resonate across time and culture. He states: "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general

passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion."

Furthermore, Johnson lauds Shakespeare's linguistic prowess, highlighting the playwright's ability to convey profound truths with eloquence and grace. He remarks, "Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind, exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination."

Johnson states that Shakespeare was aware of the taste of his audience. Thus, the enduring greatness of literary works lies in his "just representation of general nature, not merely in fanciful inventions." Furthermore, Johnson says, "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, a poet of nature," creates characters that are universal, representing common humanity transcending specific places or times. His characters are not exaggerated; they act and speak in ways relatable to the reader's own experiences. He says, "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men," his characters are individually distinct yet universally delineated, each dialogue arising organically from the incidents that provoke them.Critics who object to Shakespeare's portrayal of Romans or kings miss the point; he focuses on the human element within these roles. He points out that Shakespeare's portrayal of love differs from other dramatists. Instead of overemphasizing love as the universal agent, he recognizes it as one passion among many, acknowledging its impact depends on moderation or lack thereof.

Shakespeare's blending of tragedy and comedy is defended by Johnson, who argues that life itself is an ebb and flow of sorrow and happiness. Such intermingling is closer to reality, and the rules of dramatic writing should yield to the higher court of appeal—nature.Shakespeare's mingling of tragic and comic elements enhances the intensity of passions and provides a richer, more varied experience. Johnson mentions, "Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either, tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind." Attempts to rigidly classify his plays as strictly tragedy or comedy are deemed artificial, as these distinctions were less defined in his time. Shakespeare wrote in harmony with his natural disposition, excelling in comedy due to its spontaneity and originality drawn from common life.

Johnson thus emphasizes that the key to Shakespeare's enduring appeal lies in his profound understanding of general human nature, skilful portrayal of characters, and his ability

to capture the authentic interplay of life's complexities. Johnson also addresses the charge that Shakespeare's works lack moral purpose. He defends Shakespeare against such criticism, arguing that the playwright's insights into human nature inherently carry moral weight. Johnson contends, "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the delight which a play gives arises principally from the reflection that it may please, may instruct, and that neither pleasantry nor instruction will much prevail, when a play is neither understood nor heard."

Moreover, Johnson acknowledges Shakespeare's skill in transcending the limitations of time and place. He observes, "The ignorance of the ancient state of learning was so general in this century that Middleton in the 'Mayor of Queenborough' introduced Dr. Pinch as a teacher of Latin." This acknowledgment underscores Shakespeare's ability to create enduring works that resonate with audiences regardless of their historical or cultural context. Johnson's analysis covers Shakespeare's profound understanding of human nature, universal themes, linguistic brilliance, and ability to transcend temporal and cultural boundaries.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two charges made against Shakespearean drama.

   _____

2. Does Johnson defend Shakespeare against these charges?
3.

8.2.6 Demerits of Shakespeare as a Dramatist

Johnson's *Preface*, while acknowledging Shakespeare's towering presence in the literary world, critiques his weaknesses as a dramatist. One significant criticism is the carelessness in plot development. Shakespeare's plots are loosely knit, and some receive less attention, resulting in improbable or imperfect conclusions. There's a tendency to choose an easy path over putting in the effort required for a more robust narrative.

Anachronism, the disregard for historical accuracy, is another fault. Shakespeare blends manners and opinions from different ages or nations, affecting the credibility of his incidents. This is viewed as a flaw, despite arguments attributing it to later interpolations. For Johnson, "Shakespeare was not only a violator of chronology, Sidney also belonged to the same category."

Johnson criticizes Shakespeare's disregard for the "decorum" of time and place, asserting that the Bard's plays often transcend the confines of historical or geographical accuracy. In defence, Johnson notes, "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the

poet of Nature." While praising Shakespeare's ability to capture the essence of human nature, Johnson subtly points to a deficiency in adhering to conventional dramatic conventions.

Thus, Johnson takes up Shakespeare's disregard for the "Unities," a set of classical rules dictating the structure of plays. Johnson concedes that Shakespeare's plays often lack adherence to these rules, resulting in a perceived lack of coherence. He contends, "Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident" — a subtle acknowledgment of the irregularities in plot construction in contrast to classical norms.

Nevertheless, he defends Shakespeare in this. He argues that in history plays, consistency and spontaneity of characterization matter more than strict adherence to these rules. While some argue that maintaining these unities is essential for credibility, Johnson dismisses this view as "stupid," asserting that audiences are well aware they are watching a play on a stage, not actual events in real locations.Johnson says, "The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers, whereas the composition of Shakespeare is a forest." The audience's acceptance of scenic changes and the passage of time in drama is compared to the way readers acknowledge these elements in narrative poems. The dramatic illusion doesn't require belief in the reality of events but, serves to bring life's realities to the audience's mind, enhancing the pleasure of tragedy.

While comedy may be more effective when seen on stage, tragedy is often more stirring when read. The possible ignorance of Shakespeare regarding these rules is acknowledged, but whether he deliberately rejected them or violated them unknowingly remains unclear. Regardless, Johnson views such deviations as in keeping with Shakespeare's comprehensive genius, dismissing objections as the concerns of petty-minded critics. Johnson agrees with Dryden that "Shakespeare was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poet, had the largest and most comprehensive soul."

Finally, Johnson argues that while the unities of time and place can add to the totality of a play, sacrificing them for the sake of variety and instruction is not harmful. He suggests a fresh examination of the principles governing drama, emphasizing the importance of copying nature and instructing life over rigid adherence to rules.

The *Preface* also touches upon Shakespeare's language and style. Johnson concedes, "Shakespeare is the first who, by the magic of his versification, has made scenes transition one into another." However, even in praising Shakespeare's poetic prowess, Johnson implies that the poet's mastery of language sometimes leads to a departure from the strictures of traditional

theatrical forms.The dialogues in comedies face objections due to indecency and coarseness. Characters engage in contests of wit with jests that lack refinement, blurring the distinction between refined and less sophisticated characters.Shakespeare's fondness for puns is a notable weakness. Regardless of the situation, he often incorporates puns, even at the cost of reason, propriety, and truth. This craze for wordplay, while fascinating to him, can detract from the overall quality of his plays. Moreover, in tragedies, Shakespeare's performances suffer when he exerts more effort. The undue verbosity and prolixity of words in narrative parts, along with flamboyant speeches and inflated vocabulary, can make the narration less engaging.

Furthermore, Johnson expresses reservations about the moral and ethical aspects of Shakespeare's works. He remarks, "Shakespeare is … the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life." While acknowledging Shakespeare's reflection of reality, Johnson subtly critiques the lack of moral didacticism in some of the plays. His primary shortcoming lies in prioritizing convenience over virtue, often favouring pleasing the audience rather than delivering moral instruction. Virtuous characters don't consistently disapprove of the wicked, and moral lessons seem incidental.

Despite these criticisms, Johnson recognizes Shakespeare's unparalleled ability to evoke a wide range of emotions. He declares: "He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." This acknowledgment encapsulates Johnson's view that Shakespeare prioritizes entertainment over moral lessons in his plays.

Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* encapsulates a complex evaluation of the Shakespeare's dramatic genius. While praising Shakespeare's naturalistic portrayal of human life and his mastery of language, Johnson critiques the departure from classical dramatic norms, ethical considerations, and adherence to decorum. The *Preface* remains a testament to Johnson's ability to balance admiration with constructive criticism in assessing the literary legacy of William Shakespeare.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two of Shakespeare's perceived faults.

   _____

2. Which defects does Johnson concede in Shakespeare?

   _____

8.2.7 Summary of *Preface to Shakespeare*

Johnson begins by acknowledging the challenges of critiquing Shakespeare, emphasizing the difficulty of analyzing a writer whose popularity is so widespread. He notes that Shakespeare's universality lies in his ability to capture the essence of human nature, making his characters and themes timeless. Johnson declares Shakespeare's preeminence, stating, "The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare."He compares Shakespeare to Homer in the sweep of his imagination and places him with the Ancients as he has transcended his age.

The *Preface* delves into the complexities of Shakespearean characters, praising their depth and authenticity. Johnson contends that Shakespeare's characters possess a lifelike quality, transcending the boundaries of conventional drama. He asserts, "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion."

Johnson examines Shakespeare's use of language, lauding the playwright's mastery of dialogue and expression. He comments on the versatility of Shakespeare's language, which effortlessly shifts between eloquence and colloquialism. Johnson highlights the beauty of Shakespearean verse, asserting, "The dialogue is one of the excellencies of 'Romeo and Juliet'; but this is not often the merit of the two lovers. The delight which the play gives has a thousand causes, and a thousand excellencies, but all of them concentrate on the character of Mercutio."

Addressing Shakespeare's deviations from classical norms, Johnson defends the playwright's use of poetic license. He argues that Shakespeare's departures from established rules are deliberate and contribute to the effectiveness of his works. Johnson asserts, "Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination."

The *Preface* delves into the question of Shakespeare's moral perspective, with Johnson acknowledging the occasional lack of moral clarity in the plays. However, he contends that the absence of didacticism is intentional, as Shakespeare aims to reflect the complexities of human morality. Johnson states, "Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles." In this way, Johnson attempts to silence the critics' quarrel

with the death of Cordelia in *King Lear,* which most found to be a structural and moral defect in the play. A happy end would not have served the reality.

Johnson explores the role of the audience in interpreting Shakespeare's works, asserting that the plays require active engagement and intellectual effort. He suggests that the audience should not merely be passive observers but should actively participate in deciphering the layers of meaning within the text. Johnson articulates, "A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it. ... His quibbles have sapped the foundation of his fortunes. He has laid up his laughter in ambush; he has made his jokes with little preparation, and without heed of the sound. But that to which he owes his excellence is his perpetual attention to the varied movements of the mind."

The *Preface* also addresses the issue of Shakespearean criticism, with Johnson cautioning against rigid adherence to rules in evaluating the plays. Johnson argues that Shakespeare possessed a natural genius for writing and did not rely on classical education or literary rules. He views Shakespeare as an original thinker who transcended the limitations of his time. Despite having "Little Latin and no Greek," as Ben Jonson spoke of his lack of pedigree, he had understood the histories, folklore and chronicles of England and used them to create imaginative narratives suitable to his time. He advocates for an appreciation of Shakespeare's creative freedom and the organic development of his art. Johnson contends, "To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them." Johnson also criticizes playwrights who imitate Shakespeare without understanding the depth of his originality. He believes that imitators often miss the subtlety and complexity of Shakespeare's works. Johnson recommends that Shakespeare's works should be subjected to careful critical analysis, but he also warns against excessive revision or adaptation of the plays, as this can detract from their authenticity.

Undoubtedly, Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* is a monumental work of literary criticism, showcasing his deep admiration for the Bard while providing a nuanced understanding of Shakespeare's creative choices. Johnson's insights into character, language, morality, and audience engagement contribute to a comprehensive appreciation of Shakespeare's enduring legacy. As Johnson aptly summarizes, "Shakespeare approaches to the nearest limits of human greatness; and a performance which can only be surpassed by an understanding like his." His

Preface places Shakespeare within the broader literary tradition of English literature, acknowledging his influence on subsequent generations of writers.

8.2.8 Contribution of Samuel Johnson to Literary Criticism

In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson engages in a comprehensive analysis of William Shakespeare's works, challenging the prevalent notion that Shakespeare's lack of adherence to neoclassical principles diminishes his literary merit. Johnson recognizes Shakespeare's irregularities and divergence from neoclassical norms but argues that these idiosyncrasies contribute to his unique genius. He praises Shakespeare's profound understanding of human nature and emphasizes the importance of adhering to the "unities" of time, place, and action while acknowledging Shakespeare's exceptional ability to transcend these constraints.

Johnson's emphasis on the moral purpose of literature aligns with neoclassical ideals. He contends that literature should impart moral instruction and present models of virtue, reflecting the neoclassical belief in the instructive function of art. In his evaluation of Shakespeare, Johnson acknowledges moral lapses but ultimately defends him, recognizing the broader moral lessons embedded in his works.

Furthermore, Johnson's *The Lives of the Poets* contributes significantly to neoclassical literary criticism by providing biographical sketches and critical assessments of various poets. These biographies, covering poets from the Elizabethan era to Johnson's contemporary period, offer insights into the historical and cultural contexts shaping literary production. Johnson's analysis incorporates moral considerations, evaluating each poet's contribution to society and their adherence to neoclassical principles.

Johnson's biographies reflect his neoclassical sensibilities as he assesses poets based on their ability to balance creativity with restraint. For instance, his evaluation of John Milton highlights the tension between Milton's sublime imagination and the neoclassical demand for order. Johnson's criticisms are often rooted in a desire for moderation, reflecting the neoclassical emphasis on avoiding extremes.

Moreover, Johnson contributes to neoclassical criticism through his meticulous attention to language and style. As a lexicographer, he possessed an unparalleled command of the English language, enabling him to scrutinize the stylistic choices of poets. Johnson's critical evaluations extend beyond content to encompass linguistic precision, reinforcing neoclassical ideals of clarity and elegance in expression.

In addition to his neoclassical contributions, Johnson's emphasis on the role of the critic itself is noteworthy. He defines the critic as one who examines literature with a discerning eye, distinguishing between genuine creativity and mere novelty. This discernment aligns with neoclassical principles that prioritize artistic tradition and the imitation of classical models.

While Johnson's neoclassical leanings are evident, it is crucial to recognize the complexity of his critical stance. He does not rigidly adhere to neoclassical dogma, but rather navigates a nuanced path, appreciating innovation while valuing the enduring principles of classical literature. This flexibility is emblematic of Johnson's unique contribution to literary criticism, bridging the neoclassical tradition with a more eclectic and inclusive perspective.

It is important to note that during the 19th century, Samuel Johnson's reputation was often a subject of debate and discussion among critics. While some critics praised his contributions to language and moral philosophy, others were critical of his style and conservative literary views. Similarly, 20th century viewed Samuel Johnson's writings as examples of his conservative literary style, lexicographical contributions, moral writings, and inspiring personal life. While some critics lauded his prose and moral insights, others debated the merits of his conservatism and the complexities of his personality. Nevertheless, his legacy as a significant figure in English literature remained intact, and he continued to be a subject of scholarly interest and debate during this period.

In conclusion, Samuel Johnson's contributions to literary criticism in English literature, particularly within the framework of neoclassical criticism, are multifaceted and enduring. His *Preface to Shakespeare* and *The Lives of the Poets* showcase his ability to engage with the neoclassical ideals of order, reason, and moral instruction while acknowledging the complexities of literary creativity. Johnson's influence extends beyond his era, shaping subsequent generations of critics and fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between tradition and innovation in literature.Through this *Preface*, Johnson elevates Shakespeare to a status of unparalleled significance in the literary canon.

Check your progress:

1. Johnson's contribution to literary criticism is found in two works. Name them.

   _____

2. Was Johnson a Neoclassical critic or a Romantic critic?

   _____

8.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to know the contribution made by Samuel Johnson to English literary criticism. You should have gained understanding into the background to Johnson's essay and be able to write a critical appreciation of Shakespeare highlighting his merits and demerits as a playwright.

8.4 Glossary

Tragedy: A dramatic genre exploring human suffering and downfall, often driven by fatal flaws in protagonists. Emotions of pity and fear are evoked, leading to a cathartic experience.

Comedy: A genre emphasizing humor, misunderstandings, and a happy resolution. It celebrates human resilience and the triumph of order over chaos.

Tragicomedy: Blending tragic and comedic elements, this genre navigates the complexities of life, offering a nuanced exploration of joy and sorrow.

Neoclassical Criticism: A literary theory from the 17th-18th centuries, advocating for adherence to classical principles in literature, emphasizing order, reason, and moral instruction. It influenced the structure and content of dramas during this period.

Unities in Drama: Principles derived from Aristotle's "Poetics," advocating for unity of time, place, and action in a play.

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* was published in the year _____. (**1755**)
2. Mention two works by Dr Samuel Johnson. (*A Dictionary of the English Language, The Lives of the English Poets*)
3. *The Lives of the English Poets*, a collection of biographical and critical essays on major English poets, is written by _____. (**Dr. Samuel Johnson**)
4. "Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers..." Who said this? (**Samuel Johnson**)
5. Renaissance witnessed a revival of interest in classical Greek and Roman texts. (**True**)

6. In the Preface, Johnson offers a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare's works. (**True**)
7. According to Johnson, Shakespeare's natural medium of expression is _____.
    a. comedy
    b. tragedy
    c. tragi-comedy
    d. none
8. Shakespearan characters act and speak by the influence of general passion, argues Johnson. (**True**/False)
9. Johnson's *The Lives of the Poets* contributes significantly to neoclassical literary criticism. (**True**/False)
10. The Aristotelian unities or three unities of drama that represent a prescriptive theory of dramatic tragedy are:
    a. unity of time
    b. unity of place
    c. unity of action
    d. **all of the above**

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the Unities in Drama?
2. Discuss Johnson's critique of Shakespeare's comedies.
3. Write a short note on Johnson's analysis of Shakespeare's language.
4. Write a short note on any two Renaissance writers.
5. Which defects does Johnson concede in Shakespeare?

8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Comment on the characterisation in Shakespearean plays as discussed in the "Preface.".
2. How does Johnson deal with Plato's criticism of the poet? Explain.
3. What are the main features of Shakespearean drama? Discuss.

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. UBSPD, 2003.

Enright, Dennis Joseph, and Ernst De Chickera, editors. "Samuel Johnson: Preface to Shakespeare." *English Critical Texts: 16th Century to 20th Century*. Oxford UP, 1962, pp. 131-161.

Johnson, Samuel. "Preface to Shakespeare." *English Critical Texts: 18th to 20th Century*. Edited by D. J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera, Oxford University Press, 1982.

Peck, John, and Martin Coyle. *A Brief History of English Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1994.

Unit-9: Joseph Addison: "True and False Wit"
(from *The Spectator*, No. 62)

Structure

9.0 Introduction

The English critical tradition goes back to Geoffrey Chaucer (whose stray remarks on tragedy could arguably be seen as his critical views), but the real origins lie somewhere in Renaissance England, particularly in the sixteenth century. It was in the wake of the Fall of Constantinople (1453) that the movement of Greek scholars and knowledge to Italy came about. Fleeing persecution, the scholars moved west and took shelter in Italy, which thereafter became the cultural centre of Europe. And moving further west, the ideas travelled all the way to England in the sixteenth century. At the time, the English critical scene was a divided house. The main debates concerned whether rhyme should be used, whether the native English metrical system should be abandoned in favour of the classical ones or be continued; whether the classical models of drama should be imitated or the native kind be adopted and promoted. On all these issues, there was a difference of opinion. As a consequence, it developed into classicism versus

nativism battle. On one side were the classicists like Philip Sidney, Spenser, Harvey, Dyer, and Jonson; on the other were the Cambridge Trio—Roger Ascham, Thomas Wilson (*The Art of Rhetoric*), Samuel Daniel (*The Defence of Rime*).

The tussle ended in a temporary triumph of the nativists as both the political circumstances and the weight of writers like Shakespeare tipped the scales into their favour. Besides, the classicists hardly practised what they set themselves the task to do. Their own practice disproved their precepts. But, the matter was not yet fully settled. And when the situation changed after the Restoration of the monarchy in England, the love of classics returned, as if with a vengeance, via the French influence. When Charles II returned from France, there came along with him a colony of courtiers' and soon it was the French manners, styles, taste, and literary models that came to be the order of the day. Another factor contributing to it was the extravagance of the English Metaphysical poets. Their poetic 'conceits' stretched things rather too far to let literature be enjoyable. Hence, the French taste for the classics formulated in Boileau, Rapin, and Bossu received a welcome in England. Their appeal to the authority of Aristotle also made the temptation even harder to resist. Expectedly, there set in a trend that later came to be called neo-classicism in English literature. It roughly lasted from after the Restoration to the end of the eighteenth century, when a reaction to it broke out in the form of the Romantic revolt.

Joseph Addison belonged to this period of English history and was naturally influenced by the currents of thoughts around him. To understand a writer or a critic fully, it is important to first understand the dominant trends and tendencies of their times. So, let us first discuss the main tenets of neo-classicism and thereafter approach Addison's critical views.

Neo-classicism represented a fondness for classic aesthetics, which meant a special liking for the way the classical artists, philosophers, writers, critics, and thinkers saw life in general. What the classical artists held in high esteem was obviously what the neo-classicists also would show reverence to. A typical classical view of life and art valued nature highly and insisted firmly on a sense of balance, decorum, refinement, and the outer-world. In literature, the sense of balance, refinement, and decorum lead to a special care in the choice of words. As a result, there emerged certain unwritten rules of propriety in writing laying stress on polished, systematic, and well-set expressions. This later came to be called the 'poetic diction' against which Wordsworth in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" made a full-on assault and went to the extent of declaring that there was no essential difference between the language of poetry and that of prose.

Another feature typical of neo-classicism was the near-worshipful attitude towards the ancient writers and their uncompromising insistence on observing the rules 'discovered' by these writers. Alexander Pope's expression of this attitude is most apt, as he says:

> Those rules of old discovered, not devis'd
> Are Nature still but Nature methodiz'd.
> Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
> To copy nature is to copy them. (*Essay on Criticism*)

Yet another characteristic was a firm belief in the power of reason, as this was also the period when reason was elevated to a very high pedestal as the human faculty believed to be capable of solving almost all human problems. Even God and this universe sought to be understood in mechanistic ways.

In this way, neo-classicism not only extolled the virtues of classicism but also attempted to imitate it. However, whether this imitation could reach anywhere close to its model has been a matter of debate. That is why the prefix 'neo' is there to indicate the 'almost but not quite' status of this literature and criticism vis-à-vis the classics *per se*.

9.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- give an overview of Neo-classical critical tradition as part of the larger English critical tradition
- elucidate Addison's idea of wit and to situate him in his context as a critic

9.2 Joseph Addison: "True and False Wit" (from *The Spectator*, No. 62)

Joseph Addison entered the English literary-critical scene in the early 18th century and made a significant contribution to the growth of English prose, which later became the hallmark of this century as a whole.

His collaboration with Richard Steele yielded a new mode of essay writing and put it to a novel purpose i.e. for educating the masses in social behaviour and moral values. The essays thus popularised took the form of periodicals (explained in more detail in the relevant section later).

Since a writer is always deeply embedded in his times and the general ethos, it would be worthwhile to take a look at Addison's life briefly to understand his work better.

9.2.1 Introduction to Addison

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English writer, poet, and politician best remembered for his literary contributions to English literature during the Augustan period. He was born in Milton, Wiltshire, England, and attended schools in Amesbury, Salisbury, and Lichfield. His connection with Richard Steele, who eventually became his writing collaborator, began around this time. Both continued their education at Oxford University and attended the University of Oxford.

Addison's writing career began in 1699 when he wrote *The Old Bachelor*, his first play, which was highly appreciated. In 1709, he collaborated with his friend Richard Steele to launch the literary magazine, *The Tatler*, which covered issues such as fashion, politics, and society. The journal was an immediate success, and Addison and Steele became household names in England. In 1711, Addison and Steele launched *The Spectator*, a literary periodical that quickly outgrew *The Tatler*. Addison's writing style was noted for its clarity, wit, and elegance, and he produced writings on a wide range of issues, including literature, politics, and religion.

Besides writing, Addison was a Member of Parliament and held many political offices, including Secretary of State for the Southern Department. His contemporaries held him in high regard, and he was known for his honesty and dedication to public service. In 1719, Joseph Addison died and was buried in Westminster Abbey. He is regarded as one of the best English essayists of all time, and his work is still read and studied today.

9.2.2 The Periodical Essays

It is an established opinion that eighteenth-century England witnessed an unchallenged dominance of prose—direct, unadorned, and to-the-point. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that this dominance could come about only after a tussle between the old world and the new. The shift occurred through a cultural revolution of sorts. The general public began turning to the written word for guidance on how to live life, how to understand the structures of society, how to make life morally sound, and society refined and sophisticated. For all this, there arose a demand from the press, which gladly supplied it. In turn, the upsurge of print-media led to the genesis of

the periodicals. As Dr. Rajimwale has noted: "Sudden growth of journals and newspapers was one of the reasons behind the rise in periodical essays."

Amidst this backdrop, there emerged two essayists, namely, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, who developed a typical form of essays written self-avowedly to bring "philosophy to the coffee-houses" and to generally educate the public on a number of subjects so as to equip them for a more refined and firmly-grounded social behaviour and intellectual engagements. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* are two of the most famous periodicals that came out in this period. The former was started by Richard Steele in April 1709 under the pen-name 'Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.' In all, 271 numbers of *The Tatler* were brought out. These essays depicted the prevalent manners, emotions, thoughts, and issues of the middle-class. Moralizing and telling how to behave, the essays commanded a wide readership. In the first volume itself, Richard Steele laid down the in the following words: "The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false art of life, to puff off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our discourse, and our behaviour."

Similarly, the periodical, *The Spectator* was collaboratively brought out by Addison and Steele from March 1711 to December 1712. Unlike *The Tatler* which contained many write-ups on a variety of subjects, *The Spectator* consisted of only one long essay at a time. A total of 555 such essays came out daily and Addison contributed 274 of them. However, their central concern remained the moral and social reform of contemporary society. Thus, both Steele and Addison became the proponents of the periodical essays and also served as educators on social manners and moral values.

Check your progress:

1. In 1711, Addison and Steele launched *The Spectator*, a literary periodical that quickly outgrew *The Tatler*. (True/False)
2. In *The Spectator*, a total of 555 such essays came out daily and Addison contributed 274 of them. (True/False)

9.2.3 Critical Output: An Overview

Addison's critical output is limited almost exclusively to his papers in *The Spectator*, so it is all in the form of essays that are of general nature and aimed at making complex concepts or ideas reach the general public in a simple language. Expectedly, therefore, his critical output is of a very general nature and, in the view of some scholars, it lacked the rigor and depth of criticism

proper. As such, there is no inter-connection between the essays of different phases of his writing. The only unifying principle at work amongst them is the subject they are on. Some are on tragedy (Nos. 39, 40, 42, 44, 45), some on 'wit' (Nos. 58-62), some others on *Paradise Lost* (Nos. 267-369), still others on "The Pleasures of Imagination" (Nos. 411-21). Just as Dryden's prefaces to his plays afforded him opportunities to expound on his choice of themes and the technical matters of dramaturgy, so did the popular essay give Addison a perfect medium to articulate his views on a wide variety of subjects.

9.2.4 Addison's Idea of Wit

Of the many subjects that Addison got a chance to dwell upon in his essays, his views on wit, taste, imagination, tragedy, and *Paradise Lost* had a direct bearing on literature. Since these were the times of giving near-scientific finality to the meaning of the concepts that had long been in circulation without much consensus about their sense, Addison took it upon himself to conceptualize and define some of these ideas with a sense of certainty and in an-easy-to-understand language. The first such was 'wit' which had been in use and meant so many things to the contemporary scholars. However, Addison's was not the only attempt in his direction. In fact, there were many others like Dryden, Locke, and Pope who had done so too. Addison only sought to deal elaborately with it and by setting one usage off against other similar usages; he attempted elucidation mingled with conceptualization. That's why he identified three types of wit—true, false, and mixed type.

9.2.4.1 Definition of True Wit:

John Dryden in his *Apology for Heroic Poetry* defined 'wit' as 'a propriety of thoughts and words; or, in other terms, thought and words elegantly adapted to the subject' and also as 'a great thought dressed in words so commonly received, that it is understood by the meanest apprehensions'. But, Addison found it too general and typical of any good writing. So, it did not really help in conceptualizing 'wit' in contradistinction to other elements of good writing. Unlike Dryden's, Addison found John Locke's definition of wit much more lucid and insightful. In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Locke called it 'the assemblage of ideas wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy'. The only addition that Addison felt necessary to define wit even more clearly was of the terms 'delight' and 'surprise' to what Locke had already said.

Thus, in Addison's view, the term wit denotes 'resemblance or congruity of ideas' so made that it causes both delight and surprise. The implied idea is that a remark or expression cannot become witty unless it brings together two unlike ideas in a congruous way. So, the congruity would account for the delight felt and the innate unlikeness of the ideas would explain the element of surprise. For example, comparing whiteness with snow or milk, or blackness with coal or darkness or multi-colours with the rainbow or height with the Himalayas or barrenness with the desert will only show the congruity without giving any surprise. For this, some further dimension of congruity would be needed. Addison's example is that when the poet tells that the bosom of his mistress is like snow, it becomes witty only because of the two levels of comparison i.e. it is as white as snow and as cold as snow. It is the second level that gives rise to the element of surprise. Addison's idea of wit, therefore, had two levels of comparison/resemblance/congruity and the second level needed be surprising (and contextually explainable, not simply denotative sense).

9.2.4.2 Definition of False Wit:

If there is a phenomenon called 'true wit', there is bound to be 'false wit' against which the true could be defined and set off. Unlike true wit wherein there is congruity of ideas, the false wit has congruity or resemblance in sound, letters, words, or the utterance. For example, anagrams (words or sentences that read alike forward and backward- Madam) and acrostics (words formed by letters in different lines of a poem) and figure poems (the ones written in such a way as to resemble some figure in shape like a butterfly or a rabbit etc.). Sometimes, puns are also thought to be witty. A pun consists in the use of similar sounds of two words to create a play on the meaning. Such compositions are at times mistakenly thought to be witty. But, Addison dismisses them as products of false wit. The thing is that these do not yield any surprises, and even the delight of resemblance is of a cruder sort.

9.2.4.3 Definition of Mixed Wit:

Mixed wit, as the name itself suggests, is the middle variety between the true and the false. Naturally, it partakes of both the features i.e. congruity of ideas and resemblance of words. For the same reason, it is the most complex of the three. To elucidate and illustrate it, Addison himself referred to Cowley in the following words:

> Out of the innumerable branches of mixed wit, I shall choose one instance which may be met within all the writers of this class. The passion of love in its nature has been thought to resemble fire; for which reason the words fire and

> flame are made use of to signify love. The witty poets, therefore, have taken an advantage from the double meaning of the word fire, to make an infinite number of witticisms. Cowley observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, considers them as burning glasses, made of ice; and finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, concludes the torrid zone to be habitable…

Then, by way of elucidation, he further says:

> …the poet mixes the qualities of fire with those of love; and in the same sentence speaking of it both as a passion and as real fire, surprises the reader with those seeming resemblances or contradictions, that make up all the wit in this kind of writing. Mixed wit, therefore, is a composition of pun and true wit, and is more or less perfect as the resemblance lies in the ideas or in the words. Its foundations are laid partly in falsehood and partly in truth; reason puts in her claim for one half of it, and extravagance for the other.

So, he does not really appreciate its composition as its ingredients have "no foundation in the nature of things." He calls its use "the Gothic way of writing." Of course, it is in no way a recommendatory description for a style of writing. This is perhaps a reflection of why the Metaphysical school of poetry must have fallen out of favour by the end of the 17th century.

9.2.5 Limitations of Addison's Critical Ideas

As any thinker or critic is bound to have some limitations, so did Addison. But, what put further limitations to his range of subjects and style of writing were his avowed aims of writing critical papers in the form of periodical essays. As such, he could write only on subjects that were likely to be of interest to the general public, the middle-class to be precise. This curtailed his range. As for the depth of his critical writings, it is often pointed out that his contribution to English criticism lay more in disseminating information or creating fanfare about certain ideas, writers or works than in the originality of his observations and remarks. J.W.H. Atkins found his views on imagination to be actually about fancy—the image forming the faculty of the human mind, without any connection with the unifying and dissolving powers of the imagination that later, Coleridge was able to identify and put a finger on. Similarly, his equating the intellectual taste with the taste of the palate has been found to be wanting in its critical force as it leaves so much to subjective perception. Just as there is no accounting for taste in general, in his logic,

there can be no definitive measure or criterion of literary-critical taste as well. But, this does not pass muster where objectivity of critical views is the sole standard of value. A similar estimate has been made by later-day scholars about Addison's estimate of *Paradise Lost*. Nevertheless, his place in English criticism is not altogether on the margins. So, now let us take a look at the value of his criticism in the following section.

9.2.6 Value of his Criticism

The value of any attempt should ideally be judged only in terms of what was originally intended. Addison's aim was mainly to popularise critical ideas and principles, so would not it be unfair to say that he was not profound in his views? However, there is no denying that he was able to popularise the ideas of wit, tragedy, taste, and also the epic *Paradise Lost.* On this Dr. Johnson in *Life of Addison* said, "Had he presented *Paradise Lost* to the public with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would perhaps have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but by the blandishments of gentleness and facility, he has made Milton an universal favourite with whom reader of every class think it necessary to be pleased." Also, George Watson has remarked in this regard:

> He may not have fathered much good work, or achieved much himself, but as a symptom he is extraordinary. With him the revolution is complete: a revolution from law to actuality, from interference with the poet in his act of creation to help and advice for the thousands who read.

Likewise, George Saintsbury says:

> Though by no means a very great critic, he is a useful, interesting, and a representative one. He represents the classical attitude tempered, not merely by good sense almost in quintessence, but by a large share of tolerance and positive good taste, by freedom from the more utterly ridiculous pseudo.

So, the belittling and condemnatory estimates of Addison notwithstanding, he can be said to have largely fulfilled the purpose he set for himself, that is, elucidation of vague terms and concepts and popularising otherwise little-known ideas and works. It was this that he attempted; it was in this that he excelled. All else would be an injustice to him. Rather, it would do him some justice if his service to the cause of literature is recognised and the shift from writer to reader that he made in his bid to bring philosophy to tea-tables and coffee-houses is appreciated.

Check your progress:

1. John Dryden in his *Apology for Heroic Poetry* defined 'wit' as 'a propriety of thoughts and words. (True/False)
2. Mixed wit, therefore, is a composition of pun and true wit, and is more or less perfect as the resemblance lies in the ideas or in the words. (True/False)

9.2.7 Let Us Sum Up

In this Unit, we have seen that Joseph Addison, along with Steele, employed periodical essays to educate, popularise and elucidate ideas and concepts concerning a wide range of subjects of general interest. Addison expounded the idea of wit and did a great job clearing up confusion about this concept. He defined 'wit' as congruity/ resemblance of ideas that delighted as well as surprised. He especially laid stress on surprise. Going a step further, he suggested three types of 'wit' – true, false, and mixed.

True wit, according to Addison, consists in congruity/ resemblance of ideas whereas the false type, in congruity of syllables, letters, words or sentences. So the former operates at the level of idea while the letter only at the superficial level of words and sounds, as in pun, anagrams and acrostics. The third type is a mixture of true wit and pun. However, Addison didn't much recommend this type as its "foundation is not in the nature of things." On the whole, Addison's views on 'wit' were not really original, but his main contribution and value lay in bringing philosophy and criticism "to coffee-houses." Thus, he also turned out to be the critic who shifted attention from the writer to the reader.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

On completion of this Unit, you should ideally be able to:

- have some understanding of the English critical tradition in general.
- know Addison's idea of Wit and its forms distinctly.
- form an understanding of Addison's place in the English critical tradition.
- have an idea of how critical views get shaped by the contemporary discursive networks.

9.4 Glossary

Criticism: the practice of evaluating, judging, assessing and appreciating any work of art. However, different forms of criticism may have specific purposes like ontological, functionalist, normative, etc.

Theory: it denotes an explanation of any phenomenon as to why anything is the way it is and why anything happens the way it does. For example, the theory of the Big Bang tells us how the universe first came into being. Yet this is one of the various explanations of our existence.

Classicism: it represents a certain world-view, a certain aesthetics held by the writers of ancient Greece and Rome (and those of any culture and civilization like the Sanskrit writers in India). It also refers to a especial fondness cherished by later writers, critics and art-lovers for these classic times, their aesthetics, their general world-view.

Neo-classicism: the prefix 'neo' makes it a less-than-the-real classicism. So, in case of English critical tradition, it refers to the writers and critics of the late 17th and the entire 18th century who held the classic ideals in very high regard and sought to emulate their models in every aspect of life, particularly in production and consumption of arts and literature.

Wit: the term has been discussed in detail within the text. Yet, it is worth-noting that its semantic possibilities were never given a sense of finality. Therefore, it stood for various ideas like intelligence, creativity, imaginative powers, talent, linguistic felicity, etc. Addison's view has already been elucidated in the relevant portion of this Unit.

Imagination: just like 'Wit', imagination was another concept that evaded any definite semantic signification. As discussed in the text, it was variously defined and explained by many thinkers and critics like Addison himself. The other two notable attempts were made by Wordsworth and Coleridge, who had a sharp difference of opinion between themselves as well. Commonly, it refers to the faculty of mind that makes imagining possible by making available all the sense impressions along with an over-arching shaping force that renders all the disparate elements therein into an organic unity.

Fancy: the term 'fancy' was given a specific sense by Coleridge and it has, more or less, remained so ever since. As such, it denoted a human faculty capable of creating beautiful combinations of sense impressions and thereby producing beautiful art-works but not the sublime ones. Thus, it was thought to be of a lower quality compared to imagination. Its main flaw was its excessive concern with the exterior, the superficial, the outward combinations rather than the

vital underlying inner connections and unity. Unlike imagination, it stopped short of penetrating the soul of the matter and therefore ended up creating only the dazzle-razzle without the corresponding worth beneath.

Taste: in Addison's understanding, the idea of taste was very vague yet the final test of the worth of an artwork. If a work of art strictly observed every single rule and yet failed to appeal to the taste of the reader or art-consumer, it just flopped. By taste is also generally meant one's range of previous exposure to the thing at issue and on the basis of that exposure, one's understanding would necessarily develop. In some cases, it is also connected to one's core being and its leanings in matters concerning the choice of food, friends, clothing, sexuality, architectural designs, art-works—films, music, literature, furniture etc.

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Joseph Addison's writing career began in 1699 when he wrote his first play *The Old Bachelor*.
    a. True
    b. **False**
2. *The Tatler* was launched by Steele in 1709 and it covered issues such as fashion, politics, and society.
    a. **True**
    b. False
3. In 1711, Addison and Steele launched *The Spectator*, a literary periodical that quickly outgrew The Tatler.
    a. **True**
    b. False
4. A total of 271 numbers of *The Tatler* were brought out.
    a. **True**
    b. False
5. In *The Spectator*, a total of 555 essays were published, and Addison contributed 274 of them.
    a. **True**

b. False

6. John Dryden in his *Apology for Heroic Poetry* defined 'wit' as 'a propriety of thoughts and words.
    a. True
    b. **False**
7. In “Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” Locke called wit 'the assemblage of ideas wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy'.
    a. **True**
    b. False
8. According to Addison, the term wit denotes 'resemblance or congruity of ideas'.
    a. **True**
    b. False
9. Regarding true and false wit, Addison explains: True wit consists in congruity/ resemblance of ideas whereas the false wit consists in congruity of syllables, letters, words or sentences.
    a. **True**
    b. False
10. Mixed wit, therefore, is a composition of pun and true wit, and is more or less perfect as the resemblance lies in the ideas or in the words.
    a. **True**
    b. False

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the central tenet of the Neo-classical critical tradition?
2. How does the Neo-classical critical tradition differ from earlier critical traditions?
3. What is the role of the periodical essay in literary criticism?
4. How does Addison define wit in his essays?
5. How does his idea of wit differ from the more traditional, courtly forms of wit popular in his time?

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What was the purpose of Joseph Addison's periodical essays, and what impact did they have on the literary world of the eighteenth century?
2. What were some of the literary techniques and devices that Addison used in his essays, and how did they contribute to the overall style?
3. How did Addison distinguish between true wit, false wit, and mixed wit in his essays?

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Henry Craik, ed. *English Prose*. 1916. Vol. I. Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century Essay on the Life and Writings of Addison", Essays vol. V (1866) Hurd and Houghton.

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"True and False Wit." Spectator 62. *In Literary Criticism and Theory*. Ed. R. C. Davis and L. Finke. London: Longman, 1989. 341-44.

Unit-10: Mary Wollstonecraft: Excerpt from Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Structure

10.0 Introduction

This Unit covers literary criticism developed by Wollstonecraft during the nineteenth century. It covers the background, summary and critical appreciation of Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry.*

10.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understanding the importance of the writings of women in the development of the concept of gender equality
- situating Wollstonecraft in the 18th century
- understanding the major arguments of the text
- examining the ideas in Chapter II
- exploring Wollstonecraft's contribution to literary criticism

10.2 Mary Wollstonecraft: Excerpt from Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

10.2.1 Introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), a trailblazing figure in the history of English letters, was an 18th-century writer, philosopher, and advocate for women's rights. Renowned for her groundbreaking work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Wollstonecraft laid the foundation for feminist thought and significantly influenced the course of literature and social reform.Wollstonecraft was shaped by a myriad of events, personalities, and literary influences that left an indelible mark on her life and work. From her upbringing in a tumultuous family environment to her encounters with influential thinkers of her time, Wollstonecraft's journey was marked by challenges, triumphs, and a relentless pursuit of equality and justice.

She was born in London, into a farming family. She grew up marked by financial instability and domestic turmoil. Her father, Edward John Wollstonecraft, was a tyrannical figure whose financial failures burdened the family, while her mother, Elizabeth Dixon, struggled with her husband's abusive behavior. Mary, without the luxury of formal education, became her own teacher. However, societal norms of the time greatly restricted her avenues for progress, presenting her with formidable obstacles. Determined to alter her family's fortunes, Mary ventured into various roles: serving as a companion to a wealthy woman in Bath and later as a governess to the children of Mr. Kingsborough, an affluent Irish landlord. This appointment shaped Wollstonecraft's worldview as she observed that despite the material comfort of her surroundings, limitations were imposed on women of her social class, who were confined to the domestic sphere and denied intellectual and personal autonomy. Her time as a governess deepened her understanding of the oppressive structures that constrained women's lives, fueling her determination to challenge societal norms and advocate for women's rights.

In 1784, displaying remarkable ambition, Mary established her own nonconformist school in Newington Green, just beyond the outskirts of London. It was a revolutionary and courageous act for its time, and afforded her family an income for a while, but had to be given up as it was not sustainable. Wollstonecraft's tumultuous childhood exposed her to the injustices and inequalities that plagued women's lives, planting the seeds of her later advocacy for women's rights.

Her circumstances drew her attention to the fact that in her times girls were given a basic education, they were not permitted for higher education. There were no secondary schools for them as they were not being prepared for colleges and universities like boys were. It was only girls of wealthy families who got an opportunity to study with the help of home tutors. Consequently Wollstonecraft set about addressing the societal norms that deprived young women of equal access to education, employment, and social prospects compared to men.

As a Writer: In 1787, she penned her influential work, "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters," a publication championed by Joseph Johnson, who helped Wollstonecraft secure a post as a permanent writer of reviews for the journal he ran, Analytical Review, when she moved to London in 1787 to further pursue her career as a writer. Wollstonecraft went on to translate works, continued writing and published, Original Stories from Real Life, a text for education. She also wrote a novel, *Mary, or the Wrongs of Women* (also *Mary: A Fiction*), which was published in 1798.

Intellectual Growth: Wollstonecraft's intellectual journey was profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment ideals that swept across Europe during the 18th century. It was the Neo-Classical Age, the Age of Prose, of the Scientific Revolution and a period of a tectonic shift in theories of knowledge. She was inspired by the works of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire, whose writings championed reason, liberty, and equality. These philosophical currents laid the groundwork for Wollstonecraft's belief in the inherent rights and dignity of all individuals, irrespective of gender, race, or social status.Wollstonecraft was a passionate supporter of the French Revolution. She hoped for a political positioning of Britain towards democratic republicanism. She was disappointed when the political philosopher and MP, Edmund Burke, wrote his famous treatise condemning the revolution and defending the British monarchy. In retaliation she published a response. This began a series of "pamphlet wars," rejoinders to Burke. Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was written as a response to Burke. Both Paine and Wollstonecraft defended a doctrine of "natural rights". This is the idea that man is naturally endowed with rational thought and an ability to think independently, and therefore judge for himself. But neither Paine nor most of the French revolutionaries that Wollstonecraft so admired actively extended this thinking to women. The new French Republic, in fact, relegated all men without property as well as women to the status of "passive," i.e., non-voting citizens who were not considered independent enough to make their own decisions.

Among the literary influences that left a lasting impression on Wollstonecraft was the work of Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. While Rousseau's ideas on education and the nature of women were deeply controversial and often at odds with Wollstonecraft's views, his writings served as a catalyst for her own reflections on the status of women in society. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft engaged in a critical dialogue with Rousseau, challenging his portrayal of women as passive and subordinate beings and advocating for their intellectual and political emancipation.

Wollstonecraft's intellectual development was also shaped by her interactions with Joseph Johnson, the influential publisher and bookseller who played a pivotal role in the dissemination of radical and progressive ideas. Wollstonecraft's intellect was stimulated due to her interactions with a growing number of artists and authors she met through Johnson. She met the poet William Blake, and Thomas Paine. Johnson also introduced her to the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, the biblical scholar Alexander Geddes and Mary Hays, whose radical views on politics, religion, and social reform left a profound impact on her thinking.

One of the events in Wollstonecraft's personal life was her tumultuous relationship with the philosopher and political theorist William Godwin. He greatly influenced her and their mutual zeal for reform brought them together and they married in 1797. Their passionate love affair and subsequent marriage challenged conventional notions of romantic and marital relationships, embodying the principles of freedom, equality, and mutual respect that Wollstonecraft espoused in her writings. Despite the tragic end of their relationship with Wollstonecraft's untimely death following the birth of her daughter (Mary Shelley), her legacy endured through Godwin's memoir of her life and through her own writings, which continued to inspire generations of feminists and social reformers.

In addition to her personal experiences and intellectual engagements, Wollstonecraft's writings were profoundly influenced by the social and political upheavals of her time, including the French Revolution and the debates surrounding women's rights and emancipation.The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the emergence of much French feminist writings. Marie Le Jars de Gournay (1565-1645), renowned for her expertise in alchemy, had penned "The Equality of Men and Women" in 1622. Similarly, François Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723) presented similar ideas in his work *The Equality of the Sexes*, initially published in French in 1673 and later translated into English in 1677. The Parisian salons, where intellectuals of both genders gathered informally, had become centers of intellectual discussions and many of the

women who presided over these salons, echoed sentiments for increased equality. Moreover, during the Scientific Revolution, the education of women became a concern for several scientists. Bathsua Makin, tutor for Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, wrote, *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen*), advocated for women's access to scientific education in the mid seventeenth century. Despite the efforts of these intellectuals, practical advancements remained limited. Additionally, female intellectuals still encountered mockery from their male counterparts, as illustrated in satires such as Molière's *The Learned Ladies*, first performed in 1672. The revolutionary fervour that swept across Europe during the late 18th century fuelled Wollstonecraft's belief in the possibility of social transformation and the realization of a more just and egalitarian society.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two factors that influenced Mary Wollstonecraft.

_____

2. Name a work by Wollstonecraft.

_____

Major Works

Mary Wollstonecraft was a prolific writer and her works encompass various genres, including philosophy, fiction, and educational treatises. Some of her notable works are:

- *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) - This was one of Wollstonecraft's earliest published works, in which she discusses her views on the education of girls.
- *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) - Wollstonecraft's first novel, which explores themes of female independence and the limitations of marriage.
- *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) - Wollstonecraft's response to Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France," defending the principles of the French Revolution, against his conservative position.
- *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) - Perhaps her most famous work, this groundbreaking treatise argues for women's equality and advocates for women's education.

- *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (1794) - A critique of the French Revolution and its aftermath, written during Wollstonecraft's time in France.
- *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) - Wollstonecraft's travelogue recounting her journey through Scandinavia, where she explores themes of nature, society, and politics.
- *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) - A posthumously published work, considered a continuation of her exploration of women's rights and the injustices faced by women in society.

These are some of Mary Wollstonecraft's most notable works, each contributing to her legacy as a pioneering feminist thinker and writer. Her ideas continue to inspire scholars, activists, and readers around the world, shaping conversations about gender, equality, and social justice.

Mary Wollstonecraft's life and work were shaped by a complex interplay of personal experiences, intellectual influences, and historical events. From her early struggles against the constraints of her upbringing to her passionate advocacy for women's rights and equality, Wollstonecraft's legacy endures as a beacon of hope and inspiration for generations of feminists and human rights activists around the world. As we reflect on her remarkable journey, we are reminded of the enduring power of courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the pursuit of justice and equality for all.

Check your progress:

1. When was *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman published?*

_____

2. In which of her works did Wollstonecraft talk about education for girls?

_____

10.2.2 Development of Feminist Thought in the Eighteenth Century

In the evolution of feminist history, the emergence and development of feminist thought in the eighteenth century marked a pivotal moment that laid the foundation for subsequent waves of feminism. Although the term "feminism" as we know it today was not coined until the nineteenth century, seeds of gender-based literary analysis were sown during the Enlightenment era. However, the seeds of feminist consciousness began to sprout in the backdrop of the

Renaissance in Europe, from the 15th century. Despite the predominantly patriarchal society, women such as Christine de Pizan challenged prevailing attitudes through their writings. Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) defended women's intellectual capabilities and critiqued misogynistic beliefs, laying the groundwork for later feminist discourse.

The Reformation played a role in furthering feminist thought as women writers like Aphra Behn, a trailblazer in her own right, defied conventions with her play *The Rover* (1677), challenging the restrictive norms imposed on women's behaviour. Mary Astell's essay "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies" (1694), called for the establishment of educational institutions for women, challenging the notion of female intellectual inferiority. The trajectory of feminist point of view in the eighteenth century was not without its challenges. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a prominent philosopher of the Enlightenment, offered a contrasting view in his work "Emile, or On Education" (1762). Rousseau's ideas, though influential, often perpetuated traditional gender roles, emphasizing separate spheres for men and women.

Mary Wollstonecraft countered Rousseau, with her seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* a foundational text of feminist theory. Wollstonecraft argued passionately for women's right to education, political representation, and economic independence, challenging the prevailing notion of women as subordinate to men. She argued passionately for the education and intellectual empowerment of women, asserting, "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves." Her eloquent prose and compelling arguments resonated with intellectuals and activists alike, sparking a transformative dialogue on the status of women in England.

Wollstonecraft's impact on the Women's Movement can be traced through the lens of influential figures who acknowledged and admired her contributions. Renowned philosopher John Stuart Mill, in his essay "The Subjection of Women" (1869), lauded Wollstonecraft's pioneering ideas, recognizing her as a precursor to the feminist movements that would follow. Mill, a staunch advocate for women's suffrage, credited Wollstonecraft for laying the intellectual foundation for the struggle for gender equality.

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 marked a watershed moment in feminist history, as women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott boldly declared their demands for equal rights in the Declaration of Sentiments. The Convention laid the groundwork for the women's suffrage movement in the United States and galvanized women around the world to fight for

their rights. Thus we see that an emerging feminist movement was steadily gathering momentum, and Wollstonecraft infused it with renewed vigor.

Check your progress:

1. Give an example of women's writing that marked the rise of feminist movement.

   _____

2. The Seneca Falls Convention of _____ marked a watershed moment in feminist history.

10.2.3 Influence of Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas have influenced generations of thinkers and writers. Wollstonecraft emerged as a significant source of inspiration, during the mid-19th century in the United States, for subsequent leaders of the women's rights movement, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). Authors such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir have acknowledged the significance of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in shaping feminist thought. Woolf, in her essay, "A Room of One's Own," refers to Wollstonecraft as a foundational figure who paved the way for future generations of women writers. *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir is a seminal work of feminist philosophy that explores the social and historical construction of womanhood and addresses many of the same themes that Wollstonecraft discussed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* She acknowledges Wollstonecraft's pioneering efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures and underscore the ongoing struggle for women's liberation.

The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan, a leading figure in the American feminist movement, Friedan's pathbreaking book helped ignite the second wave of feminism in the United States by critiquing the limitations of traditional gender roles and echoes Wollstonecraft's call for women to break free from traditional roles,advocating for women's equality and fulfillment outside of domestic roles. Friedan credited Wollstonecraft for inspiring a reevaluation of women's societal roles and expectations. *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf critiques the ways in which beauty standards and the beauty industry have been used to oppress women and perpetuate gender inequality. Her analysis resonates with Wollstonecraft's concerns about the objectification of women and the importance of recognizing their inherent worth beyond physical appearance.

Wollstonecraft's influence on the Women's Movement is also evident in the works of contemporary feminist thinkers like Bell Hooks. In her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to*

Center, Hooks acknowledged Wollstonecraft's pioneering efforts and her *Feminism is for Everybody* is an introduction to feminism that explores the central principles of feminist principle of social justice. These books offer diverse perspectives on feminist theory, activism, and social critique, reflecting and expanding upon many of the ideas advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft in her pioneering work. While the initial reception of Wollstonecraft's work was mixed, its enduring legacy is evident in the continued discussions within feminist discourse.

Literary critics, historians, and scholars have revisited *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in the context of evolving gender dynamics, recognizing its role as a catalyst for change in societal attitudes towards women. The treatise remains a cornerstone in the history of English literature, inspiring generations to challenge oppressive norms and advocate for the rights and equality of women. In 2006, the British cultural commentator Melvyn Bragg included *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in his list of 12 books that changed the world. The text inspired movements and works that continue to shape contemporary feminist thought and discourse, highlighting the ongoing relevance of Wollstonecraft's ideas to the pursuit of gender equality and social justice.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two authors who were influenced by Wollstonecraft.

   _____

2. What is the title of the feminist work by Simone de Beauvoir?

   _____

10.2.4 Main Ideas in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

In Chapter I of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* Mary Wollstonecraft lays the foundation for her argument by critiquing prevailing attitudes toward women in 18th-century society. She begins by addressing the notion that women are primarily valued for their physical attractiveness and decorative qualities rather than their intellectual abilities or moral virtues. She challenges the prevailing belief that women should prioritize cultivating qualities such as charm, beauty, and obedience in order to secure a good marriage. She argues that this emphasis on superficial traits undermines women's potential for intellectual and moral development and perpetuates their subjugation to men. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft criticizes the educational opportunities available to women during her time, arguing that they are often limited to superficial accomplishments rather than rigorous intellectual pursuits. She asserts that women are

capable of reason and learning and should be afforded the same educational opportunities as men in order to fulfill their potential as rational beings. Overall, in Chapter I, Wollstonecraft sets the stage for her broader argument in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by challenging societal norms and expectations regarding women's roles and capabilities. She advocates for a more enlightened and equitable approach to gender relations, one that values women as individuals with inherent rights and abilities worthy of cultivation and respect.

In the second chapter she takes on Milton, learned men like Rousseau and " most of the male writers who have followed his steps" and the "amiable" Dr Gregory, a notable intellectual and the father of daughters, who "have warmly inculcated that the whole tendency of female education ought to be directed to one point to render them pleasing." And wishes to take women out from the status of slaves to rational and methodical beings through proper education, not a "mistaken education" which results in "a narrow, uncultivated mind, and many sexual prejudices."

Chapter III delves into the concept of women's education and its role in perpetuating gender inequality. Decrying the limitations of a domestic education, she advocates for a more expansive and enlightened approach to women's education, one that recognizes and cultivates their intellectual potential and contributes to greater equality and justice in society.

In Chapter IV, Wollstonecraft highlights the limitations of an improper education on women's character and societal progress. She argues passionately for educational reform that recognizes and cultivates women's intellectual, rational and moral faculties, envisioning a society where women are valued as equal participants in the pursuit of knowledge and virtue.

Chapter V emphasizes the importance of cultivating rationality and reason in women emphasizing that education plays a crucial role in shaping women's moral character. She believes that women should be encouraged to engage in critical thinking and independent inquiry in order to develop their intellectual faculties and make informed decisions about their lives. She argues that women should be valued as equal members of society, capable of contributing meaningfully to its progress and advancement.

Chapter VI reflects Wollstonecraft's commitment to challenging traditional gender roles and advocating the rights and autonomy of women within the institution of marriage. Marriage should not be without intellectual companionship, based solely on a woman's economic dependence. Her critique of unequal power dynamics and call for reform laid the groundwork for

subsequent feminist movements aimed at achieving gender equality in marriage and domestic life.

Chapter VII continues Wollstonecraft's commitment to challenging the patriarchal norms and customs that oppress women within the institution of marriage. Her critique of societal expectations, double standards, and legal inequalities in marriage, laid the groundwork for subsequent feminist movements aimed at achieving greater equality and autonomy for women within marriage and society.

In Chapter VIII, Wollstonecraft gives a vision of a society where women are valued as equal members and afforded equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of public life.This will help them assert a moral influence in society through their roles as mothers, educators, and community leaders.She calls for legal reforms that grant women greater rights and provide protections in society against laws and customs that discriminate against women and restrict their opportunities for advancement and self-determination.

Chapter IX discusses the role of women as mothers and the importance of maternal education in shaping the next generation and advancing the ideals of reason, virtue, and enlightenment through proper education of women.

Chapter X continues the theme of the importance of a well-rounded education that fosters both intellectual and physical development in women. She critiques societal customs and prejudices that limit women's opportunities for education and personal growth. Wollstonecraft addresses the influence of fashion on women's lives and argues against the excessive emphasis on appearance and superficiality. She encourages women to prioritize intellectual pursuits for intellectual independence. rather than conforming to societal expectations of beauty. She calls on men to support and encourage the education of women and not be threatened by women's intellectual growth. Men should recognize the benefits of an enlightened and educated female populace for the betterment of society as a whole.

In Chapter XI, Wollstonecraft discusses how women are often kept in a state of ignorance and dependence, which prevents them from developing their full potential as rational beings.The consequent lack of education and opportunities for women leads to their moral degradation and perpetuates the cycle of inequality.

Chapter XI is on the need for a "National Education" that provides equal opportunities for both boys and girls.Wollstonecraft argues that education should aim to develop individuals' rational faculties and moral virtues, regardless of their gender. She proposes reforms in the

educational system to ensure that women receive the same quality of education as men, enabling them to participate fully in public life and contribute to the progress of society.

In Chapter XIII, Wollstonecraft provides examples of the negative consequences of women's ignorance and lack of education on their behavior and decision-making.Wollstonecraft argues that a revolution in female manners, brought about by education and enlightenment, could lead to significant moral improvement in society.

Wollstonecraft's central arguments are based on her radical views on changing the image of women from domestic and pleasure-giving slaves to independent beings, capable of existing as rational and moral beings. the edifying effects of the right kind of education on virtue. However, Wollstonecraft did not mean sexual purity when she spoke of virtue. Virtue was indicative of moral character and primarily expressed in the ability to make sound, informed and rational judgement. Moral character also included, for Wollstonecraft, humility and self-discipline and a willingness to look outward from selfish or trivial wants to the needs of others. These were the republican (and indeed Protestant) virtues that good citizens in the new post-revolutionary democracies would need. Wollstonecraft argued that women are equally capable of acquiring these virtues and of benefiting from a full education if only given the chance to develop their capacities in the same way as men. She underscored the importance of education, the detrimental effects of gender inequality, and the potential for societal improvement through the empowerment of women..

Check your progress:

1. What is the purpose of education for women, according to Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman?*

   _____

2. Can education uplift women from their domestic slavery?

   _____

10.2.5 Summary of Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* takes on a few andro-texts and analyses the representation of women in them. Secondly, it delves into the education of women, challenging the prevailing notion that women should focus solely on superficial accomplishments. Wollstonecraft argues that women should receive a rational education, emphasizing the development of their minds and virtues. She criticizes the prevailing educational

practices that prioritize mere ornamentation and encourage women to be pleasing to men. According to Wollstonecraft, the true empowerment of women lies in cultivating their intellectual abilities, fostering reason, and providing them with the tools to be active participants in society.Throughout the chapter, Wollstonecraft presents powerful arguments in favour of a radically different education for women than the present.

Critique of Andro-texts: Fioravanti Sireci points out in her thesis on *A Vindication* how eminent male writers have perpetuated the representation of women as subordinate to men because of certain inherent flaws or weaknesses.

Milton's Portrayal of Women: Wollstonecraft employs a method of quotation and commentary to dissect Milton's depiction of women in his literary works. She scrutinizes Milton's portrayal of Eve in *Paradise Lost* arguing that it perpetuates traditional notions of female subordination and weakness. By engaging directly with Milton's text, Wollstonecraft not only exposes the inherent gender biases within his work but also challenges his prominent position in both literary and political canons. Her critique underscores the need to reevaluate canonical texts through a feminist lens, questioning their contribution to the perpetuation of oppressive gender norms.

Rousseau's *Emile*: Wollstonecraft's critique of Rousseau's *Emile* extends beyond mere criticism of its content; she also targets the pervasive influence of its ideas on societal perceptions of women. By dismantling the portrayal of women as submissive and domestic within *Emile,* Wollstonecraft confronts the broader cultural acceptance of such stereotypes. Her analysis not only condemns Rousseau's work but also exposes the mechanisms through which entrenched patriarchal ideologies are disseminated and normalized. Wollstonecraft's critique serves as a powerful indictment of the societal structures that uphold and perpetuate oppressive gender roles.

John Gregory's "A Legacy to His Daughters": Wollstonecraft's critique of John Gregory's conduct book, "A Legacy to His Daughters," reveals how seemingly benign texts can reinforce oppressive norms. She argues that Gregory's work unwittingly perpetuates the restrictive ideals propagated by Rousseau, contributing to the subjugation of women within society. By implicating Gregory in the perpetuation of these norms, Wollstonecraft challenges the notion of authorial intent and highlights the insidious nature of patriarchal ideology. Her critique underscores the need to critically examine seemingly innocuous texts for their complicity in maintaining oppressive power structures.

Interpretation of Normative Representations of Women: In Chapter II Wollstonecraft interprets the societal representation of women that becomes her "naturalised" self, through construction of femininity as fixed patterns of repetitive behaviour.

Beauty and Fashion: This chapter highlights her disdain for the prevalent focus on external appearances: "Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison." Here, Wollstonecraft criticizes the societal emphasis on women's physical attractiveness, that perpetuates her image as a body made for the pleasure of men, contending that it restricts their intellectual growth.

Intellectual Inferiority: Wollstonecraft asserts that women are as capable of reason and learning as men. She expresses her dissatisfaction with the prevailing notion that women are inherently inferior in intellectual capacities, stating: "I wish to persuade women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness." Here, she challenges the stereotype that associates femininity with weakness, advocating for the development of women's intellectual and physical prowess.

Passive Role as Wives: In addressing the role of women in marriage, Wollstonecraft challenges traditional notions, stating, "They begin, indeed, to doubt whether the virtues of man be virtues, or the same kind of virtues, when carried to excess, produce a different result." Here, she questions the virtue associated with women's passive roles in marriage and suggests that an imbalance in power dynamics can lead to undesirable consequences. She criticizes the prevalent practice of limiting women's education to domestic skills and tasks. The consequence is that this narrow focus confines women to the private sphere and prevents them from participating fully in public life.

Stereotyping Women as Sentimental: The author critiques the prevailing double standards, asserting, "Men are not aware of the misery they cause, and the vicious weakness they cherish, by only sentimentalizing the characters of women, and making the sex all of a piece." She deprecates the male patronising of women as "as fair defects, amiable weaknesses." Here, Wollstonecraft argues against the reduction of women to sentimentalized stereotypes, urging for a more nuanced understanding of female character.

Rousseau's Influence: Wollstonecraft critiques Jean-Jacques Rousseau's views on women and education, particularly his assertion that women should be trained solely for

domestic roles. She argues that Rousseau's ideas perpetuate women's subjugation and hinder their intellectual and moral development.

Limited Education vs. Well-rounded Education: The author also criticizes the limitations imposed on women by a narrow education, asserting, "Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man." Wollstonecraft urges women to transcend these limitations and strive for a more profound understanding of the world.Wollstonecraft advocates for a comprehensive and practical education for women, stating, "A woman of sense and manners is the finest and most delicate part of the creation." She emphasizes the importance of cultivating both intellect and manners, asserting that a well-rounded education contributes to a woman's refinement and overall excellence.

Educational Opportunities: In addressing the disparity in education between men and women, Wollstonecraft asserts, "To render mankind more virtuous, and happier, some restraint on the appetites must be laid, and the very first restraint that presents itself is that which marriage imposes." She argues for equal educational opportunities for both genders, suggesting that such equality would contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

Cultivation of Reason: If women are "capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated like slaves; or, like the brutes who are dependent on the reason of man," she says. Wollstonecraft emphasizes the need for women to cultivate reason, stating: "Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience." She argues that an educated and rational female population would contribute to a more enlightened and just society, dismantling the prevailing structures of blind obedience.

Economic Opportunity: A balanced education that trains the mind and inculcates both reason and consequently, virtue, would allow women to escape their dependency on men and meet them as equal social beings.

Moral Beings: Wollstonecraft highlights the detrimental effects of an inadequate education on women's moral development, stating, "In the present state of society, a little learning is required to support the character of a gentleman, and boys are obliged to submit to a few years of discipline." She draws attention to the societal expectations placed on men to acquire education, contrasting it with the limited opportunities afforded to women.

We can see that Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* passionately advocates a radical shift in the education of women. Mary Wollstonecraft challenges societal norms and stereotypes, calling for an education that nurtures reason, strength, and virtue in women. The chapter is a powerful plea for gender equality and the recognition of women's intellectual capabilities, offering a foundational argument for the empowerment of women through education. As an Enlightenment philosopher, she advocates liberty, "as sound politics diffuse liberty, mankind, including women, will become more wise and virtuous.

Check your progress:

1. What does Wollstonecraft want women to stop doing?

_____

2. Can women benefit from a proper education?

_____

10.2.6 Chapter Two of A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: Critical Appreciation

Chapter Two of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft is a pivotal exploration of the impact of education on women's lives and societal expectations. Wollstonecraft passionately argues for the necessity of providing women with the same educational opportunities as men. In this chapter, Wollstonecraft criticizes the prevailing notion that women should focus solely on cultivating superficial qualities to attract men. She contends that such an approach reduces women to mere ornaments, devoid of intellectual substance. Her call for educational equality is grounded in the belief that women, like men, have the capacity for reason and should be educated to become virtuous and rational individuals.

Wollstonecraft challenges the prevailing educational practices that promote the idea of women as passive and dependent. She argues that by restricting women's education to superficial accomplishments, society perpetuates a cycle of ignorance, limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to the progress of society. The author advocates for a comprehensive and intellectually rigorous education that encourages women to think critically and independently.

One of the key elements in Wollstonecraft's argument is the assertion that educating women is not just about benefiting women themselves but is essential for the betterment of society as a whole. She contends that when women are well-educated, they can be more effective mothers and contribute significantly to the intellectual and moral development of their children.

This perspective challenges the prevailing notion that women's primary role is confined to the domestic sphere, emphasizing the interconnectedness of private and public life.

Here, Wollstonecraft "enacts the role of the public female critic." The 18th century saw the strengthening of the public sphere that had been conceived from the 15th century as a space between the court-public and the private. The new public sphere was connected to the private, and this space could have excluded women, but for the intervention of female public critics like Wollstonecraft. She took up male discourse regarding women and examined it. This was possible because the literary public is a site from which the state can be critiqued.

Wollstonecraft's emphasis on reason as the foundation of education is a departure from the prevalent romanticized views of women as emotionally driven beings. She believes that cultivating reason in women would not only enhance their personal lives but would also contribute to the advancement of civilization. In this context, she critiques the prevalent cultural norms that hinder women's intellectual development and reinforce their subjugation.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft highlights the economic implications of women's education. By arguing that women should be prepared for professions and economic independence, she challenges the traditional notion of women as economic dependents on men. This vision aligns with the emerging ideas of equality and individual autonomy during the Enlightenment era.

Chapter II presents a compelling argument for the education of women as a means to empower and elevate both individuals and society. Wollstonecraft's critical examination of prevailing societal norms and her impassioned plea for educational equality lay the groundwork for the feminist movements that would follow. This chapter is a pivotal piece in the broader context of advocating for women's rights and remains relevant in the ongoing discourse on gender equality and education.

Check your progress:

1. What are the views of Wollstonecraft on the prevailing societal norms?

   _____

2. Does Wollstonecraft lay emphasis on reason?

   _____

10.2.7 To Sum Up: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as Literary Criticism

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman by Mary Wollstonecraft stands as a cornerstone in feminist literary criticism, pioneering the exploration of women's rights and equality through a

philosophical lens. Wollstonecraft supported Enlightenment principles, a republican form of government, and women's rights. She wrote *A Vindication* in reply to Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord's own report on education, and throughout the work, she critiques other writers on women's education, including Rousseau, Gregory, and Fordyce.

Wollstonecraft's work serves not only as a critique of the social and political status quo of her time but also as a foundational text that laid the groundwork for feminist thought and analysis in literature.

Terry Castle, in a recent essay, 'Women and literary criticism', helps to define what constituted women's writing and literary criticism in the 18th century:

> Women critics employed a variety of rhetorical formats, reflecting the assortment of contexts in which the practice of criticism itself - which had yet to be defined in strictly professional or academic terms - was pursued in the period. [...] Prefaces, dedications, epilogues, linguistic treatises, translations, reviews, anthologies, biographical memoirs, private correspondence, and literary works themselves [...] all provided contexts in which a distinctly 'critical' discourse might flourish. (438)

Castle poses these various modes and sites of criticism as necessary expedients in light of various 'inhibitions' against public literary women. At its core, Wollstonecraft's treatise challenges the prevailing notions of women's inferiority and subordination in society. Through meticulous argumentation and sharp critique, she dismantles the conventional wisdom that relegated women to domestic roles, devoid of intellectual and political agency. By advocating for women's education and the recognition of their inherent rationality, Wollstonecraft challenges the literary and societal conventions that perpetuated women's marginalization.

One of the key aspects of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* as a work of feminist literary criticism lies in its interrogation of the portrayal of women in literature. Wollstonecraft critiques the prevalent representations of women as either objects of desire or passive, virtuous beings whose sole purpose is to serve men. She calls for a reevaluation of literary tropes and archetypes that limit women's roles and potential, advocating instead for nuanced and complex depictions that reflect the diversity and depth of women's experiences. Wollstonecraft challenges the paradigms presented in literary works such as *Paradise Lost* in Chapter II and Rousseau's *Emil*e, throughout the text. While she acknowledges their eloquence and genius rhetorically, she underscores the "dangerous appeal" embedded within their ideas, particularly regarding gender

roles (Sireci 2). Sireci also talks about different "Interpretive Approaches" that may be applied to "Rights of Woman," due to the presence of various genres in "Rights of Woman." She suggests that Historicist readings are considered the most fruitful, highlighting the contextual factors shaping Wollstonecraft's work. Rather than viewing the text solely through her biography or as an expression of her inner incoherence or confusion, scholars like Cora Kaplan and Miriam Brody suggest that Wollstonecraft's expressions of sensibility and desire contribute to the apparent disorganization and emotional depth of the writing (Sireci 2).

The contextualization of "Rights of Woman" within the broader discourse of women's criticism and eighteenth-century periodical writing reveals that its heterogeneity and rhetorical force stem from Wollstonecraft's appropriation of contemporary critical styles. Scholars like Barbara Taylor, Vivien Jones, and others explore Wollstonecraft's use of language and rhetoric within the political and literary milieu of her time, offering insights into her intentional engagement with the public sphere. Sireci also notes that in her critiques, Wollstonecraft draws from the traditions of bluestocking women and literary periodicals, leveraging her mastery of literary knowledge and engaging with contemporary discourse to advocate for social change (2-3).

Moreover, modern scholarship has been slow to recognize the self-conscious vision of women in the eighteenth century regarding their roles in shaping the public sphere. Wollstonecraft's work challenges traditional notions of women's place in society and highlights their potential to influence and shape public discourse (Sireci 2-3). Through her meticulous analysis and incisive commentary, Wollstonecraft exposes the underlying mechanisms of gender oppression embedded within literary and cultural norms, urging readers to question and challenge the status quo (Sireci 239-40).

Moreover, Wollstonecraft's engagement with literature extends beyond mere critique; it serves as a catalyst for envisioning alternative narratives and possibilities. Through her impassioned prose, she challenges writers to imagine worlds where women are not confined by patriarchal constraints but are free to pursue their aspirations and assert their autonomy. In doing so, Wollstonecraft expands the scope of feminist literary criticism by demonstrating how literature can both reflect and shape societal attitudes towards gender and equality.

Notably, Wollstonecraft's writings sparked a reevaluation of men's roles in society, highlighting the ways in which traditional gender norms and expectations limited not only women's potential but also men's ability to fully express themselves and engage with their

emotions. By challenging the patriarchal ideals of masculinity that valorized stoicism and dominance, Wollstonecraft paved the way for a more expansive and inclusive understanding of masculinity that embraces vulnerability, empathy, and emotional authenticity.

Furthermore, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* highlights the interconnectedness of literature, politics, and social change. Wollstonecraft's call for women's rights is not isolated to the realm of abstract theory; rather, it is deeply rooted in the lived experiences of women and the urgent need for tangible reform. By situating her arguments within the broader context of Enlightenment ideals and revolutionary fervor, Wollstonecraft underscores the transformative potential of literature as a tool for political mobilization and social justice.

A Vindication of the Rights of Women emerges as a seminal work of feminist literary criticism that challenges patriarchal norms, reimagines women's roles in society, and underscores the transformative power of literature in effecting social change. Emancipation from tyranny signifies our capacity to shape our identities and chart the course of our lives. It necessitates the availability of intellectual tools and the acquisition of knowledge essential for fostering autonomy of thought. This principle embodies Wollstonecraft's paramount insight, resonating universally irrespective of gender.Through its incisive analysis and visionary outlook, Wollstonecraft's treatise continues to inspire generations of feminists and literary scholars, reaffirming the enduring relevance of her pioneering contributions to feminist thought and literary criticism.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the importance of the writings of women in the development of the concept of gender equality. You should have gained insights into Wollstonecraft's contribution to feminism and be familiar with *A Vindication of the Rights of Women.*

10.4 Glossary

Enlightenment:

- The Enlightenment was an intellectual and cultural movement that flourished primarily in the 18th century in Europe. It emphasized reason, science, individualism, and humanism.
- The Enlightenment sought to challenge traditional authority, including that of the church and monarchy, and to promote ideals such as liberty, equality, and tolerance.
- It encouraged critical thinking, empirical observation, and skepticism of traditional beliefs and institutions.
- Enlightenment thinkers criticized hypocrisy, superstition, and irrationality, advocating for rationality, progress, and the pursuit of knowledge.
- The Enlightenment had a profound impact on various fields, including philosophy, politics, science, literature, and art, laying the groundwork for modernity and shaping the development of Western thought.

Reformation:

- The Reformation was a religious movement in the 16th century that aimed to reform the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in the establishment of Protestant churches.
- It was sparked by critiques of corruption, abuses of power, and doctrinal disagreements within the Catholic Church, particularly by figures such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others.
- The Reformation led to significant theological, social, and political changes across Europe, including the fragmentation of Christianity into various Protestant denominations, the rise of nation-states, and the emergence of new religious and cultural identities.
- The Reformation also played a crucial role in the broader transformations of the early modern period, contributing to the rise of individualism, religious pluralism, and the spread of literacy and vernacular languages.

Salons of bluestockings:

- Salons of bluestockings refer to gatherings of intellectual and literary-minded individuals, particularly women, in the 18th century in England. These salons served as informal yet influential forums for discussions on literature, politics, philosophy, and various other topics of cultural significance.

Public sphere:

- The concept of the public sphere originated in the 18th century through the works of political theorists like Jürgen Habermas, and was taken up by Hannah Arendt, and others. It refers to a social space where individuals come together to discuss and deliberate matters of common concern, often with the aim of influencing public opinion and shaping political decisions.

Scientific Revolution:

- The Scientific Revolution refers to the period of rapid scientific advancements and changes in understanding that occurred primarily in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- It was characterized by the emergence of new scientific methodologies, such as experimentation, observation, and mathematical analysis, which challenged traditional Aristotelian and Ptolemaic views of the universe.
- Key figures of the Scientific Revolution include Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton, whose discoveries revolutionized our understanding of astronomy, physics, mathematics, and the natural world.
- The Scientific Revolution laid the foundation for modern science by promoting empirical inquiry, the use of reason, and the development of scientific theories based on evidence.
- Its impact extended beyond science, influencing broader cultural, religious, and philosophical developments, and contributing to the rise of the Enlightenment and the spread of rationalism and secularism.

Vindication:

- Justification. According to Cambridge Dictionary, "the fact of proving that what someone said or did was right or true, after other people thought it was wrong."

Virtue:

- For Mary Wollstonecraft, virtue encompasses several interconnected qualities and principles that contribute to the moral and ethical development of individuals, particularly women. In her work, especially in "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Wollstonecraft explores the concept of virtue within the context of women's rights, education, and social roles. The term encompasses intellectual and moral independence:, rational autonomy, self-respect and self-improvement. Besides these virtues are the qualities of empathy, compassion, justice and equality.

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in the year _____ . (**1792**)
2. Chapter _____ of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* passionately advocates a radical shift in the education of women. (**XII**)
3. The Seneca Falls Convention of _____ marked a watershed moment in feminist history. (**1848**)
4. _____ is a seminal work of feminist philosophy by Simone de Beauvoir that explores the social and historical construction of womanhood. (***A Vindication of the Rights of Women***)
5. Wollstonecraft critiques John Gregory's conduct book _____ . (***A Father's Legacy to His Daughters***).
6. Wollstonecraft scrutinizes Milton's portrayal of the character of _____ in *Paradise Lost*. (**Eve**)
7. Bell Hooks in her book _____ acknowledged Wollstonecraft's pioneering efforts towards women's movement. (***Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center***)
8. _____, in her essay, "A Room of One's Own," refers to Wollstonecraft as a foundational figure. (**Virginia Woolf**)
9. She was inspired by the works of _____ thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire. (**Enlightenment**)

10. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft responds to _____ work titled "Reflections on the Revolution in France." (**Edmund Burke's**)

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Comment on the rise of feminist movement.
2. Discuss any two authors who were influenced by Wollstonecraft.
3. What is the purpose of education for women, according to Mary Wollstonecraft in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman?
4. What does Wollstonecraft want women to stop doing? Comment.
5. What are the views of Wollstonecraft on the prevailing societal norms?

10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss how *A Vindication for the Rights of Woman* influenced feminist literature and thought.
2. Write a critical essay on Wollstonecraft's views on women's education.
3. Examine in detail the contribution made by Wollstonecraft to literary criticism.

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Castle, Terry. 'Women and Literary Criticism'. T*he Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Vol. 4 of The Eighteenth Century. Cambridge: CUP, 1997. 434-55.

Gordon, Lyndall. *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft.* Harper Perennial, 2006.

Johnson CL, ed. Frontmatter. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Sireci, Fioravanti. " Literary Criticism as Feminist Argument in Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." Ph.D Thesis awarded by University of Edinburgh, 2007.

Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Unit-11: William Wordsworth: Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

Structure

11.0 Introduction

The Romantic Age in English literature may either be marked by the start of the French Revolution (1789) or by the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a joint work by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In like way, its end is also identified either with the passing of the Reform Bill (1832) or with the ascension of Queen Victoria to the English throne (1837).

Literary criticism is an overall concept for the studies to define, analyse, interpret and classify the works of literature. Theoretical criticism uses a particular theory with a set of principles to evaluate literary writings. In the Romantic Age, there came into being practical as well as theoretical criticism. The famous triad of prose writers- Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey produced practical criticism of first class by reading and researching the major writers of the past. They did not use any theory, but analysed literature in their own way. On the other hand, their poet-critics- Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, propounded theoretical tenets about the origin, nature, substance and styles of literature- how it is to be written and read. Coleridge has given Expressive Theory, an alternative to Mimetic Theory of Aristotle since the 4th century B.C.

Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is a seminal document explaining the philosophy of romanticism, poetry and his critical thought. He is known for recognising 'imagination' as a

supreme creative power. He differentiates between 'fancy' and 'imagination' as two separate faculties. He defines imagination as the 'shaping and modifying' power, while as fancy the 'aggregate and associative power'. Imagination "struggles to idealize and to unify'; and fancy is just 'a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space'. To illustrate the ideas, Coleridge says that Milton had a highly imaginative mind and Cowley had a fanciful mind. He compares imagination with chemical compound and fancy with mechanical mixture. Moreover, he proposes two types of imaginations- primary and secondary. Primary imagination is the organ of common perception though the senses; while as secondary imagination is a poetic vision. The secondary imagination is a poetic power possessed by poets. It enables them to comprehend things and compose poetry. The function of secondary imagination is a mystical operation. It mediates between man and nature and thereby identifies the organic unity of the universe.

The romantic idea of poetry as an expression of the poet's mind and imagination has given birth to Expressive theory. The theory sees literary work in relation to the author. It tends to evaluate literature on its adequacy and accuracy to the writer's state of mind. Before it, Aristotle's Mimetic theory views literary work as an imitation or refection of the world or life. Its basic criterion is truth applied to literary work to see compatibility between subject matter and reality.

Shelley wrote "A Defence of Poetry" as a reaction to Thomas Love Peacock's "The Four Ages of Poetry." Shelley says that the artist is a superior being. Poetry as an instrument can be exploited to describe nature and the sublime. He underlies the fact that poetry is pleasurable and acts in a divine manner and goes beyond the common human consciousness. Poetry aims to lift the veil from the hidden beauty of the world rather than improve human morality. Shelley asserts that poetry enlightens the inner realm of the poet as well readers by making them aware of the inherent connection between man and the external world. He believes that poetry encapsulates the best and the happiest moments of life. Thus, he strengthens the overall romantic notion that nature and beauty are substantial meanings for life.

11.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- know the concept of literary criticism
- understand criticism in the era of Romanticism
- analyse the poetic theory of Wordsworth in terms of the nature and origin of poetry; and the qualifications and role of a poet
- help you to see the distinction between romantic theory and theories that came into being before and after the Romantic Age

11.2 William Wordsworth: Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) along with his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge, launched the Romantic movement in the history of English Literature with the publication of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The 'Preface' brings out Wordsworth's point of view on the art of poetry, its origin, nature, and role in life. It is this 'Preface' that establishes him as a great critic. As a poet, Wordsworth comes only after Shakespeare and Milton. His *magnum opus The Prelude* (1850) is his sublime poetic achievement. It is a multidimensional work in its literary value, philosophical profundity, and self-reflection and meditation is concerned. It simultaneously conveys multiple meanings. It was published posthumously by his wife. Wordsworth remained the poet laureate of Britain from 1843 until his demise from pleurisy on 23rd April 1850. He is well-known as a poet of deliberations and epistemological speculations. He shows a close and compact relation between human life and external Nature. He started composing poetry as a young enthusiastic boy in grammar school and, prior to his graduation from college, he had toured and travelled across Europe. This moving experience and intimate observation deepened and strengthened his connection with Nature and his empathetic attitude towards common man. This kinship with common man is noticeably seen in his advocacy for a rustic and simple style and substance for poetry. Besides, *The Prelude* and Preface *to Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth's well read and critically appreciated poems can be identified as "Solitary Reaper"; "The World is too Much with Us"; "Peter Bell"; " Ode: Intimation of Immorality"; " Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"; "The Recluse"; "The Ruined Cottage"; "Michael"; and like poems.

11.2.1 Romanticism as a Reaction to Neoclassicism

"Preface *to the Lyrical Ballads"* is a sort of manifesto of the Romantic Movement reflecting almost all the main tenets of Romanticism. It can also be termed as an antidote to save poetry from neoclassical intellectualism, didacticism, crude social reality, formality and lingual rigidity. Though the last generation of the Neoclassical Age represented by Johnson breaks away from the set tradition by including Nature and melancholic tinge, it is "Preface *to Lyrical Ballads"* that has revolutionized English poetry by promoting new content and language. Wordsworth asserts that time has come to have different poetry that can rekindle mankind to be emotionally vibrant and morally conscious. He identifies the fact that there seems to be "a craving for extraordinary incidents" among the public and "the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves" to such taste. From the study of "Preface," one affirms that writers should be sensitive to feelings, but ought not to exhibit them so that they become artificial.

At the very outset of the "Preface", Wordsworth demonstrates that by publishing the *Lyrical Ballads* four years ago in 1798, he was basically experimenting with the type of poetry that would be appreciated by the people. Since the poems were accepted and critically acclaimed widely, he wrote "Preface *to Lyrical Ballads"* to explain his vision and theory of poetry. These poems show Wordsworth's intention of not only providing pleasure, but also to create a class of poetry " well adapted to interest mankind permanently, not important in the multiplicity and in the quality of its moral relation." One can infer two points from it: a) to compose poems that can entertain not only a well-learned section, but also the general public; b) to produce poetry promoting moral conduct and humane feelings among readers. Wordsworth says that his poetic deviation from the Neoclassical period is not the outcome " of an insolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty". Actually, he wants to get away from "certain classes of poetry and expressions" in Neoclassical poetry, displaying an artificial "gaudiness and phraseology." Moreover, Wordsworth's intention to write in a simpler and less formal style than Neoclassical literature was to go away from his predecessors' style and subject which he termed as too flashy and rather senseless.

11.2.2 Blend of Poetry, Nature and Humanity

At the start of the 19th century, Europe was shifting alarmingly towards industrialism and urbanization. Wordsworth felt that such rapidly turning to city crowded lifestyle would cause

people to become numb and insensitive. Therefore, he used the subject of pristine Nature in his poetry to keep his readers morally aware and emotionally alive. He saw literature based on nature as a remedy to all maladies of life, believing in materialism, urbanization and industrialization. He felt that his Nature centred poetry has a holy plan and 'worthy purpose' to counter the effects of such ideology. In view of urbanization and industrialisation, Wordsworth showed urgency to produce literature that would be "well adapted to interest mankind permanently and quality of its moral relations". Such poetry could keep people human and humane by enticing them towards Nature.

Moreover, Europe at that time was in a political crisis and the propagandist literature was misinforming the public. So it was also adding to the malaise of his times: "…the increasing accumulation of man in cities, where the uniformity of their occupation produces a craving for extraordinary incidents which the rapid communication of information hourly gratifies". In the eyes of romantics, this race for life away from Nature, humanity, morality and spirituality caused a bad taste and insane life. This can be noted in his detestable reference to the contemporary Gothic novels and German melodramas: "The invaluable works of our elder writers…are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse". He adds that "human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants" by providing a new type of more natural literary amusement.

Wordsworth wants to bring mankind back on track of Nature through his poetry. This type of poetry persuades the public to embrace the simple and unmixed joy in the countryside. In 'Preface' he asserts that the time demands the ballad poetry to allure readers towards Nature. He says that: "It has therefore appeared to me that to endeavour to produce or enlarge his capability is one of the best services in which at any period, a writer can be engaged; but his service excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day". Wordsworth goes on to depict that Nature centred poetry can cure the depravity and immorality by dint of its power to take people in the lap of Nature- all tranquil and pacific. The "purer, more lasting, and more exquisite" pleasure that his poetry of Nature creates is a sharp contrast to the "gross and violent" stimulation that crude city life and sensational literature gives birth to. The joy that urban experience and sensational literature of the previous age is transient and vanishing in meaning while as the happiness of Nature is long-lasting and graceful. The lyrical and ballad poetry would restore morality and proper humanity and therefore would redeem society from spiritual decadence and

degeneration. He says that literature reflecting Nature would reinvigorate the tired minds and barren souls and thereby fill them with everlasting joy and serenity.

11.2.3 Emotions and Feelings as the Fountainhead of Poetry

William Wordsworth in the "Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads"* defines poetry as: "…all good poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But these emotions and feelings need conscious grooming and a dexterous sifting on the part of a poet before final execution. The poet is supposed to be a vigilant observer of thoughts and feelings that people possess in 'the state of excitement.' The depicted stuff must be effective and relatable. In order to write a successful and efficacious poetry, the poet must pass through various phases to comprehend the subject matter with clarity. These phases are: observation; recollection; meditation; and composition. The subject in the form of emotions and thoughts is observed and is kept in abeyance for time being and then ultimately recollected for meditation in order to compose the same in the form of a poem. Wordsworth believes that a good poet must be capable of communicating his or her thoughts to readers clearly and candidly. He affirms that emotions and feelings are strongly intermingled in the process of creation: "For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feeling." The poet should understand the inherent connection between thoughts and feelings in order to present himself as emotionally comprehensive and sensitive. When emotions and thoughts are successfully and sensitively conveyed, they have a greater enlightening effect on the readers. The poet with a powerful sensibility easily identifies himself with the people and situations he portrays. Therefore, it is evident that a poet must be a keen observer, profound mediator and crafty executor.

William Wordsworth expects that a poet should recollect emotions and feelings 'in tranquillity' in order to make the depicted subject timeless and boundless in terms of its application and meaning. His projected poet is "…chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate excitement; and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced by him in that manner." Moreover, his process of poetic creation incorporates not only contemplating emotions 'in tranquillity' but pondering on those emotions until "… by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind." This whole process permits a poet to have a distancing effect and also additionally assists him to achieve a refinement in the

composition. In this way, a poet creates a deeply enduring effect on the readers so far as their pleasure and enlightenment are concerned. In a nutshell, the soul of poetry lies in the shape of a profound expression of emotions as the same benefits the reader in the way of understanding himself, his world better. Besides, Wordsworth claims that the feeling expressed in the poem give significance to the action and situation rather than the action and situation to the feeling. He also adds that poetry relies on emotion more than the actual situation being depicted.

11.2.4 Poetic Theory: Subject Matter and Style

As a mark of reaction to Neoclassism, William Wordsworth throughout "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" advocates the significance of ordinary life in terms of language and subject matter for poetry. The prose-like language takes readers close to normal, daily communication of the people and, above all, is intelligible to everybody. Such a type of language is characterized by simplicity, sincerity and honesty. It creates a sense of permanence and is accessible and manageable for readers across borders and time. Wordsworth asserts that writers who do not make use of ordinary language "separate themselves from the sympathies of men" and thereby falter to play their given role. The use of complex language and jargon creates a gulf between the readers and the poets, and the readers find it difficult to connect themselves with the situations and the people depicted in the literature. Such sort of writing fails to produce an enduring impact and outcome. Wordsworth adds some poets, as per their habit, "indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation." He writes that some words, phrases, and expressions can become listless and banal over time despite looking stylish, that even the successful poet cannot 'overpower' the bitter and unpleasantness flavour such words have adapted.

William Wordsworth describes that common situations from ordinary life, both in view of style and substance, clearly reveal human nature. It creates an impact and a universal appeal in literature. He openly depicts that his 'principal subject' is "to choose incidents and situations from common life… and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination … and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them … the primary laws of our nature." Wordsworth claims that the choice of 'low and rustic' life helps to internalize the essence and beingness of soul in a very free, fair and unreserved manner. This kind of expression of pure feelings in plain language is always empathetic and identical. He adds that rural life is comprehensive, relatable, universal, and boundless, and therefore is fit for poetry.

Wordsworth also deliberates on the point that "a selection of language really used by men" shows the reality of peasantry and people in real life situations. He says that artificiality and vanity have corrupted human values and language. So, instead of employing crafty, rigid and unnatural poetic forms, he likes the conduct of ordinary people, whether it is thought or speech. He expresses that such "a language arising out of separate experience and regular feelings is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets." Moreover, Wordsworth reprehends the poetic diction: " I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it. This I have done…to bring my language near to the language of men." The excessive and hard laboured poetic diction is all unnatural, artificial, and devoid of spirit. It always fails to amuse and educate the people. In the context of this ordinary language and real life situations, Wordsworth aptly writes: " I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him."

11.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to know the concept of criticism in literature, gain insight into romantic literary criticism, critics and their beliefs regarding literary art and its function in life. You should have also understood the "Preface" as laying down Wordsworth's theory of poetry, its origin, nature and role towards society.

11.4 Glossary

Ballad: A type of narrative poem, adapted for recitation or singing.

Consciousness: The state of being aware or consciousness. Awareness or wistfulness.

Degeneration: Decline, decadence, debasement.

Empathetic: Relating to empathy- understanding and identification with the thoughts, feelings of others.

Encapsulate: Enclose something like a capsule; to present something bigger in a brief manner.

Enlightenment: An act of enlighten or being educated and instructed.

Epistemological: Relating to epistemology or theory of knowledge.

Expressive: Conveying thoughts and feeling of a speaker or writer.

Gothic: Pertaining to the style of fictional writing associated with the Gothic revival, emphasizing violent or macabre events in a mysterious, desolate setting.

Insolence: Insulting or arrogance.

Literary Criticism: A study, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of literature.

Magnum Opus: A major or outstanding work of literature, music or art, a masterpiece.

Melodrama: A drama replete with romantic sentiment and agonizing situations, with a musical accompaniment only in parts which are especially thrilling or pathetic

Neoclassism: Any movement to revive the earlier classical art as in English literature starting from Dryden's Age to Johnson's era.

Peasantry: Poor rural workers; rustics; people belonging to the lowest class.

Posthumously: After death; post mortem.

Pristine: Pure, unspoiled or uncorrected.

Propagandist: Source spreading propagandist.

Recluse: Secluded, isolated or sequestered.

Recollection: Remembrance; Recalling, memory.

Reinvigorate: Revitalize; to create new energy, life and enthusiasm.

Romanticism: Of a work of literature, a writer etc.: being like or having the features of a romance in the sense of something appealing deeply to the imagination.

Seminal: Relating to seed and semen; hugely influential and impactful due to newness or originality.

Serenity: Calmness; peaceful or serene.

Sublime: Exalted, heightened, or to ennoble. Grand.

Tranquillity: Free from disturbance; peacefulness.

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. When was the first edition of "Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* Published"?

a) 1788

b) 1789

c) **1798**

d) 1799

2. *Biographia Literaria* belongs to which field of literature?

a) **Literary criticism**

b) Poetry

c) Fiction

d) Drama

3. Which one of the following is not the stages of poetic process according to Wordsworth?

a) Observation

b) Recollection

c) **Procrastination**

d) Composition

4. *A Defence of Poetry* is a work of_____.

a) Byron

b) **Shelley**

c) Wordsworth

d) Coleridge

5. Pick the odd one out:

a) Keats

b) Wordsworth

c) Shelley

d) **Hazlitt**

6. The definition of poetry "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" appears in _____.

a) ***Lyrical Ballads***

b) *The Prelude*

7. Wordsworth's magnum opus *The Prelude* (1850) is his sublime poetic achievement.

a) **True**

b) False

8. Wordsworth remained the poet laureate of Britain from 1843 until his demise from pleurisy on 23rd April 1850.

a) **True**

b) False

9. In ‘Preface’, Wordsworth asserts that the time demands the ballad poetry to allure readers towards Nature.

    a) **True**

    b) False

10. Wordsworth expects that a poet should recollect emotions and feelings 'in tranquillity' in order to make the depicted subject timeless and boundless.

    a) **True**

    b) False

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Define literary criticism.
2. Write a short note on Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry.*
3. What according to Coleridge are two types of imaginations? How are they different from each other?
4. Describe the four stages of poetic process as given by Wordsworth.
5. Define poetry in the light of Wordsworth's definition.

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate on the literary criticism of the Romantic Age.
2. Critically evaluate "Preface of the Lyrical Ballads" as a reaction to Neoclassicism.
3. Examine the contribution of Wordsworth to literary theory and criticism.

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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

Alexander, Michael. A History of English Literature. 2nd edition. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*. Oxford University Press, 1982.

Carter, Ronald and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Unit-12: S.T. Coleridge: Excerpt from Chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria*

Structure

12.0 Introduction

This Unit covers literary criticism propounded by Coleridge during the Romantic Age. It covers the background, summary and critical appreciation of Chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria.*

12.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understanding Romantic literary criticism and theory
- compare the viewpoints of William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge
- explore Coleridge's literary and poetical imagination through his criticism
- examine the key concepts in *Biographia Literaria*

12.2 S.T. Coleridge: Excerpt from Chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria*

12.2.1 Neoclassical Period and Romantic Criticism

Let us first look at the literary context of the romantic movement as a revolt against neo-classical ideals. The neo-classical poetry, particularly, focused on the classical models inspired by the classical Augustan Age. The age of King Augustus was known for the Latin poets, such as Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. These poets refined and formulated principles for writing poetry suitable for different genres. In the early eighteenth century, a parallel was developed by English poets like John Dryden and Alexander Pope conforming to the models of poetry propagated by Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. Hence, this phase in English literature came to be known as the Augustan Age because it imitated classical poets during the times of King Augustus. It also marks the period as Neo-classical because of the use of classical models in a new manner in English literature.

Neo-classical literature shifted away from the romantic spirit of the Elizabethan period and focused on urban life and mannerisms. It changed the literary ethos of the period through its emphasis on mannerisms, sophistication, and etiquette. On the one hand, it resulted in image-consciousness, prestige, pride, glamour, and refined language. This phase was marked by the assertion of English identity and seeking pride in it by Englishmen. On the other hand, it resulted in pomp and show, artificiality, hollowness, and unnecessary facade.

The impact was equally felt in literature as the neoclassical writers were particular about their style and presentation. Writers talked of logic, reason, thought, urban spaces, and culture. Pope and Dryden, like classical writers, used heroic couplets. Poetry became rigid in stanza structure. Diction became refined, sophisticated, and artificial. There was a deliberate use of grand phrases, idioms, and expressions. However, the content remained trivial, commonplace, and quotidian, resulting in a burlesque. Wit, humor, and satire became popular literary devices. The impact of this approach can also be traced in literary criticism in the works of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson which shows their emphasis on the perfection of literary forms.

This phase was followed by the Transition period marked by writers like Burns, Blake, Cowper, Crabbe, and Gray. These writers retained some structural features of the neoclassical period but completely changed the subject matter and its treatment. They brought in the common people, everyday experience, and rustic life at the center of their poetry. They shifted from materialistic glorification into discussions on life and philosophical depth.

Check your progress

1. What is neoclassicism in English literature?

_____

2. Mention two features of Neoclassicism.

_____

12.2.2 Romantic Revival and Romantic Criticism

Arthur Compton-Rickett describes the phase after the Neoclassical period as the phase of the "Romantic Revival" considering it as imbued with the romantic sensibilities that were present in the Elizabethan period. The Romantic period exhibited similar features and traits that were present during the Elizabethan period. There were drastic changes in the social and cultural structures, which subsequently impacted the artistic sensibilities. The Elizabethan period was inspired by the ideals of the Renaissance. It was a phase marked by a spirit of inquiry, exploration, discovery, and imagination. The writers during the Elizabethan period explored the themes of love, power, and the human condition. There was a celebration of nature and the human spirit. Concerns about power dynamics, political, political instability, challenges from internal and external forces, power struggles and political machinations, themes of tyranny, rebellion, and the ethical implications of wielding power remained vibrant during the Renaissance and resonated during the Romantic period. Similar themes were touched upon by the poets of the Romantic period. They delved into introspection, human-nature bonds, existence and identity, imagination, emotions, creativity, mysticism, philosophy, transcendentalism, and morality. There was a stylistic shift from artificial and strict codes and forms to a more relaxed expression, language, and metrical structures. Romanticists made use of symbolism, metaphor, allegory, moral, and metaphysical themes.

Literary criticism during the Romantic period emerged out of these transformations and shifts.

Check your progress:

1. What are the main themes in Romantic literature?

_____

2. Romantic literature was a revival of Elizabethan themes. (True/False)

12.2.3 The French Revolution

The romantic period in English literature is a product of two influences: the French Revolution and continental philosophy. In the political sphere, it was inspired by the French Revolution and its ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." French philosophers like Montesquieu and Voltaire revolted against slavery and the traditional ideas of government and brought common people to the center.

The ideals of the French Revolution had a deep impact on the intellectual climate of the time. Coleridge, along with other Romantic poets, was inspired by the revolutionary fervor that sought to overthrow established hierarchies and promote the power of the individual. In "Biographia Literaria," Coleridge reflects on the revolutionary spirit and its implications for literature and philosophy.

The ideal of liberty in the French Revolution sparked the spirit and search for freedom. This search was manifested in the exploration of imagination in Romantic literature. For Coleridge, like other romantics, freedom could be experienced and exercised best through imagination. Therefore, imagination becomes the most gripping idea in *Biographia Literaria*. The upheaval in France during the French Revolution was a movement of common people for their rights and privileges. It was an attempt towards freedom from a despotic aristocracy and penalizing clergies. This helped in freeing the creative imagination of philosophers and writers. Coleridge explores the scope of this universal and creative imagination through his model of literary criticism.

However, Coleridge's criticism is not merely a blind adherent or vague inspiration from the French Revolution. He grapples with the darker side of the French Revolution, acknowledging the violence and chaos that accompanied the pursuit of radical ideals. This tension between idealistic aspirations and the harsh realities of the revolution finds its parallel in Coleridge's exploration of the sublime and the grotesque in literature. Absolute freedom could result in anarchy, whether in the political sphere, social, or literary. *Biographia Literaria* captures this concern by emphasizing the need for some poetic base and criteria despite the poetic freedom in literature.

Check your progress:

1. Write the three principles of the French Revolution.

_____

2. What are the two influences on the Romantic period in English literature?

_____

12.2.4 The *Sturm-und-Drang Movement*

In the philosophical sphere, Romantic literature and criticism were motivated by the Sturm-und-Drang (Storm and Stress) movement which was a proto-romantic movement in German literature popularized by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friederich Schiller in the late 18th century. It was characterized by emotional intensity, individualism, and a rejection of Enlightenment rationalism. The German philosophers revolted against the Enlightenment cult of rationalism. As B. Prasad writes in *An Introduction to English Criticism,* previous critics were concerned about the merits and demerits of the poem. Coleridge, on the other hand, was interested in philosophical principles and the creative process. *Biographia Literaria* delves into Coleridge's engagement with German idealism, with a more nuanced understanding of human consciousness and creativity. His influence on philosophical fervor of the movement in *Biographia Literaria* is evident in his exploration of subjective experience and the role of the individual in artistic creation.

Drawing inspiration from German Romantic thought, Coleridge emphasizes the importance of subjective experience and personal emotion in shaping artistic endeavors. The emphasis of the *Sturm und Drang* movement on spontaneity and the unbridled expression of emotion is reflected in Coleridge's discussions on imagination and creativity. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge explores the concept of the "esemplastic power," a term he uses to describe the imaginative faculty that unifies diverse elements into a coherent whole. It shows the impact of the movement on the unity of feeling and the immediacy of emotional experience in artistic creation. Furthermore, Coleridge's discussions of the sublime in *Biographia Literaria* align with the movement's fascination with awe-inspiring nature and the powerful emotional responses it can evoke. The influence of Kant's philosophy can be noted in Coleridge in redefining the relationship between subjectivity and the external world, focusing on individual perception and experience. The movement sought to prioritize individual feeling over abstract reason, and Coleridge's exploration of the imagination as a dynamic and transformative force aligns with this emphasis on the emotional and subjective aspects of human experience.

Check your progress:

1. What was the Sturm und Drang Movement?

_____

2. Was there any influence of the *Sturm und Drang Movement* on Coleridge?

_____

12.2.5 *Lyrical Ballads* and *Biographia Literaria*

The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1978 marks the beginning of the Romantic period. It was a joint venture of William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge. The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* turns out to be the manifesto of romantic sensibility. Wordsworth rebels against the neoclassical ideals and declares that poetry should be written in the common man's language, should convey the common man's experience, and should make use of rustic life, surroundings, and background.

Then there occurred a conflict between Coleridge and Wordsworth. The result of this was his reply to Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in *Biographia Literaria.* Several reasons could be traced in the publication of *Biographia Literaria.* First, *Biographia Literaria* serves as a platform for Coleridge to articulate and clarify the theoretical foundations of *Lyrical Ballads*. *Lyrical Ballads* marked a departure from the prevailing neoclassical poetic conventions, introducing a novel, natural, and emotive style. Coleridge's critical and philosophical insights in *Biographia Literaria* provide a retrospective analysis of the inspiration guiding *Lyrical Ballads*, offering readers a deeper understanding of the motives behind the revolutionary poetic experiment.

Coleridge's involvement in the joint venture became the second important reason that shaped *Biographia Literaria*. As one of the co-authors, Coleridge had a unique perspective on the collaborative process and he shared literary vision with Wordsworth. *Biographia Literaria* allows Coleridge to discuss his contributions to the collection, such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," and to delineate the distinctiveness of his poetic approach within the collaborative framework. It serves as a self-analysis of his role in shaping the innovative spirit of *Lyrical Ballads*. The third reason revolves around the critical reception and public response to *Lyrical Ballads*. The collection faced mixed reviews, while some critics appreciated its freshness, others critiqued it for not conforming to traditional poetic norms. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge addresses these critiques, defends the principles of the work,

and clarifies the intentions behind the poetic choices made in the *Lyrical Ballads*. It contributes to the broader discourse on the nature and purpose of poetry. Fourthly, *Biographia Literaria* serves as a vehicle for Coleridge to articulate his evolving poetic and philosophical ideas in response to the intellectual climate of his time. The personal and biographical elements embedded in *Biographia Literaria* constitute another crucial dimension. Coleridge uses the work to narrate his own intellectual and artistic journey, offering insights into the experiences, influences, and challenges that shaped his poetic sensibilities.

Check your progress:

1. What were Wordsworth's ideas in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*?

_____

2. Briefly comment on Coleridge's contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads.*

_____

12.2.6 Summary

Coleridge opens the discussion in "Chapter XIV" concerning his conversations with Wordsworth that he had over poetry. He describes two points to be taken into consideration regarding poetry: "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination." One way of communicating in poetry is through naturalistic depictions of things as they exist in the world. Another way of portraying things in poetry is through newness introduced by imagination. This approach sets forth the creation and framework of *Lyrical Ballads* and the intention behind it. It was inclined to incorporate two kinds of poems: natural and supernatural.

The interaction of the poet's mind with the sudden charms and beauties of nature results in "poetry of nature", as is exemplified in the works of Wordsworth. In this category of poetry "subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as well found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves." The subject of such poetry was common people, ordinary life, rural setting, and naturalistic depictions. Wordsworth thus chose to represent ordinary things through "novelty…and directing it to loveliness and wonders of the world before us." Through his poetry, Wordsworth transformed the ordinary experience into an

elevated one by registering such experiences which otherwise go unnoticed in the humdrum of everyday life.

In contrast to Wordsworth's subject, Coleridge chose to present "incidents and agents ..., in part at least, supernatural." So he directed his poems "to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic." In this chapter, he further introduces the phrase "willing suspension of disbelief." This phrase sets the tone for romantic poetry characterized by the stamp of Coleridge. As Coleridge used supernatural themes in his poetry, it was marked by imagination. It brought his poems closer to reality, but also because of imagination, it drifted away from rationalism and natural depiction. This resulted in readers' disbelief in the poetic event. But at the same time, it generated a joy that thrilled the readers so much so that they could suspend their disbelief for "poetic faith."

Coleridge addresses the famous controversy that emerged post-publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which even affected his friendship with Wordsworth. First of all, he realized that the subject of the poems of Wordsworth overshadowed his poems. Second, the poems by Wordsworth were more in number than his, which appeared more as an intrusion into the whole project than a balance. Wordsworth presented the *Lyrical Ballads* as an experiment and in the second edition he added a detailed preface explaining his theory of poetry. Coleridge answers in the context of this preface that Wordsworth contended "the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds" and rejected phrases and styles that did not conform to "the language of real life." He then addresses the criticism that Wordsworth had to face for this kind of poetry. They were looked down on as childish, marked with "meanness of language and inanity of thought," as parodies and pretentious imitations. Coleridge says that if they had been so downgraded then people must have forgotten the poems and the preface. But this did not happen. The popularity of Wordsworth and his poems continuously increased with time. People with strong sensibilities and meditative minds appreciated and admired Wordsworth's poems.

Further in the chapter, Coleridge explains that he was not satisfied with Wordsworth's argument in the preface which seemed "erroneous in principle" and contradictory to "other parts of the same preface, and to the author's practice in the greater number of the poems themselves." Coleridge admits that this marked the beginning of the controversy and also that he had to address it frequently simply because his name was associated with the *Lyrical Ballads*. He explains briefly his idea about poems and poetry, "in kind, and essence." He makes use of philosophy to define poetry. Firstly, he tries to define poetry based on form and content. He

compares prose and poetry, that they may contain the same element, "the difference, therefore, must consist in a different combination of them." A poem is "distinguished from prose "by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly." By this definition, all compositions, irrespective of their contents, that give pleasure by "anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities…may be entitled poems." The other way of defining poetry is based on the goal, object, or function. He brings together the idea of truth, pleasure, and ultimate end. The ultimate end of any work is truth. Achievement of this ultimate end will result in the realization of truth and this will result in pleasure. He compares poetry with science and history. Science discloses absolute and demonstrable truths, while history reveals experienced and recorded facts. But in the case of poetry, "communication of pleasure" is not merely the ultimate end but also the immediate object. He then compares poetry with novels and romances. He then questions whether if a metre is imposed on prose or romances then will it categorize them as poems. This can happen only if all other parts are made consonant with it and produce a poetic effect.

This leads to another definition of the poem:

> A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to the works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species…it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each part.

Coleridge then shifts to the points on which he agreed with Wordsworth and points on which he differed. The difference in the philosophy of poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge becomes evident in this chapter simply as the two looked at the definition of poetry from different perspectives. For Wordsworth, poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (180). So Coleridge says that if a person wishes to look at any composition with rhyme, meter, or both as a poem, then he will not confront it. Another merit of the poem could be its unity that different parts of the poem should be as entertaining as the whole, just like a tale. But a "legitimate poem" is one in which "the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their purpose harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose" (194). Coleridge generalizes that a poem in any age or from any country is usually considered to be a set of lines that even if it is disjointed from its original text or context, retains the pleasure and the general result. A poem makes the process of reading as well as the product of reading pleasurable. He states: "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the

final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself."

He compares the movement of poetry with that of the motion of a serpent, which was considered a symbol of intellectual power by the Egyptians. Once again he deliberates on the definition of poetry that writings of Plato, Bishop Taylor, or Sacra's of Burnet, reveal that "poetry of highest kind may exist without meter, and even without contra-distinguishing objects of a poem" (195). But at the same time, "a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry" (195). Thus, he differentiates between a poem and poetry.

In the last part of the chapter, Coleridge associates the idea of poetry with the poet. That poetry is but a reflection of poetic genius, of the poet's mind. A poet can "diffuse a tone and spirit of unity" that blends, mixes, merge, and fuses his vision with "the synthetic and magical power" of imagination. The imagination plays a crucial role in allowing the poet to balance and reconcile oppositional elements of sameness and difference, general and concrete, the individual and the representative, the natural and the artificial. Through imagination, a poet "subordinates art to nature, the manner to matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry."

Coleridge concludes this chapter by declaring: "Good sense in the body of poetic genius, Fancy its drapery, Motion its life, and Imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."

Check your progress:

1. What is "willing suspension of disbelief" according to Coleridge?

_____

2. Does Coleridge make a distinction between poem and poetry?

_____

12.2.7 Critical Appreciation

Chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria* is also titled as "On the Imagination, or Esemplastic Power." It is a pivotal section where Samuel Taylor Coleridge delves into his profound exploration of the creative faculty of the imagination. This chapter stands out as a philosophical cornerstone of the entire work, providing insights into Coleridge's evolving thoughts on the nature of artistic inspiration, the imaginative process, and its connection to human consciousness.

The chapter begins with Coleridge's assertion that the imagination is a unifying and synthetic power, which he terms the "esemplastic" or "moulding" power. This central idea forms

the core of his metaphysical inquiry, and he uses the term to convey the transformative capacity of the imagination to shape disparate elements into a cohesive whole. Coleridge's use of neologisms, such as "esemplastic," reflects his attempt to articulate concepts that transcend conventional language and encapsulate the profound and dynamic nature of the imaginative process.

Coleridge draws inspiration from German transcendental philosophy, particularly the works of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling. He integrates these philosophical influences into his own conceptual framework, emphasizing the imaginative act as a synthesis of various faculties of the mind. This synthesis, according to Coleridge, is not merely a passive reception of sensory impressions but an active, creative engagement that transcends the limitations of ordinary perception.

A notable aspect of Chapter XIII is Coleridge's exploration of the primary and secondary imagination. He posits that the primary imagination is a universal, divine force that operates in everyone, providing the raw material for creative expression. The secondary imagination, on the other hand, is individual and distinct, shaping this raw material into specific works of art. This nuanced distinction underscores Coleridge's belief in the interconnectedness of the individual and the universal, as well as the transformative power of the imaginative process.

Coleridge's discussion extends to the relationship between the imagination and nature. He argues that nature itself is a manifestation of the divine imagination, and the poet, as a participant in the creative process, acts as a mediator between the divine and the human. This theme aligns with Romantic ideals that elevate the role of the poet as a visionary and interpreter of the sublime aspects of nature.

Moreover, Coleridge explores the concept of symbols and symbolizing as essential components of the imaginative act. Symbols, in his view, are the language through which the imagination communicates profound truths that go beyond literal representation. This emphasis on symbolism echoes Romantic ideals of transcending the mundane and accessing deeper layers of meaning through artistic expression.

In Chapter XIV, Coleridge's prose takes on a highly metaphysical and abstract quality, reflecting the complexity of the ideas he grapples with. The chapter serves as a bridge between Coleridge's theoretical discussions and their practical application in the creation of poetry and literature. It provides a foundation for understanding the subsequent chapters of *Biographia*

Literaria, where Coleridge applies these philosophical principles to analyze specific works and experiences.

In conclusion, Chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria* is a profound exploration of the imaginative faculty, showcasing Coleridge's synthesis of philosophical influences and his unique contribution to Romantic thought. Through his intricate analysis, Coleridge lays the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the transformative and unifying power of the imagination. He attempts to define poem, poetry and the role of a poet.

Check your progress:

1. What is the significance of imagination in the creative process, as per Coleridge?

_____

2. Who is a poet, according to Coleridge?

_____

12.3 Learning Outcomes

It is expected that on the completion of this Unit, you should be able to understand the role of literary criticism and theory that emerged in the nineteenth century. You should also have gained an understanding into Coleridge's revolt against Wordsworth's theory of poetry, and how he proposed his own theory of poetry.

12.4 Glossary

Romantic literary criticism: A branch in English literary criticism that emerged in the nineteenth century. It was particularly inspired by the political and continental currents in Europe. Nature and imagination were seen as important components in the development of romantic literary criticism.

Neoclassical criticism: This developed during the eighteenth century, primarily focusing on mannerisms, sophistication and artificiality. It was marked by criticism of hypocritical and pompous language and manners.

Willing Suspension of Disbelief: A phrase made popular by Coleridge when a reader is ready to suspend his disbelief at the seemingly unbelievable event or object and enjoy it as a reading experience.

Primary Imagination: According to Coleridge, primary imagination is "living power and the prime agent of all human perception." It is universal, common to all beings, and everyone can experience and enjoy.

Secondary Imagination: According to Coleridge, this is peculiar to poetic genius and is attained through individual experience. It is important for a creative process.

Fancy: According to Coleridge, Fancy is "a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space". It is an inferior version of imagination which gives a very brief pleasure by associating with material reality.

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. *Lyrical Ballads* was published in the year _____. (1798)
2. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* came out in the year _____. (1817)
3. Chapter 14 of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* discusses the creation of *Lyrical Ballads*, a joint effort with Wordsworth.
    a. **True**
    b. False
4. Which of the given poems are written by S.T. Coleridge?
    a. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
    b. Kubla Khan, Or, A Vision in a Dream
    c. Dejection: An Ode
    d. All of the above
5. In "Biographia Literaria," what does Coleridge mean by the "willing suspension of disbelief"?
    a. Readers should believe every word in a poem
    b. Readers should never believe anything in a poem
    c. Readers should temporarily accept the unreal elements in a poem.
    d. Readers should criticize all aspects of a poem.
6. Coleridge explores the concept of the "esemplastic power," a term he uses to describe the imaginative faculty that unifies diverse elements into a coherent whole.
    a. **True**

b. False

7. What term does Coleridge use to describe poetry that relies solely on the external senses without engaging the mind?
    a. Sensational poetry
    b. Organic poetry
    c. **Fancy**
    d. Imagination
8. According to Coleridge, what is the ultimate aim of poetry?
    a. To entertain and amuse readers
    b. To convey moral lessons
    c. To communicate the poet's personal experiences
    d. To awaken the reader's imagination and engage their intellect
9. In "Biographia Literaria," Coleridge criticizes which contemporary poet for lacking imagination and creativity?
    a. William Wordsworth
    b. John Keats
    c. Lord Byron
    d. William Blake
10. Who among these is NOT a 'Lake Poet'?
    a. S.T. Coleridge
    b. William Wordsworth
    c. Robert Southey
    d. G.B. Rossetti

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What does Coleridge mean by the term "esemplastic" in "Biographia Literaria"?
2. According to Coleridge, what is the ultimate aim of poetry?
3. Write a short note on Coleridge's view on a poem.
4. Briefly discuss Coleridge's view on primary and secondary imagination.
5. What literary concept does Coleridge consider central to the understanding of poetry and criticism in "Biographia Literaria"?

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Coleridge's literary criticism as a revolt against the Neoclassical school of poetry.
2. Discuss Coleridge's views on imagination and the creative process as presented in Chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria*.
3. Examine in detail, the contribution made by Coleridge to literary criticism.

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Coleridge, S. T. "Chapter XIV. *Biographia Literaria"* in *English Critical Texts: 16th to 20th Century*. Edited by D. J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera, Oxford University Press, 1962.

Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. UBSPD, 2003.

Peck, John, Martin Coyle. *A Brief History of English Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1994.

Unit-13: Victorian Criticism: Overview

Structure

13.0 Introduction

In the previous Units you have been introduced to literary theory and criticism up to the Romantic period. You have studied classical and medieval criticism. You have also studied the contribution of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas in detail. In Block II you read about Renaissance and Neo-Classical criticism with specific reference to Sir Philip Sydney, John Dryden and Samuel Johnson. In your study of the Enlightenment and Romantic criticism and theory, you had also studied in detail Addison, Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

In this Block, you will be introduced to Victorian Criticism. You will study Mathew Arnold, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Oscar Wilde in detail. Before you study the contribution of these critics in the Units that follow, let us first have an overview of Victorian Criticism.

13.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study the role of criticism in Victorian Age
- understand the contribution of Victorian criticism
- learn about the major critics of this period

13.2 Victorian Criticism: Overview

As you have already studied in earlier courses, the history of English literature is divided into different periods. One such period is the Victorian Age which falls in the nineteenth century. This period is characterized by the reign of Queen Victoria over England from 1876 to 1901. The Victorian Age witnessed the growth and development of the English novel. Prose writings, both fiction and non-fiction, were produced in huge numbers. One important non-fiction of this period is Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* which impacted religion and philosophy. The scientific advancement and technological innovations prompted economic change in society.

The Victorian criticism is, in general, a continuation of the Romantic criticism. However, various other influences in the fields of science, religion, philosophy, and the social and economic changes because of the Industrial Revolution, apart from the influence of Darwin's theory of the evolution of man had an impact on Victorian writers. The emerging views on feminism, Karl Marx's historical criticism, Ruskin, Pater, and Wilde's views on art helped create a distinct body of Victorian criticism. Taine and Comte considered society to be the cause of literature and literature to be the product of society. This led to historical and social criticism. On the other hand, the Aesthetic movement strongly supported by Pater and Wilde advocated self-sufficiency and art and proposed "art for art's sake" as propounded by the French critic, Gautier.

The Victorian age in literature is marked by the influence of the industrial revolution, the shift from agrarian to industrial life, the conflict between science and religion, the advancement in various fields of learning, the spread of imperialism, and the deep sense of loss of faith. The novels of Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot and Thackery among others depicted the shift from the rural to the urban, from agriculture to industrial, from comfort to poverty apart from the sense of loss of faith so well projected in the poetry of Matthew Arnold

and Tennyson among others. Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Newman also influenced political, social, and religious thought through their prose writings. In the field of criticism, the major work on Victorian criticism is a contribution of Carlyle, Ruskin, Mathew Arnold, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde. We will study them separately and look at the contribution of minor critics of this period.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two Victorian novelists.

   _____

2. Give the names of three major Victorian critics.

   _____

3. In whose poetry is the sense of loss of faith presented?

   _____

13.2.1 Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

Thomas Carlyle is more famous for his prose writings and for his non-fiction than for his criticism. The influence of German philosophers like Goethe is perceptible in his writings. Some contemporary literary giants like Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, and the famous philosopher J.S. Mill were his close associates. His works include: *The French Revolution* (1837), *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, (1838), *Chartism* (1839), *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), *Past and Present* (1843) and *Sartor Resartus* around 1833 and 1834.

For Carlyle, the Hero as prophet is Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) in whom he finds a great and influential leader; the Hero as poet is both Shakespeare; and the Hero as man of letters is Samuel Johnson. He is considered the most important critic of the 1830s. For him the poet is worthy of veneration because he links the communion with divinity. Two of his contemporaries, Arthur Hallam and W.J. Fox, consider that the poet must find his self-expression in some object. Their criticism prepared the ground for later psychological theory.

Check your progress:

1. Name two associates of Carlyle.

   _____

2. Who is the hero as prophet for Carlyle?

   _____

3. Who is the hero as poet for Carlyle?

_____

13.2.2 Arthur Hallam (1811-1833)

As students of literature, you probably know Arthur Hallam because of his close friendship with Tennyson. He lived a very short life. In the poem In Memoriam, Tennyson mourns his death in the form of an elegy. Tennyson and Arthur Hallam were college friends. Moreover, Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister. During his short span of life, Arthur Hallam made a mark for himself. Both he and Tennyson were members of the literary and debating club, Apostles at Cambridge University. His essay "On some of the characteristics of modern poetry and on the lyrical poems of Alfred Tennyson" is a new theory of poetry. the basis of this theory is the desire of beauty. This essay was published in 1831.

Later, after his death, his father published his poems and essays as *Remains in Verse and Prose of Arthur Henry Hallam* in the year 1834. Hallam is chiefly remembered for his contribution to Victorian criticism in his theory of poetic empathy. Empathy is the ability to emotionally connect with others by an understanding of their emotions. Hallam appreciates the Romantic poets like Shelley and Keats because they could find emotions in the sounds and sights of nature. He likes Tennyson's poetry also for the similar reason. Hallam believed that Tennyson's poetry is great because the poet internalizes his emotions and finds his true expression through some external object.

Check your progress:

1. Whose friendship is mentioned in this section?

_____

2. What is Hallam chiefly remembered for?

_____

3. Why did Hallam like the Romantics?

_____

13.2.3 W. J. Fox (1786-1864)

Another minor critic of the Victorian Age is W. J. Fox. He believes that a poet externalizes his feelings and the inner landscape into the objects around him. He believes in the expressiveness of art. During his time, he was famous as a social and political commentator.

From unitarian philosophy, he shifted to rationalism after his break from the Unitarian Church. As a journalist, he edited *Monthly Repository* and contributed articles to the *Westminster Review*. His works were published posthumously.

13.2.4 John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

J.S. Mill is famous as a political thinker and philosopher. He was a contemporary of Carlyle and the two of them and were friends for some time before differences of opinion separated them. Carlyle was an influence on Mill's thought. Though Mill mostly wrote essays on political issues, his essays like, "Essay on Poetry" and "Essay on Coleridge" reveal his contribution as a Victorian critic. Mill was also an advocate of women's rights and was in favour of abolition of slavery in America. When Carlyle wrote in favour of slavery, Mill countered him with the essay "The Negro Question." J.S. Mill is famous as a proponent of Utilitarianism and was a staunch advocate of free speech with liberal ideas.

Check your progress:

1. Name two essays by J.S. Mill.

   _____

2. Was Mill a proponent of Utilitarianism?

   _____

13.2.5 John Ruskin (1819-1900)

John Ruskin was a writer and art critic. He was deeply influenced the paintings of J.M.W. Turner and took it upon himself to justify his paintings as upholding truth. He countered the neo-classical criticism against Turner as lacking reality by pointing out that Turner was true to specific aspects in his paintings and that Turner had a deep knowledge of the art of painting. In *Modern Painters* (1843), Ruskin justified the depiction of Nature in Turner's landscape paintings. Later, he went on to publish the book in different volumes over a period of nearly two decades. The last volume was published in 1860. It was perhaps his love for paintings that made him support the Pre-Raphaelite Movement.

Ruskin strongly believed that art and architecture are an expression of the social conditions in which they were produced. On imagination, Ruskin's contribution is next only to Coleridge. For Ruskin the greatest poets like Shakespeare and Dante possess what he calls "imagination penetrative," the highest order of imagination. It is the faculty which is 'the highest

intellectual power of man." Their works are a combination of the "natural" (because derived from Nature) and the "ideal" (because of conscious ordering of material). Imagination associative and imagination contemplative are the other two orders of imagination propounded by Ruskin. Milton and Shelley in their oracular vision come close to the Imagination contemplative while the Imagination associative expresses the self-effacing and the elusive in a poet.

Check your progress:

1. What do Shakespeare and Dante possess?

   _____

2. What are the three orders of imagination?

   _____

13.2.6 Mathew Arnold (1822-1888)

Any study of Victorian criticism is incomplete without an understanding of Mathew Arnold's contribution. He is famous for *Literature and Dogma* published in 1863, *Essays in Criticism* (1885), and *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). During your programme, you have also studied Arnold as a poet. So, it should not be difficult to understand the contribution of Arnold as a critic. You will study in detail about Arnold in the next Unit. In this Unit, we will have a brief look at Arnold as a critic.

In complete contrast to Wordsworth and Coleridge, Arnold was a proponent of classicism. He wanted poetry to uphold high seriousness of thought. He was against frivolousness in poetry. He wanted poetry to be grounded in classical style, form, language, and expression. Therefore, he advocated the touchstone method in judging contemporary poetry by comparing it with classical poetry. He strongly believed in the classical insistence on unity, in an impersonal approach, and in universality. Arnold believed that difference between good and bad poetry can be understood when we compare lines or passages of one poet with lines or passages from masters of classicism. For the touchstone method, he advocates great poets like Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton.

In his essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold states that criticism is a "disinterested" exercise to propagate the best thoughts from the past to create newer ideas in the present. He writes that real criticism:

> obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to

> value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever.

In another essay, "The Literary of the Academies," he states that the English writers must look beyond England and be familiar with European literature. In "The Study of Poetry" he says that poetry must replace religion. Poetry will "interpret" life, will "console," and will "sustain" man. *Culture and Anarchy* is a ridicule and criticism of the Victorian society which can be divided into three classes, the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace. The Barbarians represent the aristocracy, the Philistines represent the middle class, and the Populace represent the working class. Arnold advocated a reassessment of the accepted values and beliefs. He also favoured a shared cultural identity. The critic, according to Arnold, plays a disinterested role as an objective commentator.

For Arnold, truth and seriousness in poetry are essential attributes. He states, in the essay, *The Study of Poetry*:

> The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

Arnold thus established a new form of criticism, the new humanism, wherein poetry is considered to be superior and a reliable substitute to science and religion. For him, criticism should concern itself with the effects of a work on the individual and the nation.

Check your progress:

1. Name two works by Arnold.

_____

2. What is the touchstone method?

_____

3. What are the three classes in society, according to Arnold?

_____

13.2.7 Walter Pater (1839-1894)

Walter Pater believed that art is an elaboration of form, colour, balance, and tone. There should be no imposition of morals on a poet, painter, or artist. Any such imposition would distort the function of criticism. For Pater life was also an aesthetic phenomenon like the arts. In *Renaissance* (1873) and its subsequent revisions, Pater suggested that a critic must begin by an analysis of the impression created by a poem or a painting. Then, he must trace it to the work itself. Pater believed in a subjective approach as opposed to the objective approach propounded by Arnold. In his own time, Pater did not receive the deserved recognition, but his influence may be felt on the Aesthetic Movement as acknowledged by Oscar Wilde. You will read in detail about Oscar Wilde in another Unit. You will also gain some understanding about Oscar Wilde in the next sub-section of this Unit.

Check your progress:

1. When was *Renaissance* first published?

   _____

2. For Pater, life was an _____ phenomenon like the arts.

13.2.8 Oscar Wilde (1856-1900)

Unlike J.S. Mill, Oscar Wilde believed in the non-utilitarian value of poetry. For him pleasure and beauty evoked by a poem were greater than its utilitarian value. He was a poet, novelist, playwright, and critic. He was influenced by Walter Pater. During his tour of America, he became associated with the Aesthetic Movement. While many believed art imitates life, Wilde proposed the opposite. He propounded that life imitates art. As a spokesperson of the Aesthetic Movement, Wilde advocated art for art's sake.

The Critic as Artist (1891) is written in the form of a dialogue between two characters, Ernest and Gilbert, and through their dialogue, Wilde presents his views on aestheticism. According to Gilbert, criticism is the highest form of art. It is both independent and creative. He also believes that criticism reveals the soul of the critic. The only requirement of a critic is that he must be "susceptible to beauty." Through the dialogue and argument between Ernest and Gilbert, Wilde skilfully presents the theory of art for art's sake.

13.2.9 Other Contributions to Victorian Criticism

Apart from the major and minor Victorian critics, you have studied in this Unit, let us quickly look at some other contributions to Victorian criticism. Henry James (1843-1916)

published *The Art of Fiction* in 1884 concentrating on the point of view in narrative fiction. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) who just preceded the Victorian Age, initiated feminist criticism with her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* published in 1792. Though Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *Origin of Species* published in 1859 is a scientific work, it's impact can be felt on literature and criticism of the Victorian age.

Check your progress:

1. Who are the two characters in The Critic as Artist?

   _____

2. With which movement was Oscar Wilde associated?

   _____

13.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have got an idea about Victorian criticism, about Victorian critics, and their contribution. You should also have gained some information about the background to Victorian criticism. You should have understood the new and emerging theory of criticism, "art for art's sake" through your study of this Unit.

13.4 Glossary

Aestheticism: a movement in the second half of the nineteenth century which believed in the autonomy of art and that art is not dependent on anything for meaning. It is independent of moral, social, political, or any didactic purpose. It is art for art's sake only.

Anarchy: a state of lawlessness; chaos and confusion

Barbarians: a term used by Arnold to refer to a class of society equivalent to the aristocratic class.

Philistines: a term used by Arnold to refer to a class of society equivalent to the middle class.

Populace: a term used by Arnold to refer to a class of society equivalent to the working class.

Touch stone method: a method proposed by Mathew Arnold to judge contemporary writing by comparing them to the great classics both English and classical Greek and Latin.

Victorian: belonging to the period of nineteenth century England during the reign of queen Victoria from 1876 to 1901. The second half of the 19th century.

13.5 Sample Questions

13.2.1 Objective Answer Type Questions:

1. Queen Victoria ruled from _____ to _____.
    a. 1700 to 1789
    b. 1882 to 1914
    c. 1800 to 1886
    d. 1876 to 1901
2. The sense of loss of _____ deeply influenced the Victorian writers.
    a. Faith
    b. Childhood
    c. Nature
    d. None of the above
3. Which of the following is not a Victorian critic?
    a. Mathew Arnold
    b. Oscar Wilde
    c. Sir Philip Sydney
    d. Thomas Carlyle
4. Identify the Victorian critics.
    a. Mathew Arnold
    b. Arthur Hallam
    c. J.S. Mill
    d. All the above
5. _____ wrote *Culture and Anarchy*.
    a. Thomas Carlyle
    b. Mathew Arnold
    c. T.S. Eliot
    d. J.S. Mill
6. The touchstone method was proposed by _____.
    a. Arthur Hallam
    b. Tennyson
    c. Mathew Arnold

d. W.J. Fox

7. The theory of Utilitarianism was propounded by _____.
   a. J.S. Mill
   b. Thomas Carlyle
   c. Sir Philip Sydney
   d. Samuel Johnson
8. *Origin of Species* by _____ was instrumental in creating rift between science and religion.
   a. Thomas Carlyle
   b. Charles Dickens
   c. Charles Darwin
   d. Arthur Hallam
9. J.S. Mill wrote in favour of abolition of slavery in _____.
   a. The Negro Question
   b. The Black Awareness
   c. The Negro Dilemma
   d. The Freedom
10. J.S. Mill and _____ were contemporaries.
    a. **Carlyle**
    b. T.S. Eliot
    c. Dryden
    d. Wordsworth

13.2.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on Carlyle as a critic.
2. What do you understand by Arnold's touchstone method? Explain in brief with reference to his criticism.
3. Examine in brief the role of J.S. Mill in Victorian criticism.
4. Write a short note on Arthur Hallam.
5. Name some Victorian critics and their works.

13.2.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Examine in detail Victorian criticism.
2. What were the influences on the Victorian critics? Discuss in detail.
3. Evaluate the contribution of major Victorian critics.

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. 5th ed. Oxford UP: London, 2011.

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol 4. Allied Publishers: New Delhi, 2002.

Vidya-mitra. *Literary Criticism in the Victorian Age* (ENG). 2017. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsBaSReQ7qk.

CEC. The Victorian Criticism. 2016. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eleoSHW2Gd0.

Unit-14: Mathew Arnold: "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"

Structure

14.0 Introduction

The Victorian Age (1837-1901) in the history of English Literature is immensely rich and profound in the production of literature across genres. Almost all forms have found the fertile soil to grow and have reached a full flowering. With the exception of drama, poetry, fiction, non-fiction and literary criticism have been written in abundance with new experiments yielding adequate outcomes for the coming generations of writers. In the domain of literary criticism and theory, the age has witnessed the emergence of both practical and theoretical criticism. The good and great literature of bygone times has been read and researched for the balanced approach of creating literature and critiquing it. It is not only creative writing but also the critical literature during this era that shouldered the responsibility of socio-cultural reformation and regeneration. The traditional life supported by culture- its spirit and flair has been found in shambles. Critics like Matthew Arnold have realized that criticism could play a powerful role in promoting cultural ethics and ancestral values, so it is to be made worthwhile and effective. Victorian criticism seeks order and balance to overpower the chaos and commotion resulting from materialistic and rationalistic thought of life. It strives for realism and matter of factness.

This critical approach shows the deep entrenched impact of Hippolyte Taine (1828-1898) and Sainte Beauve (1804- 1869), both hailing from French soil. These critics emphasized the essence of time and life of a writer in literary art. Taine believes race, milieu and the moment are the three prime ingredients behind the creation of a work. Therefore, their consideration in the evaluation of literature is a prerequisite. Moreover, the Victorian criticism displays two contrasting perspectives. There is group of critics- John Staurt Mill, Thomas Macaulay, Aldous Huxley, John Morley and Herbert Spencer demonstrating rationalistic and materialistic stance. While as John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Walter Pater, Arthur Symons and John Addington Symonds- are thoroughly idealistic, impressionistic and romantic in nature. This romantic colour in Victorian reading and writing is supplemented hugely by Pre-Rephaelites, an association of painters, poets, critics during the period. Victorian literary criticism is also known for its two contradictory cults: 'Art for Life's Sake'; and 'Art of Art's Sake'. The former believes that art and literature ought to serve the moral purpose of life, as Mathew Arnold asserts that 'poetry should be a criticism of life'. On the other hand, 'Art for Art's Sake' strives for the beauty of art to the exclusion of social reality and life. Oscar Wilde and Water Pater are the main proponents of this creed of literature.

14.1 Objectives

The main objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce the main currents of literary criticism of the Victorian period
- highlight the basic ideas of Mathew Arnold as a great literary critic
- present Arnold as principal critic among all Victorian critics
- explicate the concerned essay with all its main ideas for the comprehensive study
- project the essay as a supreme manifesto of Arnold's whole critical work

14.2 Mathew Arnold: "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"

14.2.1 Mathew Arnold as a Critic

Mathew Arnold is universally acknowledged and critically acclaimed as a major critic of the Victorian Age. This image of being above to all contemporary fellow critics is well founded on reasons based on his contribution and his individual experiments. But being a towering critic does not overshadow his quintessential unique space in the field of poetry. He is equally recognized as an established character in both the genres. He is the part and parcel of the lineage of the well-known poet-critics tradition of European literature to which belong such adorable names–Sir Phillip Sydney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel John, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his successor Thomas Sterne Eliot. Arnold starts his career as a poet and has gained unparalleled popularity in the field, but ends his literary odyssey as a critic of first class. Overall, as a creative writer, Arnold exudes a concern for the pervasive social and cultural malaise. He expresses despondency, dissatisfaction, and the spiritual barrenness of Victorian life. He is seen ceaselessly striving to create an order and balance between materialistic and spiritual life; and Christian faith and rationalistic science. He is a great advocate of culture and morality. He shows exigency for the revival of a traditional lifestyle saturated with ethical ideas and religious values. He is a propagator of ' art for life's sake'. Everywhere he emphasizes the use of literary art as an instrument to improve deteriorated life devoid of everything prerequisite for ultimate peace and gratification. He believes that great and good literature is born when the ideal atmosphere replete with traditional practices, moral ideals, and human values do exist in individual life and in social structure. Therefore, the primary task of a successful critic is to reflect what is the best in terms of thinking, believing, saying, and doing. Mathew Arnold is a prolific and versatile writer in terms of both quality and quantity. His main and influential books in the area of criticism are as tabulated:

a) *The Preface to the Poems* (1853)
b) *On Translating Homer* (1856)
c) *Essays in Criticism- First Series* (1865)
d) *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1866)
e) *Culture and Anarchy* (1869)
f) *St. Paul's Protestantism* (1870)
g) *Literature and Dogma* (1873)

h) *God and the Bible* (1875)

i) *Essays in Criticism- Second Series* (1888)

14.2.2 Concept and Function of Criticism

The essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is just like a manifesto document followed by Arnold's all books of criticism and his main critical thought. In the essay, he incubates ideas of diverse kinds regarding creative as well as critical art and these ideas are developed in the successive works. The essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is part of the work *Essays in Criticism* (1865), the first well-acclaimed work of Arnold in the domain of literary criticism. He defines the task of criticism as: "A disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought of in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and noble ideas." The word 'disinterest' signifies the objective and impartial type of reading or interpretation free from all historical and personal prejudices. While analysing Arnold's definition of criticism, three important things come to fore: that a critic must be well aware of reality and life before writing anything and get things as they are; that he ought to promote his/her thoughts to others and make the best ideas prevail in social setup; and that he must prepare an ambiance for the creation of genius writers of the posterity by fostering the honest, noble, and true ideas.

Mathew Arnold explicates the idea that the production of great and good literature is possible only in the presence or concurrence of 'power of man' and 'power of the moment'. The phrase 'power of man' refers to the strength and potential of a writer whereas 'power of moment' indicates the favourable atmosphere or external condition the writer lives in. He elaborates the idea by citing German Wolfgang Goethe and English John Byron. Though both these writers possessed tremendous imaginative and creative power, German Goethe's literature is more powerful, meaningful and enlightening because of his rich cultural background. Arnold adds that despite being not a voracious reader, Shakespeare's fame and eternal appeal are the result of his fortune time and inspiring literary climate. Moreover, Arnold emphasizes that while reading a literary work, the critic's intention is to 'see the object as in itself it really is.' Historical, psychological and sociological information and understanding are not relevant and to rely on such elements is merely a lack of professionalism. This idea has triggered the approach of objectivity later on in the domain of literary criticism and theory as advocated by Modern and New Critics.

Check your progress:

1. The essay " "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is part of the work *Essays in Criticism* (1865). (True/False)
2. Mathew Arnold expresses despondency, dissatisfaction and the spiritual barrenness of Victorian life.

14.2.3 Weakness of Victorian Literature

Mathew Arnold censures the literature written during his age. He is of the opinion that there is no adequate mechanism of criticism due to the division of society, particularly intellectuals in the small political and religious sects that incapacitate them to assess things in the right perspectives. He points out several works of Victorian Literature ostensibly promoting the writer's personal and political agenda or religious beliefs. The *Edinburgh Review* demonstrates the views and policies of Whigs; the *Quarterly Review* represents the ideas and values of Tories; the *British Review* shows the predilections of political dissenters; and the *Times* mirrors the rationale of the 'rich Englishman'. Arnold also criticises the 'constructive' by Bishop Colenso and Miss Cobbe. He denounces the British common man as he sees him lacking in creativity and productivity. Further, Arnold says that the French Revolution with its stalwarts like Rousseau and Voltaire yielded stronger results than the English Revolution of Charles. However, the English Revolution is considered more successful due to its "appeal to an order of ideas which are universal, certain and permanent." The French Revolution goes away from the intellectual domain and embraces temporal political ideology and thereby is missing the elements of permanent and universal meaning. It has led to the 'epoch of Concentration'- period of single-mindedness. It has paved the way to an 'epoch of expansion'- an era of creative thoughts. The writings of Edmund Burke are well-received and appreciated, yet they are not 'disinterested' as they are an admixture of politics and creative thoughts.

14.2.4 Creativity and Literary Criticism

According to Matthew Arnold, the creative writer is greater and more powerful than the critic as "creative activity is the true function of man." However, he adds that the critic extracts the true meaning of literary art. He says that criticism is "the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is,"

and makes it a precondition for a genuinely major creation. He opines that quality in creation is impossible if fresh ideas are not available to the people. In the absence of the best ideas, cultural anarchy comes in. Arnold states that unbiased criticism produces a feeling of creative happiness in a critic. He equates the emotional state of writing criticism with the emotional state of creative writing. Good writing is the result of great ideas, and the critic performs the essential task of identifying such ideas with disinterest and transporting them to the masses. Besides, he argues that critical writing is an inherent and important part of free creativity: "It is undeniable also that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art". Arnold states that a successful critic, criticism must be essentially the activity of curiosity. He defines the term as the desire to know the best. This curiosity is to be accompanied with a disinterested state of mind: "Judging is spoken of as the critic's own business, and so in some sense it is but the judgement that forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one." This knowing and understanding should be the main concerns of a good critic. Arnold says further that in his quest for the best, a critic is free to go through world literature rather than limit himself to native writing and writers. This approach would certainly promote ideas fairly and impartially.

14.2.5 Arnold's Apology for Critic and Criticism

Mathew Arnold is called a 'critic's critic' for his contribution to the meaningfulness of criticism in the domain of literary art. He argues that a good bulk of literature from the European countries has been used for the purpose of criticism. But English people have not encouragingly written a significant amount of critical literature due to the undesirable tendency of writers towards criticism. He cites the instance of Wordsworth, who believes that critical writing is a futile exercise for the author as well as the reader. He also admits that huge damage can be done through critical writing, but little harm is possible through creative literature. Arnold defends this argument that if a person has a competency in one field of writing, he must not be insisted to produce original writing by suggesting that critical writing is of no use or worth at all:

> It is almost too much to expect a poor human nature, that a man capable of producing some effect in one line of literature, should for the greater good of society, voluntarily doom himself to impotence and obscurity in another.

Arnold identifies the contradiction in Wordsworth's view on criticism by referring that the latter is himself an established critic. To counter the nihilistic view of criticism, Arnold has

shown that criticism has a significant role to play, and so should be seen as an art form, not less than creative literature in any way. He has a strong notion of the vocation of a critic and the value of criticism. He asserts that a critic belongs to life, society, religion and culture, and works for their betterment and amelioration.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the main currents of literary criticism during the Victorian Age. You should know the contribution of Mathew Arnold in the field of criticism after perusing this Unit.

14.4 Glossary

Ambiance: A particular atmosphere of an environment or surrounding influence.

Anarchy: A state of socio-cultural set up with order or any governing body.

Apology: A justification or defense for something.

Censure: An act of criticizing, blaming or condemning.

Commotion: Turbulence; disturbance. The absence of peace.

Concurrence: An example of simultaneous happening; agreement.

Critique: Art of Criticism; a kind of robust analysing or review.

Celtic: The Indo-European languages that got spread widely over western and central Europe in the pre-Christian times.

Despondency: Hopelessness; despair; dejection.

Disinterest: Without self interest; absence of prejudices.

Dogma: A doctrine about to matters such as morality and religion, set forth authoritatively by a religious organization or institution.

Endeavour: A determined attempt; persistency.

Epoch: A particular era of history; A well-known event.

Flair: Natural talent; spirit; elegance

Idealistic: Pertaining to idealism; related to ideas.

Impressionistic: based on impressionism or subjective reaction.

Incubate: hatch or brood eggs; conceive new ideas.

Lineage: descend; progeny; forefathers.

Literary criticism: The study, analysis, interpretation or reviewing of literature.

Manifesto: publicity of policies, ideology, or agenda of a particular party.

Peruse: Examine; read; skimming in reading

Quintessential: A perfect example of something; ultimate or prototype.

Regeneration: Rebirth; rebuild; renewal.

Romantic: Based on romance, fantasy; imaginary; literature based on imagination or personal meditation.

Shambles: A state or scene of great chaos, disorder; ruin; mess.

Temporal: Pertaining to time or material world.

Theology: A study of religion, or God.

Vanishing: becoming invisible; expiring.

Versatile: capable of doing multiple tasks at a time. Multifunctional.

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objectives Type Questions:

1. Arnold defines criticism as:
    a) Uninterested endeavour
    b) **Disinterested endeavour**
    c) Personal task
    b) Impersonal Task
2. The essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" was published in:
    a) *Essays in Criticism-First Series* (1865)
    b) *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1866)
    c) *Culture and Anarchy* (1869)
    d) *St. Paul's Protestantism* (1870)
3. Which genre does not define Mathew Arnold as a writer?
    a) Poetry
    b) Criticism
    c) Prose
    d) **Novel**

4. When was Mathew Arnold's famous work *Culture and Anarchy* published?
    a) 1859
    b) 1863
    c) **1869**
    d) 1873
5. The expression 'Epoch of expression' denotes:
    a) Era of creative thoughts
    b) Era of critical thought
    c) Era of chaotic thought
    d) Era of coercive thought
6. The essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is part of the work *Essays in Criticism* (1865)
    a) **True**
    b) False
7. Mathew Arnold explicates the idea that the production of great and good literature is possible only in the presence or concurrence of:
    a) 'power of man'
    b) 'power of the moment'
    c) both
8. The phrase 'power of man' refers to the strength and potential of a writer.
    c) **True**
    d) False
9. The phrase 'power of moment' indicates the favourable atmosphere or external condition the writer lives in.
    a) **True**
    b) False
10. Mathew Arnold expresses despondency, dissatisfaction, and the spiritual barrenness of Victorian life.
    a) **True**
    b) False

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What do you mean by 'Art for life's sake'?
2. Define the expression 'Art for art's sake'.
3. Write a short note on Arnold's definition of 'Criticism'.
4. Write down the titles of Mathew Arnold's five works of criticism.
5. What according to Hippolyte Taine are the three main elements of criticism? How can they help to evaluate a literary work fairly?

14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write an elaborate description of critical thought during the Victorian Age.
2. Examine Mathew Arnold as a major Victorian critic.
3. Explain the concept and function of criticism as envisioned by Mathew Arnold.

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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

Annan, Noel. *Mathew Arnold: Selected Essays*. London: OUP, 1964.

Arnold, Mathew. *Essays in Criticism.* Ed. S.R. Littlewood. London: Macmillan, 1958.

Arnold, Mathew. *Selected Poems and Prose*. Ed. Denys Thompson. London: Heinemann, 1971.

Carter, Ronald and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Oberoi, Nirmalijeet. Mathew Arnold as a Critic: Background to Arnold's Criticism and Theory of Poetry. Creative Books, 1998.

Secord, James A. *A Victorian Sensation: the Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the National History of Creation*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Unit-15: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Excerpt from *The German Ideology*

Structure

15.0 Introduction

The German Ideology, co-authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels between fall 1845 and mid-1846, comprises a series of manuscripts presented as pamphlets, laying out their foundational principles on society, art, and history. Despite their struggles to find a publisher, the text was eventually published in 1932. While attributed to both Marx and Engels, it is widely believed that Marx was the primary author, evident through his distinctive style marked by irony, sarcasm, and literary flair. The work serves as a critique of the prevailing philosophical and ideological ideas in mid-19th century Germany, particularly targeting the Young Hegelians whom Marx and Engels perceived as insufficiently critical of societal and economic conditions.

Marx and Engels challenge the idealist philosophy of their contemporaries, asserting that ideas and beliefs are not abstract and independent entities but are rather shaped by material conditions and class struggle. They develop the theory of historical materialism, emphasizing the

significance of material life in shaping political, economic, and social aspects of society. Unlike Hegel's philosophy which posits that thoughts determine social life, Marx and Engels argue that social life is primarily influenced by material circumstances. They contend that changes in economic structures and modes of production drive shifts in social consciousness and dominant ideology.

According to Marx and Engels, people's moral, religious, and political beliefs are shaped by their social status and material conditions. They challenge the Hegelian notion that changes in social consciousness drive social change, instead asserting that changes in material conditions drive changes in social, political, and ideological systems. They also discuss the concept of alienation under capitalism, where workers are estranged from the products of their labor and from their own true nature as social beings, leading to social inequality and exploitation.

Marx's study focuses on various aspects including, the production of subsistence and mode of production, the emergence of classes through division of labor (physical vs mental labor), the relation of the state, ideology, religion, and family to the development of classes, and the notion of contradiction as the force of history.

15.1 Objectives

This Unit unleashes the complexity of the work *The German Ideology* which comprises the ideas of Marx and Engels about society and the operation of power on it. The better understanding of the concepts such as ideology, capitalism, materialism, historicism etc, in a simplified way will make the students to critically evaluate the society they live in.

15.2 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Excerpt from *The German Ideology*

15.2.1 Compositional Structure

The German Ideology is a text that is divided into three sections and has more than 700 pages. The first part, ‘Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy,’ offers the primary theoretical exposition of Marx and Engels' materialist understanding of history; yet, many readers only encounter an edited version of this piece. Volume 1: Critique of Modern German

Philosophy, According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer, and Stirner; and Volume 2: Critique of German Socialism, According to Its Various Prophets comprise the primary body of the essay. An addendum containing Karl Marx's Theses on Feuerbach completes the work. Some academics believe that readers who are not professionals would find the final two sections to be of limited interest because they mostly include pointed remarks directed against different colleagues and contemporaries, such Max Stirner and Bruno Bauer, and may be quite sharp and detailed.

Introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy* is the prelude that opens the work. Marx and Engels contend that solutions based on German philosophical idealism are unsuccessful because they fail to show how the philosophy reflects the real realities of people's lives. They define their own conceptual framework of historical materialism by criticizing idealism, thus exposing their methodological and epistemological underpinnings. The end product is a global analysis that offers individuals the opportunity to alter their living circumstances by taking meaningful action. Marx and Engels argued that any reading or comprehension of the reality that did not provide the opportunity for human agency to actively alter material circumstances is viewed as pointless and ineffective.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels criticize positivism, empiricism, and mechanical determinism while simultaneously drawing a line between them. They contend that some versions of socialism and communism supported by their contemporaries are based on these intellectual frameworks, which lead to an inadequate description of the social world. The theory of mechanical determinism, which holds that social events are exclusively governed by natural or mechanical rules, downplays the influence of class conflict and human action on societal development. The ideology of positivism ignores the underlying social ties and historical background that shape society changes, emphasizing solely visible and quantifiable facts. Empiricism, which is exclusively based on sensuous experience might not be able to adequately convey the larger political, social, and economic systems that influence human cultures.

Marx and Engels contend that some of the socialist and communist doctrines advanced by their contemporaries may be seen as having their epistemic roots in these constrained viewpoints. These theories might not be able to adequately analyse the underlying reasons of the exploitation, oppression, and social inequality that are features of capitalism society if they downplay the significance of social relations, historical context, and class struggle.

Marx and Engels, however, suggest historical materialism as a substitute strategy. As the

foundation for comprehending social phenomena, they argue for a thorough examination that considers the material circumstances of society, such as the method of production, class conflict, and historical evolution. They highlight the function of deterministic or reductionist viewpoints that downplay the role of social interactions, human activity, and historical context in forming civilizations.

Check your progress:

1. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels criticize positivism, empiricism, and mechanical determinism. (True/False)

15.2.2 Concept of Ideology

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels critique Ludwig Feuerbach and the Young Hegelians, two well-known German thinkers of that era, while outlining their materialist theory of history. They contend that although being well regarded at the time, the Young Hegelians' method was shallow and unoriginal. Rather than interacting critically with Hegel's concepts, they simply reinterpreted them without contributing to philosophical discussion. According to Marx and Engels, philosophy should place a higher priority on material circumstances than on abstract ideas, highlighting the crucial role that human creation of means of sustenance plays in forming society.

Through modifications to the division of labour, social interaction, and production—all interrelated processes—the writers chart the development of human society. They explain several ownership systems, such as tribal and prehistoric communal, each with unique social dynamics and work agreements. Marx and Engels saw material causes like resource scarcity or shifts in social organisation as influencing wars and conquests, which are frequently considered as the primary forces behind historical change.

The feudal system is portrayed as the last example of pre-modern property growth, characterised by the dominance of guild masters over urban labourers and the aristocracy over land and serf labour in rural regions. Marx and Engels contend that in order to understand historical eras, one must take into account visible features such as property relations, modes of production, and the division of labour, all of which have an impact on the legal, religious, and political facets of society.

They reject the premise that ideas exist irrespective of their surroundings and emphasise instead that awareness is moulded by historical material conditions. In general, Marx and Engels

support a materialist perspective on history that views society's material underpinnings as crucial to comprehending its evolution.

15.2.3 Idea Concerning 'History'

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels lay out their historical perspective and argue that it provides both a new method of historical interpretation and a revised understanding of historical progression. They argue that individuals need to be able to meet their basic needs for survival before they can have an impact on history. Despite the fact that human activity has progressed over time beyond basic survival, fulfilling these needs is still essential.

Marx and Engels note that historians have often neglected to address the analysis of material circumstances, which they believe is crucial to understanding historical progress. They argue that the first real "historical act" is when humans establish new wants in addition to getting means of production and satisfying their basic needs. This process of satisfying present wants and creating new ones shapes history and transforms society. The writers distinguish between three fundamental aspects of human social behaviour: fulfilling basic needs, having children, and acquiring means of survival. Since the dawn of time, these components have existed in basic forms and have intricately created human society.

Marx and Engels discuss the dual nature of the "production of life," which encompasses both innate ties to the environment and interpersonal social interaction. They underline how a society's capacity for production is shaped by its tendencies towards cooperation and technical development. The authors also introduce the notion of a "mode of cooperation" as a basic aspect of human conduct and history. They argue that while language is a social product, consciousness also evolves in parallel and changes in response to social interactions and human creativity. Marx and Engels criticize the illusion of "pure" consciousness, arguing that it arises from the division of work that separates mental from material labour. This division leads to disputes between various schools of thought and the preexisting social order, which facilitates the establishment of the state and private property. According to them, communism would abolish this system and replace class strife with a society based on voluntary organization and collective control, in which people share power over resources and productive forces.

Criticizing the illusion of "pure" awareness, Marx and Engels contend that it results from the division of labour, which distinguishes between mental and material labour. This split causes conflicts between many schools of thought and the social structure that already exists, which aids

in the formation of the state and private property. They see communism as the elimination of this system, bringing about a shift from class conflict to a society based on voluntary organization and collective control, where people have collective control over productive forces and resources.

Check your progress:

1. Marx and Engels discuss the dual nature of the "production of life," which encompasses both innate ties to the environment and interpersonal social interaction. (True/False)

15.2.4 Idea concerning the product of consciousness

Marx and Engels' theory addresses a major paradox of the mid-19th century: many people perceived limited freedom and fulfillment despite societal development. They blame this on the enduring influence of antiquated and illogical ideas that obstruct the achievement of Enlightenment principles. They contend that this detachment from creative work and its results is made worse by the division of labour. As human potential grows, so does the power of dominance; modern labourers are exposed to the world market.

Marx and Engels argue that a revolution empowering mankind as a whole is necessary for the true development of human powers. They criticize philosophers who look into historical periods or human nature, saying that their methods frequently fall short of understanding the intricate relationships that exist throughout society. They highlight how human existence is comprehensive, where ideologies, government, religion, the law, and production processes are all interwoven.Marx and Engels said idealist historians disregard the underlying material circumstances and concentrate only on ideas. They berate Bauer and Stirner for their narrow-minded history that ignores tangible reality. Although they acknowledge that Feuerbach's work has some value, they contend that he falls short of completely appreciating human life as a dynamic process.

Marx and Engels draw attention to the conflict that exists between theoretical ideas about the nature of humanity and the reality of living situations. This conflict can only be overcome via revolutionary activity. They emphasize the importance of material circumstances and industrial processes of production, rejecting the idea of an abstract link between humans and the environment.

The authors claim that dominant ideologies convey the idea of universality by mirroring the objectives of the dominant class. They contend that realizing the necessity of overthrowing

the ruling class itself is a prerequisite for dispelling this illusion. A classless society must be established in order to achieve real emancipation and advance historical development.

15.2.5 Idea of 'Intercourse' and 'productive forces'

Marx and Engels claim that the division of labour permeated human social life throughout history and goes beyond the assignment of jobs. The battle between town and country, which symbolizes the division of labour between the material and cerebral faculties, is one way in which this split shows up. Urban centres' emergence as centres of politics, economics, and culture mark the beginning of society's split into the proletariat and bourgeoisie. The struggle between capital and feudal landed property is the source of this conflict, and its settlement is essential to the development of communism.

Even if there were class tensions, persistent class conflict was uncommon in rural or medieval communities. Marx and Engels explain this by saying that the labouring underclass and serfs are disorganized, which makes it difficult for them to advocate collectively. Cohesive action was hindered by the increased fragmentation of labour groupings caused by guilds, where journeymen worked for masters. The ownership of guilds or landed estates, or both, was a major source of capital that shaped society dynamics.

The feudal system was challenged by the rise of merchants who promoted trade between cities throughout the shift to modern capitalism. Marx and Engels claim that class formation emerges from economic rivalry and the battle for domination. Maintaining industrial improvements and promoting specialization depend on commerce growing. Market expansion and increased commerce fueled the growth of manufacturing, especially in the textile industry, which laid the foundation for industrialization.

Capital accumulation and market expansion were driven by the colonization of Europe and the influx of precious metals. Technology innovation and the Industrial Revolution were fueled by England's supremacy in commerce, particularly in textiles. The advent of advanced technology and skilled labour signified the shift towards contemporary industry and fully fledged capitalism.

15.2.6 The Relation of State and Law to Property and Natural and Civilised Instruments of Production and Forms of Property

Marx and Engels stress how crucial it is to place the development of legal and political structures within larger social concepts like cooperative and productive forms of production. They argue that the growth of social interactions and production processes has formed political and legal systems, challenging earlier views that isolate these systems as only the result of intellectual progress.

They sketch a progression of property forms, from tribal to contemporary capital, highlighting a dramatic change in the interplay between private property and the government. In contemporary society, the state is heavily influenced by capital and the bourgeoisie, which is made possible by structures like national debt and taxes, which forces the state to depend on bourgeois economic output.

Marx and Engels believed that the purpose of the modern state is to further the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole. As an exemplary case, they cite North America, where the state serves the class interests of the bourgeoisie while remaining clearly separated from civil society. But in Germany, the independence of the state is restricted by the existence of privileged estates.

Institutions such as the judicial system and public education may take on a political form that gives the impression that it is formed by the collective will, hiding the fact that it is based on class and material interests. With the goal of safeguarding private property, modern civil law views property relations as a manifestation of social will as opposed to class concerns.

Marx and Engels underline the exchange-based interaction between capitalists and workers as they go into further detail about the differences between natural and civilized tools of production. They contend that workers lacking wealth are subjugated by capital, which is the accumulation of labour converted into assets. Only by eradicating private property via revolution and drastically altering the social and economic structure will workers attain self-activity and emancipation.

Check your progress:

1. Marx and Engels claim that class formation emerges from economic rivalry and the battle for domination. (True/False)

15.2.7 Communism

Marx and Engels contend in *The German Ideology* that communism is a movement and system that has never existed before since it radically departs from earlier social and economic systems. Communism aims to bring traditions, production techniques, and social interactions under the conscious control of a unified people, in contrast to previous systems that considered these features to be "natural" and uncontrollable by conscious humans.

According to them, distinct "forms of intercourse," or how social and economic ties are arranged in accordance with the available creative powers, define historical eras. Conflict happens when these productive forces surpass the current form of interaction, and a new form that is in line with more advanced productive forces and individual self-activity emerges. This historical transformation process happens naturally and is not planned, driven by material conditions. Historians who focus on a single element in isolation and oversimplify historical events are criticized by Marx and Engels. They support an all-encompassing strategy that takes into account the material circumstances, including social, economic, and ideological aspects. Additionally, they criticize earlier attempts at social transformation for failing to address the core problems of private property and the division of labor—rather than just substituting new ruling classes.

In the end, Marx and Engels contend that people can only experience genuine freedom and community when they interact with one another in their truest forms. This calls for actively transforming social and economic institutions in addition to going beyond abstract concepts. The final section of *The German Ideology* offers the "Theses on Feuerbach," emphasizing Marx's critique of materialism and idealism as they currently stand. These theses encapsulate Marx's dedication to practical change above philosophical contemplation by highlighting the significance of actively transforming the world in addition to just comprehending it.

15.2.8 Let Us Sum Up

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels critiqued German philosophical idealism. To make their arguments more comprehensible, they developed an epistemology grounded in historical materialism. They needed to go through this self-clarification process because they had previously struggled with the idealist/materialist debate and understood that history was crucial to their materialist worldview. They acknowledged and appreciated the fundamental conditions of existence before concentrating on specific aspects of reality and utilising historical materialist analysis to better understand the world as it is. Marx and Engels worked on the premise that

human activity impacts the universe and that the structures they investigated were actual, pre-existing facts in the tangible world rather than inventions of society or individual thought.

15.3 Learning Outcomes

On completion of this Unit, you should be able to have a general understanding of *German Ideology,* interpret society in the Marxist perspective, understand the concepts of history, consciousness, bourgeois etc., and understand the power operations in society.

15.4 Glossary

Alienation - experiencing or inducing feelings of isolation or estrangement.
Subsistence - the state of having what you need in order to stay alive.
Reductionism - the practice of analysing and describing a complex phenomenon in terms of its simple or fundamental constituents, especially when this is said to provide a sufficient explanation.
Antagonism - active hostility or opposition.
Bourgeoisie - the capitalist class who own most of society's wealth and means of production.
Apriori - relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience.

15.5 Sample Questions

15.2.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. *The German Ideology*, co-authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels between fall 1845 and mid-1846, comprises a series of manuscripts presented as pamphlets.
    a. **True**
    b. False
2. Marx and Engels targets the Young Hegelians, whom they perceived as insufficiently critical of societal and economic conditions, in *The German Ideology*.
    a. **True**
    b. False

3. ‘Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy,’ is the first part of *The German Ideology* and it offers the primary theoretical exposition of Marx and Engels' materialist understanding of history.
    a. **True**
    b. False
4. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels also critique Ludwig Feuerbach, a well-known German thinker of that era.
    a. **True**
    b. False
5. Marx and Engels criticize positivism, empiricism and mechanical determinism in *The German Ideology*.
    a. **True**
    b. False
6. Marx and Engels develop the theory of historical materialism, emphasizing the significance of material life in shaping political, economic, and social aspects of society.
    a. **True**
    b. False
7. Marx and Engels claim that class formation emerges from economic rivalry and the battle for domination.
    a. **True**
    b. False
8. Marx and Engels discuss the dual nature of the "production of life," which encompasses both innate ties to the environment and interpersonal social interaction. (True/False)
    a. **True**
    b. False
9. According to Marx and Engels, people's moral, religious, and political beliefs are shaped by their social status and material conditions.
    a. **True**
    b. False
10. Karl Marx’s ‘historical materialism’, which is distinct from both idealism and materialism, states that thoughts and social institutions develop only as a superstructure founded on an economic base.

a. **True**

b. False

15.2.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is historical materialism?
2. Comment on the compositional structure of the work *The German Ideology*.
3. How Marx and Engels reverse the methods of earlier philosophers on analyzing society?
4. What are the nuances given by Marx and Engels on interpreting history?
5. With reference to Marx's criticism, what are the shortcomings of historiography?

15.2.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate the concept of division of labour according to Marx and Engels.
2. Critically evaluate the connection between state and the law to property.
3. Discuss in detail the concept of ideology as envisaged by Marx and Engles.

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

C.J. Arthur, 'Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*'. *Philosophers Ancient and Modern*. Edited by G.Veysey. Cambridge.1986.

K. Marx and F. Engels. *The German Ideology*. Moscow. 1976.

N. Geras. *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* .London, 1983.

R. Miller. *Analyzing Marx: Morality, Power and History*. Princeton. 1984.

S. Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge. 1968.

Unit-16: Oscar Wilde: Excerpt from "The Critic as Artist"

Structure

16.0 Introduction

In this Unit, we will discuss Oscar Wilde's essay "The Critic as Artist." Oscar Wilde is a 19th century Irish poet and playwright. He also wrote a novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. As a spokesperson of the Aesthetic Movement, he advocated art for art's sake. In the essay "The Critic as Artist," he presents his views on criticism in the form of a dialogue between two characters. Hence, this essay may also be considered a play.

16.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- comprehend Oscar Wilde's unconventional perspective on criticism as presented in his essay "The Critic as Artist"

- explore the philosophical concept of "art for art's sake" advocated by Wilde and its implications for understanding the intrinsic value of art
- analyse the symbiotic relationship between the artist and the critic as portrayed by Wilde, and to understand how interpretation enriches the dialogue surrounding art and literature
- examine Wilde's use of rhetorical devices, such as paradoxes and contradictions, and their impact on challenging conventional assumptions about art and criticism
- critically evaluate Wilde's arguments and articulate personal interpretations and reflections on the role of the critic and the nature of artistic interpretation.

16.2 Oscar Wilde: Excerpt from "The Critic as Artist"

16.2.1 Background

Oscar Wilde, the author of "The Critic as Artist," left an indelible mark on literature and culture, captivating audiences with his wit and brilliance long after his passing in 1900. Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1854, Wilde was raised in a stimulating environment shaped by his parents' literary pursuits and social activism. His upbringing instilled in him a love for learning, which flourished during his studies at Trinity College Dublin and later at Magdalene College, Oxford. It was here that Wilde delved into classical literature and philosophy, drawing inspiration from Greek aesthetics and the burgeoning Aesthetic movement of his time.

In 1891, Wilde published his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a masterpiece that explored themes of beauty, morality, and the duality of human nature. This work solidified Wilde's reputation as a significant literary figure and further cemented his place in literary history. However, Wilde's personal life was marked by controversy. He openly embraced his aesthetic lifestyle and homosexuality, challenging the strict social norms of Victorian society. His relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas ultimately led to his downfall, as he was accused and convicted of "gross indecency" in 1895, resulting in imprisonment and public disgrace.

Wilde's literary journey began with poetry and criticism, where he showcased his sharp wit and advocated for the philosophy of "art for art's sake." He championed the idea that art should exist independently of moral or utilitarian concerns, emphasizing its intrinsic value and beauty. This notion revolutionized literary criticism by encouraging a focus on the formal qualities of a work and its emotional impact, rather than its adherence to societal norms or moral

standards. Wilde's advocacy for aestheticism profoundly influenced subsequent generations of critics, shaping their approach to the interpretation and evaluation of literature.

Wilde's wit and penchant for paradox are evident throughout his critical writings, infusing them with a distinctive style and intellectual flair. He delighted in challenging conventional wisdom and subverting expectations, inviting readers to question prevailing attitudes towards art and society. Wilde's embrace of paradox as a rhetorical device serves as a reminder of the inherent complexity and ambiguity of literature, encouraging critics to adopt a more nuanced and nuanced approach to their analysis. His early works laid the foundation for his later successes as a playwright, with plays like "Lady Windermere's Fan" and the iconic "The Importance of Being Earnest" earning widespread acclaim for their witty dialogue and satirical brilliance.

Wilde's seminal essay, "The Critic as Artist," stands as a cornerstone of his literary criticism. In this work, Wilde challenges conventional notions of criticism as mere fault-finding or analysis devoid of creativity. Instead, he posits that the true critic is an artist in their own right, engaging with literature as a medium for self-expression and interpretation. Wilde contends that criticism should not aim to diminish the work of art but to enhance its appreciation by illuminating its aesthetic and philosophical depths.

Despite this personal tragedy, Wilde's literary legacy remained intact. His works continued to be celebrated for their originality, wit, and insightful commentary on society. His tragic life added another layer to his complex and enduring legacy, sparking discussions about morality, identity, and the role of art in society.

16.2.2 Art for Art's Sake

It is important to understand the movement 'Art for Art's Sake' before reading Oscar Wilde's essay. Art for art's sake is a concept that has been debated, celebrated, and pondered over by artists, critics, and philosophers for centuries. At its core, it's a simple idea with profound implications: art exists for its own sake, independent of any moral, political, or practical purpose. Let us explore this concept, understanding its origins, implications, and enduring significance.

The phrase "art for art's sake" emerged in the 19th century during a period of artistic upheaval and experimentation. It was championed by writers, poets, and artists who sought to liberate art from the constraints of traditional conventions and societal expectations. One of the earliest proponents of this idea was the French writer Théophile Gautier, who declared, "Art for

art's sake, and nothing else!" This rallying cry encapsulated a rebellion against the prevailing notion that art should serve a moral or didactic purpose.

At the heart of the concept of art for art's sake lies the belief in artistic autonomy. This means that artists have the freedom to create without being bound by external considerations such as morality, ideology, or utility. Instead, they are guided by their own creative impulses, exploring the limitless possibilities of artistic expression. In essence, art for art's sake asserts the intrinsic value of art, emphasizing its capacity to evoke emotion, provoke thought, and enrich human experience.

When we understand the idea of art for art's sake, we shift our focus from the content or message of a work to its aesthetic qualities and formal elements. This doesn't mean that art becomes meaningless or devoid of significance. On the contrary, it invites us to appreciate art for its beauty, craftsmanship, and sensory impact. Whether it's the vibrant colours of a painting, the melodic harmonies of a symphony, or the lyrical prose of a novel, art for art's sake encourages us to immerse ourselves in the sheer pleasure of artistic experience.

In a world where everything seems to serve a purpose or fulfil a function, art for art's sake offers a refreshing alternative. It liberates art from all the shackles, allowing it to exist purely for the sake of itself. This doesn't mean that art is divorced from reality or disconnected from the human condition. Rather, it asserts that art has its own intrinsic logic and rationale, independent of external demands or expectations.

While the concept of art for art's sake has its proponents, it is not without its critics and controversies. Some argue that it promotes a detached, elitist view of art, divorced from the pressing social issues and concerns of the day. Others contend that it leads to a kind of aesthetic escapism, where art becomes an ivory tower inaccessible to the masses. However, defenders of art for art's sake maintain that art has the power to transcend boundaries and unite people across time and space through its universal language of beauty and emotion.

Despite the debates and disagreements, the idea of art for art's sake continues to exert a powerful influence on artistic practice and critical discourse. It reminds us of the intrinsic value of art as a source of inspiration, solace, and enlightenment in an often chaotic and uncertain world. Whether we're admiring a masterpiece in a museum, losing ourselves in a novel, or simply marveling at the beauty of nature, art for art's sake invites us to embrace the transformative power of aesthetic experience.

Check your progress:

1. In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde challenges conventional notions of criticism as mere fault-finding or analysis devoid of creativity. (True/ False)
2. French writer Théophile Gautier declared, "Art for art's sake, and nothing else!" (True/False)

16.2.3 Overview of the Essay "The Critic as Artist"

In the essay "The Critic as Artist," which is part of his book *Intentions*, we find two friends, Ernest and Gilbert. They are engaged in a dialogue. Thus, the essay is presented in the form of a dialogue in two parts. Overall, this essay explores the role of critics in the world of art and how their opinions shape our understanding of creativity.

In the first part, titled "With Some Remarks upon the Importance of Doing Nothing," Ernest and Gilbert talk about the significance of criticism in different times. They discuss whether critics are as important as the artists themselves. Gilbert explains that critics are crucial because they bring new perspectives to art. He also suggests that criticism is a form of art in itself because it requires creativity and imagination.

In the second part, titled "With Some Remarks upon the Importance of Discussing Everything," Ernest asks Gilbert about the relationship between aesthetics (the beauty of art) and ethics (moral values). Gilbert argues that aesthetics is more important than ethics in the world of art. He explains that critics have a responsibility to analyse both the beauty and the meaning of art. Gilbert also believes that art should inspire people to think differently and contemplate important ideas.

To explain in little more detail, in the essay, Wilde presents a compelling argument that criticism is not simply the act of pointing out flaws in a work of art, but rather a creative and interpretive endeavour in its own right. He begins by challenging conventional views of criticism, asserting that the true critic is not just a judge but an artist who engages with the work deeply, bringing their own perspective and insights to the interpretation. Wilde draws a parallel between the creation of art and the act of criticism, suggesting that both involve the exercise of creative faculties and the expression of individuality. He argues that criticism should not aim to diminish the work of art but to enhance its appreciation by revealing its deeper meanings and nuances. In this way, the critic becomes a co-creator of meaning, contributing to the ongoing dialogue between the artist and the audience.

Wilde also explores the relationship between the critic and the artist, suggesting that the critic's interpretation of a work of art is as valid and meaningful as the artist's creation. He rejects the idea of a hierarchy between the two, arguing instead for a symbiotic relationship in which each enriches the other's understanding and appreciation of art. Throughout the essay, Wilde employs his trademark wit and rhetorical flair to engage and entertain the reader. He delights in paradoxes and contradictions, challenging readers to question their assumptions and preconceptions about art and criticism. Ultimately, Wilde's essay invites readers to embrace the transformative power of criticism as a creative and interpretive pursuit, one that enriches our understanding of art and deepens our appreciation of its beauty and significance.

16.2.4 Key Concepts Explained

Let us try to understand the key concepts of the essay, exploring them in depth using some examples:

Imagine this: You are at a museum, gazing at a dazzling Van Gogh painting. Everyone around you seems awestruck by its beauty, but you wonder... *Is it good? How good?* Suddenly, a renowned art critic walks in, and everyone hangs on their every word. They dissect the colours, brushstrokes, and hidden meanings the average viewer might miss. Now, *they* seem to be creating art out of the painting!

Oscar Wilde throws a similar thought bomb in the Introduction of "The Critic as Artist." He challenges the classic idea that criticism is just "reviewing" art, like judging a cake at a bake sale. Instead, he argues that **great criticism is an art form itself**, as creative and alive as the original artwork.

Imagine the typical art critic as a stern judge, handing out scores and pronouncements. Wilde throws that image out the window! He says true criticism is not about rigid rules or "correct" interpretations. It is more like a dance, where the critic engages with the artwork on a personal level, using their unique perspective to unlock its deeper meaning.

Now, here's the kicker: everyone has that potential! Wilde believes everyone's experience and personality shape how they see and understand art. So, when you analyse a poem, a song, or even a movie, you are essentially creating your own interpretation, adding your own brushstrokes to the artistic landscape.

He uses history as his witness. He points to ancient philosophers like Aristotle, who were both playwrights and master critics. He highlights artists like Shakespeare, who infused his plays

with insightful observations about human nature. These figures blurred the lines between creation and interpretation, proving that the best art sometimes involves both.

Think of it this way: a great review does not just tell you if a movie is good or bad. It takes you on a journey through the director's vision, highlighting scenes you might have missed and making you connect with the characters on a deeper level. That's the kind of artistry Wilde champions in the critic.

But here is the crucial takeaway: this does not mean throwing out all standards or becoming overly subjective. It is about **e**ngaging with art critically while celebrating your own perspective, adding your voice to the ongoing conversation about what makes art meaningful.

So, the next time you admire a painting, read a poem, or watch a movie, remember: you're not just a passive observer. You're a potential critic, an artist in your own right, ready to unlock the hidden layers and create your own interpretation. With that in mind, go forth and explore the art world, not just as a viewer, but as a co-creator!

16.2.4.1 The Subjective Nature of Criticism

Have you ever argued with a friend about whether a movie was a masterpiece or a snooze fest? Wilde, in his essay "The Critic as Artist," would chuckle and say, "Welcome to the beautiful chaos of subjective criticism!"

He throws shade on the idea of "objective" art evaluation, like rating a restaurant with a star system. He argues that art doesn't exist in a vacuum waiting for a universal "good" label. Instead, it interacts with each viewer through their unique lens shaped by life experiences, beliefs, and even mood that day.

Imagine two people looking at the same painting. One, raised in a family of artists, sees technical brilliance and hidden symbolism. The other, with no art background, focuses on the colours and evokes personal memories. Both interpretations are valid, even if they seem worlds apart.

Wilde does not downplay expertise. A seasoned critic, like a seasoned chef, has more tools to analyse technique and style. But even then, their opinion remains their own, a flavoured response to the artwork. He compares it to tasting wine - a sommelier might describe complex notes, but ultimately, you enjoy it or not based on your own palate.

So, where does objectivity fit in? Not in judging individual pieces, but in understanding broad artistic movements and historical context. Knowing cultural influences can enhance your interpretation, but it doesn't dictate how you personally feel.

Wilde believes this subjectivity is necessary for art to thrive. Imagine if everyone saw the same meaning in every artwork. It would be like wearing the same uniform! Diversity of views sparks discussions, fuels creativity, and keeps art alive and evolving.

Subjectivity doesn't mean letting personal biases run wild. A good critic, like a responsible chef, uses their unique perspective to build informed interpretations, not just spew random opinions. They consider the artist's intent, historical context, and technical aspects before forming their views.

So, the next time you disagree with a critic (or your friend!), remember: Wilde might say, "Celebrate the diversity! Your unique take adds another brushstroke to the ever-evolving canvas of art appreciation." Just make sure your brushstrokes are informed and thoughtful, not just flung recklessly onto the canvas!

16.2.4.2 The Artist as Interpreter

Imagine gazing at a magnificent sculpture, its intricate details whispering stories you did not know you understood. Oscar Wilde, in his essay "The Critic as Artist," suggests that such art isn't merely crafted by conscious intent, but emerges from a deeper wellspring within the artist. He declares that artists function as channels, expressing universal truths and emotions that transcend their conscious awareness. This opens a fascinating doorway for the critic, transforming their role from mere judge to interpreter, tasked with unveiling the hidden meanings nestled within the artwork.

Wilde's claim challenges the typical image of the artist as a deliberate creator, meticulously planning each brushstroke and plot twist. Instead, he proposes a more mysterious process. Artists, he says, tap into a realm of collective unconscious, a vast reservoir of shared human experiences, emotions, and archetypes. They become instruments, translating these unconscious forces into tangible forms – be it a haunting melody, a soul-stirring poem, or a captivating painting.

But how does this unconscious creation process translate into tangible art? Think of a dream. Vivid symbols and emotions surface, yet upon waking, the precise meaning remains elusive. Similarly, the artist may be guided by powerful urges and intuitions, but their conscious mind might not fully grasp the significance of every stroke or note.

Here is where the critic enters, armed with their own artistic sensitivity and interpretive prowess. Their task is not to simply evaluate or judge, but to act as a decoder, unravelling the intricate layers of meaning embedded within the artwork. They delve into the artist's unconscious

landscape, drawing connections between symbols, motifs, and emotions, ultimately bringing to light the universal truths resonating beneath the surface.

For example, imagine a melancholic piano piece. The critic might not be able to pinpoint the exact event that triggered the artist's emotions, but by analyzing the tempo, chords, and dynamics, they could unveil a universal theme of loss, longing, or perhaps even resilience. They become the bridge between the artist's unconscious expression and the conscious understanding of the audience.

Wilde does not suggest the artist is entirely oblivious to their creation. They likely experience the emotions and intuitions guiding their work, but the final meaning might remain partially veiled. The critic, then, acts as a collaborator, completing the interpretive circle by articulating what the artist may have only felt or sensed.

However, this does not imply the critic possesses the ultimate truth. Wilde encourages individual interpretations, acknowledging that each of us brings our own unique lens to the artwork, shaped by our experiences and emotions. The critic's role is to offer one insightful perspective, sparking dialogue and enriching the appreciation of the art.

Through this lens, the relationship between artist and critic becomes a fascinating dance. The artist creates from the depths of the unconscious, while the critic navigates the conscious realm, illuminating the hidden truths and emotions embedded within the art. Together, they unlock the multifaceted potential of art, enriching our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

16.2.4.3 The Critic as Creator

Imagine gazing at a Rembrandt portrait, captivated by the subtle brushstrokes and profound expression. Oscar Wilde goes beyond mere admiration. He boldly proclaims that the true critic doesn't just appreciate the artwork; they become creators themselves, re-interpreting and even surpassing the artist's original vision.

Wilde challenges the traditional view of the critic as a passive judge, merely handing out 'good' or 'bad' ratings. Instead, he elevates their role to that of a co-creator, actively engaging with the artwork and crafting their own interpretation. This interpretation is not simply a commentary; it is a re-creation, a fresh perspective that breathes new life into the original work.

Think of it this way: an artist paints a landscape, capturing the vibrant colours and serene atmosphere. But a skilled critic, through their analysis and insightful observations, might unveil hidden meanings like the artist's personal connection to the land or the symbolism embedded in

the composition. This re-creation enriches the artwork, offering viewers a deeper understanding and appreciation that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Wilde goes even further, stating that a great critic can surpass the artist in their interpretation. This seems like a radical claim, but consider: the artist creates within the limitations of their own experience and perspective. The critic, however, draws upon a diverse knowledge base, historical context, and even the collective interpretations of others.

Imagine a poem exploring themes of grief. The author poured their personal experience into the verses, but their understanding of grief might be limited by their own journey. A critic, well-versed in various forms of loss and mourning, could offer a re-creation that expands upon the original, connecting the poem to broader themes of human sorrow and resilience. This enriched interpretation wouldn't diminish the artist's work; it would broaden its reach and deepen its impact.

However, Wilde is not advocating for subjective interpretations that disregard the artist's intent or the work's inherent qualities. He emphasizes the importance of informed criticism, where the critic engages in deep analysis, considers historical context, and respects the artist's vision. They don't impose their own ideas but use their insights to unlock the full potential of the artwork.

Think of it like uncovering a hidden inscription on a weathered statue. The inscription clarifies the sculptor's intent, but it's the expert's careful cleaning and interpretation that truly reveal its significance. Just like the expert enhances the statue's value, the critic, through informed re-creation, amplifies the artwork's impact.

But this does not diminish the artist's role. Wilde acknowledges the artist's creative spark and the raw emotions poured into their work. The critic, acting as a skilled interpreter, unlocks these emotions and translates them into universal themes, making them accessible to a wider audience.

Ultimately, Wilde's view of the critic as creator highlights the collaborative nature of art appreciation. Artists express their vision, leaving room for interpretation. Then, insightful critics act as bridges, connecting the artwork to the audience and enriching its meaning for generations to come. This dance between creation and interpretation ensures that art remains alive, evolving, and forever sparking fresh conversations and understanding.

16.2.4.4 The Artist and Critic as the One

Imagine a world where artistic expression seamlessly blends with its interpretation. Wilde throws open the doors to this captivating possibility, suggesting that the ideal scenario is for the artist and critic to be one unified entity. This unification, he argues, fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of art, creating a potent force for cultural enrichment.

Wilde challenges the traditional image of artists and critics as separate entities, locked in a tug-of-war between creation and judgement. He proposes a more harmonious existence, where the critical faculty becomes an intrinsic part of the creative process. Imagine a painter not just visualizing a vibrant landscape but simultaneously analyzing its composition, symbolism, and potential impact on viewers. This unified approach, Wilde believes, leads to richer, more self-aware art that resonates on both emotional and intellectual levels.

He provides historical evidence to support his claim, pointing to figures like Aristotle and Shakespeare. Aristotle, a renowned philosopher, not only authored groundbreaking theories but also penned insightful dramatic critiques. Shakespeare, the quintessential playwright, masterfully infused his own critical analysis into his plays, crafting characters with profound dialogues and multifaceted stories. These individuals, according to Wilde, exemplify the power of unifying critical and creative faculties, producing works that endure due to their depth and complexity.

But such unification is not merely a technical advantage. Wilde suggests it fosters a deeper understanding of the artistic process. When the artist also acts as the critic, they engage in a constant dialogue within themselves, questioning their choices, exploring hidden meanings, and constantly refining their expression. This internal conversation leads to works that are more intentional and effective, leaving less room for misinterpretation or ambiguity.

However, achieving this artistic-critical fusion might seem daunting. How can one effectively create and analyse their own work simultaneously? Wilde suggests approaching it as a continuous journey of exploration. The artist constantly observes their own creation, analyzing its effectiveness, potential interpretations, and room for improvement. This introspective analysis then informs their further creative choices, leading to a dynamic evolution of the artwork.

This self-critical approach doesn't imply artists should become isolated perfectionists. Wilde encourages seeking external perspectives and engaging in open dialogue. Sharing their work with trusted critics and engaging in thoughtful discourse allows artists to gain further insights and refine their interpretations. This creates a collaborative environment where the artist-critic benefits from diverse perspectives, ultimately enriching the final piece.

The unification of artist and critic doesn't negate the value of independent critics. Wilde acknowledges the important role external experts play in providing fresh interpretations and broadening public understanding. However, he emphasizes that artists who cultivate their own critical faculties create a stronger foundation for appreciating and responding to external critiques.

Ultimately, Wilde's vision serves as a bold challenge to traditional conceptions of artistic creation and analysis. By blurring the lines between these roles, he encourages a deeper engagement with art, enriching both the creative process and our understanding of the world around us. While achieving this complete unification might be an ideal rather than a reality, the journey towards it inspires artists to introspectively analyse their work and encourages audiences to become active participants in interpreting its meaning. This ongoing dialogue, where creation and interpretation dance hand-in-hand, ensures that art remains a powerful force for reflection, growth, and shared human experience.

Check your progress:

1. Artists, Wilde says, tap into a realm of collective unconscious, a vast reservoir of shared human experiences, emotions, and archetypes. (True/False)

16.2.5 Implication of Wilde's Ideas

Hope you have understood the arguments in the essay with some realist examples in your own lifescape. Wilde puts his concluding notes, not with a definitive full stop, but with a flourish of defiance and artistry. He does not just reiterate his argument; he elevates it to a resounding symphony, leaving a lasting impression on the reader long after the final word. Wilde, throughout the essay, has challenged the conventional perception of criticism as a mere "appraisal" or "judgment" of art. He has meticulously painted a different picture, showcasing it as an active, creative process intertwined with the artistic endeavour itself. Now, in his concluding stroke, he boldly declares: "The highest criticism... is itself an art."

This powerful statement encapsulates the essence of Wilde's argument. He wasn't merely challenging existing roles; he was redefining the very nature of criticism. He elevates it from a passive evaluation to an act of creation, demanding the same level of imagination, insight, and artistry as the original artwork. Imagine a skilled composer meticulously analyzing a symphony, not just dissecting its structure but also conjuring new emotional interpretations through their

analysis. This is precisely how Wilde envisions the "highest criticism." It is not a cold dissection, but a vibrant re-creation, adding another layer of meaning and understanding to the original work.

But why is this elevation of criticism necessary? Wilde suggests that true art appreciation thrives on diverse perspectives and interpretations. A single, fixed analysis can limit the artwork's reach and impact. When criticism embraces its artistic potential, it opens doors to multiple interpretations, enriching the conversation surrounding the art and ensuring its continued relevance.

Furthermore, by acknowledging the artistry of criticism, Wilde empowers every individual to engage with art on a deeper level. No longer are they passive viewers; they become active participants, contributing their own interpretations and adding to the tapestry of understanding. This fosters a vibrant cultural ecosystem where art inspires not just appreciation but also creation, reflection, and dialogue.

Wilde's concluding statement doesn't just resonate; it provokes. It challenges us to rethink our relationship with art and criticism. It encourages us to see the act of interpretation not as a secondary activity but as an artistic pursuit in itself, capable of enriching both the artwork and our own lives.

So, the next time you stand before a painting, read a poem, or watch a film, remember Wilde's words. Do not be a passive observer; embrace your inner critic, engage with the artwork, and create your own interpretation. You might just discover that the art of appreciation is itself a beautiful journey, one that can spark creativity, broaden perspectives, and connect us to the world around us in profound ways.

16.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

Oscar Wilde's arguments in "The Critic as Artist" can be encapsulated as follows:

1. **Rejection of Traditional Criticism:** Wilde challenges traditional views of criticism, asserting that the true critic is an artist in their own right, engaging with the work of art creatively and interpretively.
2. **Comparison of Criticism to Creation:** Wilde draws a parallel between criticism and creation, suggesting that both involve the exercise of creative faculties and the expression of individuality.

3. **Advocacy for Aestheticism:** Wilde champions the concept of aestheticism, advocating for art for art's sake and asserting its intrinsic value independent of moral or utilitarian concerns.
4. **Purpose of Criticism:** Wilde argues that criticism should not aim to diminish the work of art but to enhance its appreciation by revealing its deeper meanings and nuances.
5. **Autonomy of Art:** Wilde emphasizes the autonomy of art, asserting that its value lies in its ability to evoke emotion, provoke thought, and stimulate the senses.
6. **Relationship Between Critic and Artist:** Wilde explores the relationship between the critic and the artist, suggesting that the critic's interpretation of a work of art is as valid and meaningful as the artist's creation.
7. **Rejection of Hierarchy:** Wilde rejects the idea of a hierarchy between the critic and the artist, arguing instead for a symbiotic relationship where each enriches the other's understanding and appreciation of art.
8. **Stylistic Devices:** Wilde employs his trademark wit and rhetorical flair, using paradoxes and contradictions to challenge assumptions about art and criticism.

16.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the Unit, you should be able to have a better understanding of how critics can be like artists themselves, bringing creativity and new perspectives to their interpretations of art. You should be able to understand the idea that art can exist just for its own sake, without needing to teach a lesson or have a moral. You should have gained insights in to how artists and critics work together, and how discussing art can make us appreciate it even more.

16.4 Glossary

Aestheticism: A philosophical movement advocating the intrinsic value of art for its own sake, independent of moral or utilitarian considerations.

Paradox: A statement or situation that appears self-contradictory or illogical but may reveal a deeper truth or meaning upon closer examination.

Symbiotic: Referring to a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more entities, where each depends on the other for support or sustenance.

Interpretation: The act of explaining or understanding the meaning, significance, or intent behind a work of art, literature, or other forms of expression, often involving subjective perspectives and insights.

16.5 Sample Questions

16.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Oscar Wilde, the author of "The Critic as Artist," was an _____ writers born in 1854.
    a. **Irish**
    b. English
    c. American
    d. Scottish
2. Wilde published his only first novel The Picture of Dorian Gray in _____.
    a. **1891**
    b. 1991
    c. 1791
    d. 1691
3. Wilde's literary journey began with poetry and criticism, and he advocated for the philosophy of "art for art's sake."
    a. **True**
    b. False
4. Which of the given plays are NOT written by Oscar Wilde?
    a. Lady Windermere's Fan
    b. The Importance of Being Earnest
    c. A Woman of No Importance
    d. **Arms and the Man**
5. The phrase "art for art's sake" emerged in the 19th century during a period of artistic upheaval and experimentation.
    a. **True**

b. False

6. In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde challenges conventional notions of criticism as mere fault-finding or analysis devoid of creativity.
    a. **True**
    b. False
7. French writer Théophile Gautier declared, "Art for art's sake, and nothing else!"
    a. True
    b. False
8. "The Critic as Artist" is a philosophical dialogue between two characters, Gilbert and Ernest, about the role of art critics in society. (**True**)
9. In "The Critic as Artist," Oscar Wilde uses the strategy of a dialogue to argue his perspective with Ernest as the _____.
    a. speaker
    b. antagonist
    c. **interlocutor**
    d. interloper
10. Oscar Wilde was a proponent of what philosophy espoused by Gilbert in "The Critic as Artist" essay?
    a. Agnosticism
    b. **Aestheticism**
    c. Stoicism
    d. Epicureanism

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Explain Wilde's concept of "art for art's sake" and its implications for artistic expression.
2. Discuss the importance of criticism according to Oscar Wilde, and how does he redefine its role?
3. How does Wilde challenge the traditional perception of criticism as mere judgement or appraisal?
4. Describe Wilde's view on the autonomy of art and its significance in the context of aestheticism.
5. What parallels does Wilde draw between criticism and creation in his essay?

16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explore Wilde's argument in "The Critic as Artist" regarding the autonomy of art and its implications for artistic expression and interpretation.
2. Discuss Wilde's perspective on the relationship between the critic and the artist, examining how he challenges traditional hierarchies and emphasizes symbiosis.
3. Analyze Wilde's use of rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques in "The Critic as Artist," and evaluate their effectiveness in conveying his ideas and engaging the reader.

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Habib, R. (2008) 'Symbolism and Aestheticism', in *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: A History*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Leitch, V.B. and Cain, W.E. (2018) 'OSCAR WILDE (1854-1900)', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY
Master of Arts English
III SEMESTER EXAMINATION, December 2023
Paper : MAEN301CCT, Literary Criticism and Theory-I
Time: 3 hours Max. Marks 70 marks

Note : This question paper consists of three parts : Part – A, Part-B and Part-C. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

Part–A contains 10 compulsory questions of multiple choice/fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all questions. Each question carries 1 mark. (10x1=10-marks)

Part-B contains 08 questions of which students are required to answer 05 questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries 06 marks. (5x6=30 marks)

Part-C contains 05 questions of which students are required to answer 03 questions. Answer each question in approximately 500 words. Each question carries 10 marks. (3x10=30 marks)

Part-A

1. Choose the correct option for each question.

i. In Plato's *The Republic*, what term does he use to describe the imitation or representation of the physical world in art?
a) Allegory b) Mimesis c) Catharsis d) Harmony

ii. According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, what element does he consider the most essential for a successful tragedy?
a) Unity of time b) Tragic flaw (hamartia)
c) Excessive dialogue d) Comic relief

iii. What is Thomas Aquinas's specific contribution to literary criticism, as seen in his work *Summa Theologica*?
a) Advancement of ethical considerations in literary analysis
b) Emphasis on the importance of historical context
c) Formulation of key principles related to tragedy
d) Exploration of the relationship between theology and literature

iv. In Sir Philip Sidney's "An Apology for Poetry," how does he respond to the four objections raised by Stephen Gosson?
a) He agrees with Gosson's objections and proposes modifications to poetry.
b) He dismisses Gosson's objections and defends the inherent virtues of poetry.
c) He acknowledges the shortcomings of poetry and suggests alternative art forms.
d) He adopts a neutral stance, neither supporting nor rejecting Gosson's objections.

v. According to Samuel Johnson in his "Preface to Shakespeare", what is the primary purpose of literature?
a) Entertainment b) Instruction c) Satire d) Imitation

vi. In Joseph Addison's essay "True and False Wit" from *The Spectator*, No. 62, which among the following is not given as an example of false wit?
a) Anagram c) Lipogram c) Chronogram d) Palindrome

vii. Which poet among the following emphasises the use of everyday language in poetry?
a) William Wordsworth b) S.T. Coleridge
c) Samuel Johnson d) John Dryden

viii. Who among the following critiques the role of the critic as an artist in the essay "The Critic as Artist"?
a) Mathew Arnold b) Oscar Wilde c) John Dryden d) Mary Wollstonecraft

ix. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' literary critique in "The German Ideology" primarily focuses on:
a) Tragedy b) Epic poetry c) Socio-political issues d) Aesthetics

x. In which text does Mathew Arnold discuss the contemporary role and function of literary criticism?
a) "An Apology for Poetry" b) "Preface to Shakespeare"
c) "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" d) *The Republic*

Part B

2. Discuss Plato's perspective on poetry focusing specifically on his concept of mimesis.
3. Examine Aristotle's view on the essential elements of tragedy, emphasising the concept of catharsis.
4. Analyze Sir Philip Sidney's defence of poetry in "An Apology for Poetry," with a focus on his argument regarding the moral and educational value of poetry.
5. Critically evaluate Joseph Addison's concept of true and false wit.
6. Analyse S.T. Coleridge's theory of imagination.
7. Assess Mathew Arnold's perspective on the function of criticism in the present time, comparing his insights with that of TS Eliot.
8. Discuss how Oscar Wilde, in his essay "The Critic as Artist.", responds to Mathew Arnold's ideas on creativity and criticism.
9. Trace the development of the comparative method in literary criticism

Part C

10. Compare and contrast Plato and Aristotle's perspectives on the role of poetry in society, emphasising the differences in their views on mimesis and catharsis.
11. Trace the evolution of literary criticism from the Renaissance to the Neoclassical period, focusing on the contributions of Sidney, Dryden, and Johnson.
12. Evaluate the Enlightenment and Romantic perspectives on literature, emphasising the ideas presented by Addison, Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.
13. Critically analyse the socio-political critiques in the literary criticism of the Late Victorian Period, considering the works of Arnold, Marx, and Wilde.
14. Assess the influence of Romanticism on literary theory, citing examples from the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.