MAEN401CCT

Literary Criticism and Theory-II

M.A. English
(Fourth Semester)

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

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for

M.A. English

4th Semester

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(SLM Based on UGC CBCS)

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Programme Coordinator

Dr. Gulfishaan Habeeb
Professor of English, CDOE, MANUU, Hyderabad

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First : Dr. S M Fasiullah
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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 DDE 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, Directorate of Distance 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 Theory and Criticism - II**" aims to introduce the learners to the twentieth century literary theory and criticism. The major literary theories like New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Feminism, Post-Colonialism, New Historicism will also be studied in this course. It also introduces them to the Translation theory. The course is divided into four Blocks and each Block has four Units.

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
Programme Coordinator

Literary Criticism and Theory-II

Unit-1: New Criticism: An Overview

Structure:

1.0 Introduction

In this course on literary theory and criticism, we will start by first understanding New Criticism. In an earlier course, you already studied literary theory and criticism. In this Unit, we will discuss what new criticism is and try to understand the principles of New Criticism. New Criticism falls under the broad area of formal approach to criticism together with Formalism and Structuralism. We will study more about Formalism and Structuralism in the next unit. The pioneers of New Criticism are I.A. Richards and William Empson. Other major proponents of New Criticism are T.S. Eliot, Wimsatt and Brooks, Rene Wellek and Alan Tate. New Criticism is a

movement of the early twentieth century. The main emphasis of New Criticism is on close reading of the text. The text is believed to contain inherent meaning within itself. It is independent of the writer who is the author, of the reader who is the target group, and of the critic whose aim is to judge it.

1.1 Objectives

In this Unit, we will focus on the objectives given below:

- attempt an understanding of New Criticism
- examine the role of the new critics
- study the principles of new criticism
- understand the importance of new criticism in the current academia

1.2 New Criticism: An Overview

New Criticism played a predominant role in the 1930s to 1960s. It marked a shift away from the study of genre and form. The textual analysis of an individual text for meaning through language, imagery, etc. was the focus in New Criticism. The New Critics believed that universal truths in a text are revealed through contraries. For example, language ≠ meaning, content ≠ form, and universal ≠ particular. Content for them was more important than form. Meaning was believed to be created through the choice of language, that is, poetic devices like imagery. They do not believe in a subjective approach to a text. The textual analysis of a text to derive meaning through a close reading of the text is a very important feature of new criticism. The new critics search for aspects in a text that cause tensions, such as paradoxes and then study how these tensions are resolved through unity. The term "new criticism" was first used by J.C. Ransom in his book *The New Criticism* (1941) to describe the work of I.A. Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924). Let us read more about the contribution of I.A. Richards to New Criticism.

Check your progress:

1. New Critics believed that universal truths in a text are revealed through _____.

2. What is more important for the New Critics?

   _____

3. What do they search for?

   _____

4. Who first used the term New Criticism?

   _____

1.2.1 I.A. Richards (1893-1979)

I.A. Richards is considered by many to be the father of New Criticism. Some include T.S. Eliot also as a pioneer of New Criticism. His main contribution to literary criticism is through his works: *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1926), *Practical Criticism* (1929), and *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934). He believed that objectivity is more important than subjectivity. According to him, the two main pillars of criticism are (1) the value of the work of art, and (2) the communicative element. He explains that the artist basically concerns himself with the shape of his work. The correctness or rightness is important for the artist as he works. He, himself, is not concerned about what meaning his work will communicate. However, as he attempts at rightness, he is indirectly making communication possible. Art is an expression of ordinary experiences. Through his work, an artist communicates these experiences. Therefore, he lay emphasis on the words on a page rather than on ideas outside the text.

According to I.A. Richards, the close reading of the text is "an opening up of the [text] for what it can really be for us." The meaning of a text is important and meaning can be arrived at by a combination of different meanings. I.A. Richards presents four types of meaning. They are: sense, feeling, tone, and intention. Let us study each one of these now. Sense refers to the literal meaning. It is what is spoken to convey to the listeners/readers for their consideration. The literal and factual meaning of what is said through the word is Sense. Feeling refers to the attitude of the speaker to the subject. The speaker could be detached or may hold some feeling or desire for the subject. There may be bias in what we speak. Language is used to express such feelings. We also experience feelings when we read a text.Tone refers to the attitude the speaker has toward the listener. The tone of a text reflects the nature of the relationship with the reader. The writer chooses and arranges words based on the readers.The last type of meaning is intention. The intention of the writer may be conscious or unconscious. It is the aim or the effect that he wishes to promote

through the text. In brief, sense is what the speaker says, feeling is his attitude to his subject, tone is his attitude to the listener, and intention is the effect he wants to create.

Check your progress:

1. Name any two works by I.A. Richards.

   _____

2. What are the four types of meaning according to I.A. Richards?

   _____

3. In brief, sense is what the speaker ____, feeling is his attitude to his ____, tone is his attitude to the _____, and intention is the _____ he wants to create.

1.2.2 William Empson

For I.A. Richards reading a text is all about experience. The way in which the mind is affected by what it reads. Both Richards and Empson believe in a scientific basis for what one does in literary studies. Science is considered autonomous and according to Richards it can be described in statements which do not need any kind of context for human need. It is a declaration of facts. Therefore, any text could be autonomous if it is a declaration of facts and independent of external context. Empson differs from Richards in that he believes in authorial intention. He does not believe in separate compartments of author, text, and reader as separate functions. He, instead, believed in a back and forth movement among all three. He does not consider the author a part of the text. So, he is more interested in local effects and their complexity. So, Empson rarely concerns himself with the whole of the text. In *The Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), he carries forward I.A. Richard's theory of New Criticism by presenting how a single word could have multiple semantic possibilities and how the English syntax is flexible to accommodate different levels of meaning. Empson, you might know, was a student of I.A. Richards. He presents the seven types of ambiguity to express clarity of thought for a better understanding of a text. To discuss the different types of ambiguity, he surveys English poetry right from Chaucer (14^{th} Century) to his contemporary, T.S. Eliot.

Check your progress:

1. Empson differs from Richards in that he believes in _____ intention.

2. When was The Seven Types of Ambiguity published?

   _____

3. Empson surveys English poetry from Chaucer to _____.

1.2.2.1 The Seven Types of Ambiguity

The seven types of ambiguity are given below. But before we study them, let us look at the meaning of the word *ambiguity*. Ambiguity is defined by the Cambridge dictionary thus: "Ambiguity is the fact of something having more than one possible meaning and causing confusion." Webster's dictionary defines it as "a word or expression that can be understood in two or more possible ways." Empson himself defined it as "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language." So ambiguity is the use of words that lend themselves to several interpretations. It is the quality of openness to more than one meaning. Let us now look at each of the seven types of ambiguity as listed by Empson.

1. The first type of ambiguity arises in the use of metaphors. In this ambiguity words with similar sound mean different things. A metaphor is a literary device, a figure of speech, in which a word or a phrase is applied to something to which it is not applicable in a literal sense. For example, "She is a beautiful rose." In this sentence, the ambiguity lies in the metaphor of a rose compared to a beautiful girl. A metaphor is a direct comparison between two dissimilar things as though they are one and same. The first type of ambiguity is the simplest type.
2. The second type of ambiguity is where two or more words or metaphors merge into one. According to Empson, this is like using two differing metaphors together.
3. The third type of ambiguity is where two seemingly dissimilar and unconnected words are given together. The use of oxymorons by Milton, for e.g., "darkness visible" is a good illustration. Similarly, the use of conceits by Donne falls into this category. In the third type of ambiguity, different ideas that are joined by context may be provided in one word/phrase.
4. The fourth type of ambiguity is where interpretation is difficult because of several alternate meanings combined together. In this ambiguity, different words remain in disagreement but they come together to suggest the complex state of the author's mind.

5. The fifth type of ambiguity arises as a result of confusion created by the author who in the course of writing loses track of his work. In this, the author is in the process of "discovering his idea in the act of writing."
6. The sixth type of ambiguity arises when irrelevant matter is included and the reader has to decide what to do. In the ambiguity, the word/phrase/sentence in itself does not say or mean anything. The readers, on their own, are compelled to find meaning. But, this derived meaning may not convey the author's intended meaning. It may, in fact, be in conflict.
7. The last type of ambiguity is where the meaning is contradictory or goes beyond what the author had conceptualised. In context, the two words are opposites and provide a glimpse into the division in the author's mind.

Check your progress:

1. What is the first type of ambiguity?

   _____

2. Define ambiguity.

   _____

3. Define metaphor.

   _____

4. Who wrote The Seven Types of Ambiguity?

   _____

1.2.3 T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

T.S. Eliot is well-known as a poet and dramatist. He is famous for the poem, *The Waste Land* and the play, *Murder in the Cathedral*. He is well-known for his concepts of 'objective correlative and 'dissociation of sensibility.' Eliot is also an established essayist and critic. *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* was published in 1920 and included the essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919). "The Function of Criticism" was published in 1923. In the former, Eliot says that no author has his meaning alone. The author's work must be seen in relation to the literary tradition of which it is a part. In this essay, Eliot's focus is on the author. In "The Function of Criticism" he shifts his focus to the critic. The essay follows-up on "Tradition and the Individual Talent." According to Eliot, a critic of poetry is one who himself is a poet. So

he proposes the idea of a poet-critic like Matthew Arnold in the Victorian Age. His *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism* (1933) is a series of lectures on Mathew Arnold. In an earlier Semester, you have studied Victorian Criticism and Mathew Arnold's contribution.

1.2.3.1 "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919)

According to Eliot, a great artist is one who surrenders himself to the tradition while the second-rate artist depend on their individuality to gain credibility for their work. Tradition is not a repetition of the past. It encompasses the whole of the European tradition. Eliot states that poetry should be distinct from the poet and remain objective. He proposes that a poet should be familiar with the past because the past works form a tradition. The past blends into the present as a continuum. The tradition keeps changing as new works are added to it. Therefore, the poet or artist must be aware of tradition to contribute to it. True art is above the artist's personal life. Poetry "is not the expression of personality." according to Eliot. He strongly advocated that the focus of criticism should be the work and not the author.

1.2.3.2 "The Function of Criticism" (1923)

In this essay, Eliot propagates his belief that a creative writer also participates in the critical process of the work. This is more true of writers who are guided by tradition and do not rely on the "inner voice" as proposed earlier by Mathew Arnold. A critic should not concern himself with how he feels about a work. He should, instead, apply comparison and analysis to reach an understanding of the work. In this essay, he strongly advocates the importance of tradition over the individual taste, of objectivity over subjectivity, and the whole over the part. He suggests a work of art should be judged on its merits based on the accepted standards rather than on individual taste of a critic.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two critical essays by Eliot.

   _____

2. When was *The Sacred Wood* published?

   _____

3. Eliot strongly advocates the importance of tradition. (True/False)

1.2.4 Wimsatt and Beardsley

William Wimsatt (1907-1975) played a key role in the shaping of New Criticism. He believed in the totality of a poem. He argued that any interpretation of a poem must be based on the text itself and not on the intention of the poet. An objective criticism helps in better understanding. Like Empson, he also believes that there can be several meanings and there can no single way to read a poem. His essays on the intentional fallacy and the affective fallacy were co-authored by Beardsley and included in his collection of essays titled *The Verbal Icon* (1954). You will read about Beardsley in the following passage and you will read about intentional fallacy and affective fallacy in later subsections. Wimsatt's other major works are *Hateful Contraries: Studies in Literature and Criticism* published in 1965 and *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957). The latter was co-authored by Cleanth Brooks. You will read more about Brooks later in this section.

Monroe Beardsley (1915-1985) was a philosopher and his main contribution is in the field of aesthetics. *Practical Logic* and *Thinking Straight* were both published in 1950. *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (1958), *The Possibility of Criticism* (1970), and *The Aesthetic Point of View* (1982) are his works on aesthetics. As you read in the above paragraph, Beardsley also contributed to literary criticism. According to him, the intention of the author is not important for an understanding of his work. He goes to state that the author's intentions have no role in the meaning of the text. The meaning of a sentence need not be the meaning of the speaker. According to his arguments, there are texts which have meaning and can be interpreted, even though there is no authorial meaning. Next, after the death of an author, the meaning of a text may change. But, the text itself does not change. Hence, there is a difference between authorial meaning and textual meaning. Last, there may be meanings in the text that the author is unaware of. So, he again insists that the textual meaning is not the same as the authorial meaning.

1.2.4.1 Intentional Fallacy

The word fallacy means a mistake or error in reasoning. In their essay, "The Intentional Fallacy" published in 1946, William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley explain that intentional fallacy is the error or mistake in considering the intention of the author, the author's biography, or the background to the text for interpretation. For them, all these are extrinsic and should not be applied in criticism. Like other New Critics, they also believed that meaning can be found in the intrinsic features, such as language, structure, forms.

Check your progress:

1. What is fallacy?

   _____

2. Who used the term intentional fallacy?

   _____

1.2.4.2 Affective Fallacy

This concept was also proposed by Wimsatt and Beardsley in their 1949 essay, "The Affective Fallacy." Affective fallacy is the mistake of interpreting a text on the emotions it evokes in the readers. Wimsatt and Beardsley stated that the meaning of a text is not determined by one's personal emotions or reactions. Meaning is not dependent on the reader's response. The meaning of a text is self-contained and independent of extrinsic factors. The emotions or the feelings of the reader on reading the text has no role in the meaning of the text. The meaning of a text is derived from an objective analysis based on its intrinsic features.

Check your progress:

1. What is affective fallacy?

   _____

2. Who proposed it?

   _____

1.2.5 Brooks and Warren

Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994) was associated with the journal *The Southern Review* from 1935 to 1942 along with Robert Penn Warren. This journal was dedicated to New Criticism. He co-authored *Understanding Poetry* (1938) *and Understanding Fiction* (1943) with Warren. His contribution to New Criticism is primarily through his critical works, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939) and *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947). According to him, ambiguity and paradoxes help in an understanding of a text. He gave importance to textual analysis and a structural approach to a text. The concern of a critic should be with the work itself. The form and content cannot be separated. He was against the use of paraphrase to convey meaning. He called this the "heresy of paraphrase."

Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989) collaborated with Brooks, as you know from the previous paragraph. Along with Brooks, his contribution to New Criticism is significant. According to Warren, literature presents our experience of life. It mirrors something about life. Therefore, a close textual analysis and close attention to the text is recommended. Though, he advocated a close textual analysis, he often adopted a cultural and psychological approach to the study of a text. He was a poet, novelist and a critic. Some of his works are *Brother to Dragons* (1953) which is a long narrative poem*, All the King's Men* (1946), a novel, and *Selected Essays* (1958) which contain his critical essays. He received the Pultizer prize twice, once for fiction and another for poetry. He was also the first American poet laureate in 1986. Along with Rene Wellek, he published *Theory of Literature* (1949). You will read more about Wellek in the following section.

1.2.6 Wellek and Tate

Rene Wellek (1903-1995), as you read in the above paragraph, collaborated with Warren to publish *Theory of Literature.* Later, in 1960 he published *Literary Theory, Criticism, and History*. He advocated the need for in-depth study of a text in isolation. The text should be scientifically analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated based on close observation. He is recognized for his major contribution *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, published in eight volumes between 1955 to 1992.

Allen Tate (1899-1979) is famous for the poem "Ode to the Confederate Dead" (1937) and for the essay "The Fallacy of Humanism." He also published a novel *The Fathers* (1938) which reveals his ideas about society and tradition. He was inspired by Eliot's ideas about literary tradition. He insisted that the author needs to depend on tradition. As a poet and critic, he gave importance to form. Tate's contribution to criticism is through *Essays of Four Decades* (1969) and *Collected Essays* written earlier in 1959, apart from *The Man of Letters in the Modern World* (1955).

Check your progress

1. Mention two works by Rene Wellek.

   _____

2. Name the novel by Allen Tate.

   _____

3. Who was Allen Tate inspired by?

1.2.7 Principles of New Criticism

Before we end the Unit, let us sum up the principles of New Criticism. Some of the principles of New Criticism are given below:

1. The analysis of a text must remain centered on the text in isolation.
2. There should be no consideration of the life of the author or the circumstances leading to the writing/publication of the text.
3. The reader or the audience has no role to play in the meaning of the text.
4. Only those influences which are a part of the text may be considered.
5. Unlike the three unities of time, place, and action that you have already studied in earlier courses, the New Critics focus on the Unity of Effect. All the elements in a text may blend together to create the intended effect.
6. The focus should primarily be on the textual meaning.
7. The elements of form, structure and language used are studied objectively to find the meaning of the text.
8. Objective and textual analysis of the text through close reading.
9. Identifying the paradoxes in the text.
10. The paradoxes lead to tensions through ambiguity in the use of language or through contradictory themes and characters.
11. Through interpretation, the paradoxes can be resolved and the different layers of meaning can be uncovered.

Check your progress:

1. Write any five principles of New Criticism.

   _____

2. Through interpretation, the _____ can be resolved and the different layers of _____ can be uncovered.
3. The focus should primarily be on the textual meaning. (True/False)

1.2.8 Let Us Sum Up

In this Unit, we have covered New Criticism as a school of literary theory and criticism. We had an overview of how it started, the pioneers of New Criticism, the proponents, and the

principles of New Criticism. We have also looked into the seven types of ambiguity as presented by Empson. We studied intentional fallacy and affective fallacy. We considered the contribution of I.A. Richards, Empson, Eliot, Wimsatt, Beardsley, Brooks, Warren, Rene Wellek and Alan Tate to New Criticism.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained some knowledge about New Criticism, You have understood the contribution of New Critics like I.A. Richards, William Empson, T.S. Eliot, Brooks, Warren, Tate and Wellek. You should know about the seven types of ambiguity, intentional and affective fallacy and a good understanding of the principles of New Criticism.

1.4 Glossary

- **Ambiguity:** from the Latin word 'ambiquitas' meaning 'to be double.' It is the quality of inexactness in meaning by holding two or more levels of meaning.
- **Dissociation of Sensibility:** a separation of thought and feeling. It was proposed by Eliot to refer to the moment when thought and feeling became separate as two different sensibilities in a work.
- **Fallacy:** a mistaken belief
- **Metaphor:** a figure of speech where a word or phrase is used to compare or refer to two dissimilar things as though they are one and same. It is a direct comparison between two objects, not literally applicable.
- **New Criticism:** a mid-twentieth century movement in literary criticism with emphasis on close reading of the text without any concern for the biography of the author or the prevalent social conditions.
- **Objective Correlative:** a set of images, actions, or event that evoke the intended emotion in a work. It was applied by T.S. Eliot.
- **Paradox:** a seemingly absurd statement that is found to be logically correct on examination

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Which of the following critics is a New Critic?
    a) Philip Sydney
    b) Coleridge
    c) I.A. Richards
    d) Karl Marx
2. Who was I.A. Richard's student?
    a) Ben Jonson
    b) Mathew Arnold
    c) John Dryden
    d) **William Empson**
3. In which book was "Tradition and the Individual Talent" included?
    a) *The Sacred Wood*
    b) *Well Wrought Urn*
    c) *The Function of Criticism in the Present Time*
    d) None of these
4. Mathew Arnold is a _____ critic.
    a) Victorian
    b) Romantic
    c) Renaissance
    d) Modern
5. What is important for the new critics?
    a) Textual reading
    b) Close reading
    c) Looking for paradoxes
    d) All the above
6. Which of the following is a work by I.A. Richards?
    a) *Principles of Literary Criticism*
    b) *Science and Poetry*

c) *Practical Criticism*

d) All the above

7. Which of the following is a work by Cleanth Brooks?

a) *Well Wrought Urn*

b) *The Sacred Wood*

c) *Science and Poetry*

d) None of these

8. Who first used the term New Criticism?

a) Samuel Johnson

b) Mathew Arnold

c) **J.C. Ransom**

d) Karl Marx

9. How many types of ambiguity that Empson discusses?

a) Three

b) Seven

c) Ten

d) Six

10. Who among the following is not a new critic?

a) Wimsatt

b) Brooks

c) Warren

d) Dryden

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. What is New Criticism? Mention four new critics.
2. Explain intentional fallacy and affective fallacy in brief.
3. Write a short note on "Tradition and Individual Talent" by Eliot.
4. Mention any five types of ambiguity as laid down by Empson.
5. What is the contribution of Brooks and Warren to New Criticism?

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Present a detailed overview of New Criticism.
2. Discuss the contribution of the I. A. Richards and William Empson to New Criticism.
3. Examine the principles of New Criticism.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Abrams, M. H. *Literary Criticism: A Short History.* W. W. Norton & Company, 1953.

Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry.* Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938.

Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton University Press, 1957.

Knellwolf, Christa, and Christopher Norris, editors. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Ransom, John Crowe. *The New Criticism.* Louisiana State University Press, 1941.

Vincent B. Leitch. Ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.

Wimsatt, W. K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry.* University of Kentucky Press, 1954.

Web:

Yale Courses. "New Criticism and Western Formalism." YouTube Lecture - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47YyqXdrIhU

Unit-2: Structuralism and Formalism

Structure:

2.0 Introduction

Structuralism is a school of literary criticism and theory. It emerged as a reaction to New Criticism in the 1950s. You have already studied New Criticism in Unit-1. Both Structuralism and post Structuralism were introduced in France but had an impact across various literatures. Structuralism is an attempt at understanding through structures. Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude-Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida contributed immensely to Structuralism. Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida applied Structuralism to literature. In this Unit, we will discuss the contribution of these linguists and critics in detail. Formalism is also a school of literary criticism and theory. It marks a shift away from the study of biographical, historical,

and cultural influences on a text. Form is important and the inherent features of a text, such as its syntax, the use of literary devices and the structure are studied to derive meaning. Hence, Formalism is the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of a literary text based on its inherent characteristics rather than external influences. It started as Russian Formalism and quickly spread to the US where Rene Wellek and Austin Warren popularized it. You have studied both of them in Unit-1. So Formalism may be divided into two: Russian Formalism and New Criticism. The chief proponent of Russian Formalism is Roman Jakobson.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as to:

- understand Structuralism in the study of literary criticism and theory
- understand Formalism in the study of literary criticism and theory
- examine the contribution of the structuralists, such as Saussure, Strauss, Jakobson, Barthes and Derrida
- discuss the contribution of formalists, such as Roman Jakobson, I.A. Richards, Brooks, Warren, and Rene Welleck

2.2 Structuralism and Formalism

In your study of literary criticism and theory, you have already been introduced to various schools of thought. In this Unit, our focus will be on Structuralism and Formalism. We will look at the characteristic features of both and also study the theorists and critics of these areas. Let us first understand the principles of Structuralism.

2.2.1 Principles of Structuralism

- *Emphasis on structures*: Structuralism lays emphasis on structures and systems by which our experiences, society, culture, and even language is shaped and influenced. It aims to study how each of the separate structures interact and lead to the whole.
- *Interconnectedness of the structures*: Structuralists believe that different structures are not independent of one another. They are interconnected and interlinked. A study of these

different components or structures helps understand the relationship between them, leading to an understanding of the system under which these structures function.

- *Signs are integral*: For structuralists, language is a system of signs. They study the function of these signs to understand the relationship between the sign, signifier, and the signified. So for them, language is not merely communication but a system that facilitates an understanding of the world.
- *Binary opposition*: Binary opposition refers to the presence of contrasting concepts, such as hot-cold; love-hate, rural-urban, male-female, etc. By focusing on the differences, binary opposition helps in creating meaning. The understanding happens by the contrariness within/among the structures.

Check your progress:

1. Language is a system of _____
2. What is binary opposition?

   _____
3. What does Structuralism lay emphasis on?

   _____

2.2.1.1 Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

Ferdinand de Saussure is generally called the father of Structuralism. He was a Swiss linguist. He is famous for his work *Course in General Linguistics*. It is a compilation of his lectures and was published posthumously in 1916. The Saussurian theory gave way to the structural theory of understanding man's social and cultural life as depicted in literature. Saussure referred to language as a system of signs. It is through these signs that meaning is derived. Signs are signifiers and the signified. The signifier could be a word (spoken or written) and the signified is the underlying meaning evoked by the signifier. He also distinguished between langue and parole. Let us look at each one of these now.

Check your progress:

1. Who is the father of Structuralism?

   _____

2. What did Saussure refer to language as?

   _____

3. Saussure wrote *Course in* _____ *Linguistics*.

Theory of Signs:

1. **Sign:** It is a unit of language. It has two components: the signifier and the signified.
2. **Signifier:** It is the written or the spoken word to represent the sign. Take for instance, the page which you are reading now. "Page" is the sign; the written word spelled p-a-g-e or the spoken word /peɪdʒ/ is the signifier.
3. **Signified:** It is the idea or the concept of the sign. So, the idea of "page" that evokes in our mind is the signified.

Langue and Parole:

Langue: It refers to the abstract rules of a language as shared by a linguistic group. It is the social part of a language governed by rules and norms. It is the linguistic code which consists of the structures. It does not concern itself with usage. It is a study of the rules. It is superior to parole.

Parole: It refers to the actual use of language through speech and writing. It is the personal and individual expression of language. It is the use of the langue for a specific purpose with a specific meaning. It does not concern itself with the rules, but with the usage. It is inferior to langue.

2.2.1.2 Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009)

Claude Levi-Strauss was a French anthropologist. He was influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure. As an anthropologist, he found similarities between Saussure's linguistic systems of sign, signifier, and signified and the cultural systems studied in anthropology. He rejected the view of existentialism that gave importance to individual freedom and choice. Instead, he believed that unconscious patterns and structures give shape to human behaviour. His theory of Structuralism, thus aimed to present the structures that influence human thought across cultures and time periods. He presented a theoretical framework to help understand how our beliefs and values are shaped by the structures. He proposed that every culture engages in bricolage. *Bricolage* means the recombination of the present cultural elements into a newer form. Ideas and practices from

different cultures are taken and recombined into a newer idea or practice. This leads to cultural shift and innovative practices in society.

Check your progress:

1. What is the domain of Strauss?

   _____

2. What does bricolage mean?

   _____

3. What view did Strauss reject?

   _____

2.2.1.3 Roman Jakobson (1896-1982)

Roman Jacobson was an American linguist born in Russia. He preferred to be known as a Russian philologist. He was the first to use the term Structuralism to refer to his linguistic theory. His contribution to structural linguistics is based on binary oppositions in the study of phonemes, for example, voiced-voiceless and aspirated-unaspirated sounds. He influenced both Strauss and Barthes, leading to the application of his work in structural linguistics to areas, such as anthropology and literary theory. He rejected the diachronic approach (study of history and development of words/ideas/works across time) in favour of the synchronic approach where the structure served the purpose of communication. He attempted a close linguistic analysis of literature with a focus on the formal linguistic features in a work and on the sound patterns in poetry. He successfully carried forward Structuralism from Europe to the United States. His works on language in literature and the linguistic aspects of translation are widely appreciated. He is chief contributor to Russian Formalism which spread to the US and led to New Criticism.

2.2.1.4 Roland Barthes (1915-1980)

Roland Barthes was a French literary critic and philosopher. He played an important role in the rise and spread of Structuralism. An important contribution to Structuralism is his collection of essays titled, *Mythologies.* It was published in 1957. With the help of semiotics, he showed how to deconstruct the selected object or image. He believed that an object carries both the literal and the connotative meaning. By deconstruction of the connotative meaning, the hidden structures in society can be revealed. He challenged fixed meanings and instead gave importance to the role of

the reader in understanding a text. He successfully shifted the focus from the intention of the author or authorial intent to the interpretation by the reader. With the concept of "death of the author" he insisted on the ongoing role of the reader as critic and interpreter. The meaning of a text is not author dependent. The author dies with his creation, the meaning lives on with the reader. His famous essay, "The Death of the Author" (1967), is a critique of the literary traditions held on to by the scholars. In it, he states that the author does not provide the meaning. It is the reader who provides meaning to the text. Therefore, instead of one single truth, there are truths that are revealed in and through a text.

Check your progress:

1. Mention any two works by Roland Barthes.

   _____

2. Is the meaning of the text dependent on the author?

   _____

3. What did Barthes challenge?

   _____

2.2.1.5 Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

Jacques Derrida was an Algerian-born Jew. His works are mostly autobiographical. He introduced deconstruction as a literary theory. He is a theorist and a philosopher. He is famous for his contribution to deconstructionism which you will study in detail in another unit. Derrida considers the concept of structure to be as old as the idea of episteme. The term episteme means knowledge and epistemology is the branch of phiolosphy that deals with knowledge. In his study of structure, he lays down that the structure gets its structurality from its center. The center balances and organizes the structure. But the center remains unaffected by what is happening to the structure. In a way, the center is both within and outside the structure. This can be understood with the concept of God. God is the center of man's life. However, God is unaffected by man's life and is outside it. In this way, the center is as Derrida calls it, "transcendental signifier." At the same time, Derrida proposes that the center can be replaced. In different historical periods, the center shifts from one focus to another. It may shift from God and religion to the individual man. It may shift from the rural and the agrarian to the urban and industrial with the passage of time. The center

can only be replaced historically but the center of the structure cannot be changed or shifted during the given period. For Derrida the structure is important. It is essential for discourse. However, he finds some drawbacks in Structuralism. The truth value given to a structure in Structuralism can be shaken as the center gets replaced. Thus, he goes on to propose the theory of deconstruction which you will read separately.

2.2.2 Principles of Formalism

1. Autonomy of the text: The text is independent of the external social, political, cultural context in which it was produced. The focus of study should, therefore, be on the text and its features and not the life of life or the social, political, historical context in which it was produced. Formalism lays emphasis on the form and the elements rather than on the historical background.
2. Unity: In an analysis of a text, the specific parts should lead to the whole. A study of plot, character, theme, etc should revolve round the central idea of the text to present a holistic view and a harmonious idea of the entire text.
3. Defamiliarization: Pre-conceived ideas must be challenged to find the strangeness or newness in the familiar.
4. Literariness of the text: The value of a literary text lies in its literariness. The aim of the critic should be draw attention to the literariness of a text to judge and evaluate it. Literary language is different from ordinary language and it distinguishes the literary text from any other text. What a literary text says cannot be separated from how it says it.
5. Practical language vs poetic language: Practical language is everyday language that we use for communication. The poetic language has an independent value. It not only provides meaning as the practical language, but it has an independent existence due to the poetic devices, such as simile, metaphor, rhythm, personification, etc.
6. Structure of language: The focus on language led them, invariably to study the structure of language. Roman Jakobson suggested two levels: one similarity and the other contiguity. This bipolarity of language facilitates meaning through a study of form and the elements of a text.

Check your progress:

1. What is autonomy of the text?

   _____

2. Mention any two principles of Structuralism.

   _____

3. What are the two levels suggested by Roman Jakobson?

   _____

2.2.2.1 Russian Formalism

Russian Formalism started around the end of World War I and continued to remain active till about 1930. It believed that the meaning of a text goes beyond the life of the author and the socio-political, cultural, and historical background in which it was produced. The major proponents of Russian Formalism, other than Roman Jakobson, are Grigorri Vinokur, Petr Bogatyvrev (all three from the Moscow Linguistic Circle), Viktor Shklovsky, Iurii Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum (all from the Society for the Study of Poetic Language), etc. Most of Russian Formalism was influenced by the writings of Aleksandr Veselovskii and Aleksander Potebnia. Their ideas on the poetic language and the distinction between practical language and poetic language had an influence on the Russian Formalists. You have already studied Roman Jakobson in this unit. We will now look at the American Formalists or the proponents of New Criticism. You have already studied New Criticism in Unit 1. Here, we will do a quick recapitulation.

Check your progress:

1. What did Russian Formalism believe in?

   _____

2. Name any two Russian formalists.

   _____

3. Mention any two critics who belonged to the Society for the Study of Poetic Language.

   _____

2.2.2.2 I.A. Richards (1893-1979)

According to I.A. Richards, the close reading of the text is "an opening up of the [text] for what it can really be for us." The meaning of a text is important and meaning can be arrived at by a combination of different meanings. I.A. Richards presents four types of meaning. They are: sense, feeling, tone, and intention. Let us study each one of these now. Sense refers to the literal meaning. It is what is speak to convey to the listeners/readers for their consideration. The literal and factual meaning of what is said through the word is Sense. Feeling refers to the attitude of the speaker to the subject. The speaker could be detached or may hold some feeling or desire for the subject. There may be bias in what we speak. Language is used to express such feelings. We also experience feelings when we read a text. Tone refers to the attitude the speaker has toward the listener. The tone of a text reflects the nature of the relationship with the reader. The writer chooses and arranges words based on the readers.The last type of meaning is intention. The intention of the writer may be conscious or unconscious. It is the aim or the effect that he wishes to promote through the text. In brief, sense is what the speaker says, feeling is his attitude to his subject, tone is his attitude to the listener, and intention is the effect he wants to create.

2.2.2.3 Brooks and Warren

Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994) gave importance to textual analysis and a structural approach to a text. The concern of a critic should be with the work itself. The form and content cannot be separated. He was against the use of paraphrase to convey meaning. He called this the "heresy of paraphrase." Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989) collaborated with Brooks, as you know from the previous unit. Along with Brooks, his contribution to New Criticism is significant. According to Warren, literature presents our experience of life. It mirrors something about life. Therefore, a close textual analysis and close attention to the text is recommended.

2.2.2.4 Rene Wellek (1903-1995)

Rene Wellek advocated the need for in-depth study of a text in isolation. The text should be scientifically analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated based on close observation. He is recognized for his major contribution *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950,* published in eight volumes between 1955 to 1992. He advocated the need for in-depth study of a text in isolation. The text should be scientifically analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated based on close observation. He is recognized for his major contribution *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950,* published in eight volumes between 1955 to 1992.

2.2.3 Let Us Sum Up

In this Unit, we have studied two schools of literary criticism and theory, i.e., Structuralism and Formalism. We have studied the principles of both. We also looked at the contribution of major structuralists and formalists.

2.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to have an understanding of Structuralism and Formalism. You should be familiar with Russian Formalism and American Formalism (New Criticism). You should have gained an idea about the contribution of major structuralists and formalists.

2.4 Glossary

- **Binary opposition:** the presence of contrasting concepts
- **Defamiliarization:** technique of presenting ordinary, common, and familiar things as though they are strange or unfamiliar
- **Formalism:** lays focus on the text's use of structure during interpretation
- **Langue:** the language system shared by a group of individuals
- **Parole:** the actual act of speaking by an individual in a real situation
- **Sign:** unit of language that communicates meaning
- **Signifier:** the spoken or the written word to signify the sign, distinct from its meaning
- **Signified:** the concept or idea or meaning of the spoken or the written word
- **Structuralism:** lays focus on the underlying structure of a text while interpreting it

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Which one of the following is considered the father of Structuralism?
   a) Ferdinand de Saussure
   b) Claude-Levi-Strauss

c) Roman Jakobson

d) All the above

2. Identify the correct example of binary opposition.

a) Hot-Cold

b) Big-bigger

c) losing-lost

d) Write-written

3. Who propounded the theory of signs (sign, signifier, signified)?

a) Richard Wright

b) Ferdinand de Saussure

c) Plato

d) William Empson

4. Ferdinand de Saussure lived between _____.

a) 1857-1913

b) 1957-2013

c) 1757-1813

d) 1847-1940

5. Who differentiated between langue and parole?

a) William Shakespeare

b) Sir Philip Sydney

c) Samuel Johnson

d) Ferdinand de Saussure

6. Which of the following represents Russian Formalism?

a) Grigorri Vinokur

b) Petr Bogatyvrev

c) Viktor Shklovsky

d) All the above

7. Who belonged to the Moscow Literary Circle?

a) Karl Marx

b) Leo Tolstoy

c) Roman Jakobson

d) I.A. Richards

8. Who was responsible for the spread of Formalism to the US?
   a) Mathew Arnold
   b) S.T. Coleridge
   c) Roman Jakobson
   d) None of the above
9. Identify the principle of Formalism.
   a) Autonomy of the text
   b) Literariness of the text
   c) Defamiliarization
   d) All the above
10. Jacques Derrida is mainly known for his contribution to _____.
   a) Renaissance
   b) Restoration
   c) Deconstruction
   d) Contemporary novel

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Roland Barthes.
2. What is the contribution of Jacques Derrida?
3. Mention any five principles of Formalism.
4. Examine in brief the contribution of Brooks and Warren.
5. Write a brief note on langue and parole.

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. What is Structuralism? Mention the principles of Structuralism and discuss the contribution of at least two structuralists.
2. What is Formalism? Mention the principles of Structuralism and discuss the contribution of at least two structuralists.
3. Compare and contrast Structuralism and Formalism as schools of literary criticism and theory.

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Vincent B. Leitch. Ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.

Knellwolf, Christa, and Christopher Norris, editors. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton University Press, 1957.

Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism: from Plato to Present.* Blackwell, 2005.

Knellwolf, Christa, and Christopher Norris, editors. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Unit-3: Cleanth Brooks: 'The Language of Paradox'

Structure

3.0 Introduction

Cleanth Brooks is one of the most notable literary critics of the twentieth century and a significant contributor to the New Criticism approach. His most famous essay, "The Language of Paradox," is included in his most widely-read book, "The Well Wrought Urn" (1968). Brooks analyzes the role of paradox in the language of poetry. According to him, poetry uses paradoxes to paint vast realities and to explain realities that cannot be explained in clear language.

Brooks' argument is that poetry as a communicative medium is paradoxical because it resolves opposing elements, meaning that is hidden beneath the words. Acknowledging that paradox generates a denser text that has more interpretative potential, he supports his argument by examining several poems. In his essay, Brooks manages to raise an argument against the strictly material interpretation of poetry and appeals to the readers to view the work on a metaphorical level.

"The Language of Paradox" has remained an important text for the understanding of contemporary literary analysis and has prompted readers and critics to explore and reconsider the

various and conflicting layers of poetic meaning. Amidst a collection of poems, Brooks' work provides an insight into the importance of ambiguity and complexity in literature and a cautious approach to poetic interpretation.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- facilitate an understanding of how paradox operates within the language of poetry and how it enriches poetry.
- define paradoxes encountered in poems, and to think about the poet's intent and techniques.
- understand the figurative language in poetry as a set of words and phrases that convey meanings beyond the direct, literal sense.
- place Brooks' essay in the context of the American literary theory of the twentieth century.

3.2 Cleanth Brooks: "The Language of Paradox"

The title "The Language of Paradox" could be said to summarise the main message of Cleanth Brooks' argument that paradox is the essence of language and form of poetry. Paradox is a statement or proposition that seems to be contradictory and self-contradictory, but they may harbour a hidden reality when discerningly analysed. For instance, the phrase 'less is more' is a paradox because it contains antithetical meanings but bears meaning in some circumstances.

Brooks asserts that poetry always uses paradoxical words to convey complex concepts because of the nature of the language. In general, compared to prose literature that aims at clarity and simplicity, poetry may be viewed as that kind of literature which relies on obscurity, poly-vocalist, and the interplay of opposites.

Irony in poetry is helpful in explaining often things that may go unnoticed when told in a normal way. Cooper emphasises that contradiction is potentially ennobling, as contradictions allow poets to investigate the complexities of people's lives, feelings, and the world. For instance, John Donne in "Holy Sonnet X" employs paradox with the line, death, thou shalt die, as a way of

expressing the theme of life beyond death. To explain the use of paradox in poetry, Brooks uses examples of paradox usage in various poems. These instances of paradox highlight how the poets enrich their work beyond the surface meanings, thus making the pieces more engaging and deserving of closer analysis.

The title of the essay is very indicative as it situates the author against the kind of criticism that reads poetry literally. To read poetry, Brooks offers his opinion that the reader must understand the figurative and paradoxical dimensions of poetry. This approach provides a deeper understanding of various themes and moods of the text in the process of reading.

3.2.1 The Centrality of Paradox in Poetry

Brooks suggests that paradox is not merely a decorative element in poetic language but is essential to its core essence. He claims that poetry frequently deals with intricate and conflicting concepts, and paradox enables poets to articulate these subtle ideas. Brooks discusses the use of paradox by metaphysical poets such as John Donne to explore issues of faith and love; these poets give opposing concepts that, with closer inspection, reveal deeper truths (Brooks,1968,p.3).

Brooks emphasises the value of paradox, challenging the conventional wisdom that poetry should be straightforward and unambiguous. By using the writings of metaphysical poets, he illustrates how paradox is essential to conveying the complexities of the human experience. Readers are urged by this viewpoint to embrace poetry's ambiguity and variety of interpretations.

In "The Language of Paradox," Cleanth Brooks makes the case that paradox is a crucial component of poetry's language and structure rather than just a literary device. He argues that poetry inherently addresses intricate and sometimes conflicting truths, and paradox is essential for conveying these truths. Here is a detailed explanation of this idea:

a. Intrinsic to Poetic Thought

Brooks suggests that poetic thinking is contradictory by nature as it aims to convey the complex essence of reality and human emotions. While prose typically aims for clarity and simplicity, poetry embraces ambiguity and paradox to communicate deeper messages. For instance, John Donne's sonnet exemplifies death as a personified entity while also undermining its authority, presenting a contradiction that questions the typical understanding of death.

Thus, Brooks states that the poetic thought is paradoxical as poetry is intended to contemplate the world’s multifaceted nature and life. Unlike prose, poetry can be lyrical with an intention to create an intentionally developed opposing polarity. For instance, “Death, be not

proud" from John Donne's sonnets; where death has been granted a voice and at the same time death is reduced to the level of a fool.

b. Reconciliation of Opposites

Solving the opposites is one of the main tasks of the paradox in poetry, which means that the information presented in the poems is to be a complete and coherent system. Such reconciliation facilitates the presentation of multiple angles in themes that poets deal with. For instance, whereas, in William Blake's 'The Tyger', the concepts of good and evil, innocence and experience are depicted by a terrifying tiger and a sweet lamb respectively and still exist in the same world.

c. Depth and Complexity

The meaning of the discussed subject becomes broader and more ambiguous thanks to paradox in poetry. Emotionally, it forces readers to read between the lines and call for a more profound understanding of a given material. Thus, Brooks is absolutely right when she claims that this is what poetry needs to be like in order to be more interesting. For example, in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" the main character's hesitation and doubts are expressed with the help of antithetical expressions that characterize the protagonist's inner confusion and anxiety, such as "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?"

d. Expression of Profound Truths

Brooks goes further to explain that paradox is good in concealing the grand truths that are not easily said directly. Since love, faith and death for instance are abstract entities, poetry will be filled with contradictions. This way, Paradox helps poets to express the key themes of their work to the readers, meeting their intellectual and emotional expectations. For instance, in Emily Dickinson's poem Possibility – The Sphere, she employs the paradoxical statement that she dwells in possibility to depict the concept of creativity and imagination.

e. Engaging the Reader

The application of paradox in poetry also to a greater degree ensures that the reader is actively involved. This way, the reader is also engaged because instead of reading smooth sentences that contain specific messages or ideas, he encounters contradictions, which make him think about meanings instead of following the straightforward flow of information. This is very characteristic of the New Criticism approach that Brooks often employs in his writings, where he discourages readers from searching for the contexts of a work in favour of examining the text itself.

f. Illustrative Examples

In his essay, Brooks does an excellent job enumerating all the examples of paradox from the works of great poets of various epochs and from modern poetry to show how this kind of mechanism works in poetic language. His arguments are drawn from analysing several 'Metaphysical' poets such as John Donne and 'Modern' poets such as T. S. Eliot proves that paradox is not confined to any specific period of literature or style but it exists all through time.

As Cleanth Brooks brought into discussion the centre of parity in poetry, it becomes clear that poetry is to express the semi-transparent moments of paradoxical logic. Thus paradox enhances the language of poetry to communicate better and create the room for the readers to figure out more about the world and life.

3.2.2 Illustrations of Paradox in Classic Poetry

Paradise Lost – This is another paradox since the word 'lost' does not depict a positive scenario. Brooks also dislikes that paradox becomes part of a poem's text, and he offers examples of paradox taken from widely-read poems. Using William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" Thomas Hawkes highlights the principle of constructing opposites, illustrating that despite its apparent inactivity, the city is very much awake in order to demonstrate how the poem captures a moment and successfully conveys the poet's perspective on the city. This is a perfect representation of the life of the city on the one hand, simple and on the other joyfully growing and blooming, which shows the usability of paradoxes to describe multifaceted states of existence (Brooks, 1968, p. 10).

Brooks has all the reasons to do that and making an attempt to support the idea, he offers concrete examples from the most famous poems. In this case, his ability to explain Wordsworth's paradoxical imagery as a way of creating ambience only shows that such gadgets add value as they offer a way of rounding up the feelings and sensory experiences of a poem.

In Cleanth Brooks' essay known as 'The Language of Paradox', the author discusses the ways in which paradox is used in classic poetry and how, accustomed as readers are to the technique, poets add layers of meaning and shades of semantics through the use of this kind of metaphor. To support his observations, Brooks uses several examples taken from famous poets and collections to show that paradoxical language is not as one-dimensional as it may seem. Here's an elaboration on Brooks' illustrations: Here's an elaboration on Brooks' illustrations:

a. William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge"

Brooks analyzes Wordsworth poem which is a sonnet, paying attention to the antagonistic semiotics of Idol sleeping. He goes further into detail about the opposite aspects of the city in the poem by Wordsworth to show how he refers and captures a calm city as busy as a beehive. According to Brooks it has a specific reason for it; for making the reader understand the beauty of the moment and the towering mysteries of the city-life (Brooks, 1968, p 10).

In Cleanth Brooks' essay "The Language of Paradox," the exploration of paradox in poetry can be illustrated using William Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge. "Here are two examples that integrate lines from Wordsworth's poem with Brooks' analysis:

According to Brooks, speaking of the anti-philosophers, the anti-philosophers have the paradox at the heart of poetry precisely because paradox allows the poets to tell the complex truths. Wordsworth's line, **"Earth has not anything to show more fair: /Dull would he be of soul who could pass by / A sight so touching in its majesty,"** has a rather complex irony since the two terms attached hover in between the provinces of imagined touch and perceived grandeur. This line contrasts the approaches that are warm and that concern personal relationships ("touching") with the ones that are colossal and that pertain to the might of kings and queens ("majesty"). Brooks would point to this as an example of how Wordsworth shows the spiritual nobility of the city and to voice the words of the man who was to become one of its greatest historians, Thomas Carlyle, who once said that to possess a dull soul is to be unable to appreciate the magnificent sight of London. This intimidation contributes to the poem's theme of beauty and zephyr's feelings for the city, which Brooking elaborated in pointing out that paradox always adds to the enrichment of theme in poetry.

Brooks opined that paradox actually reveals things that are not patently clear and are barely discernible. In "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," Wordsworth writes, "Ne'er saw I, never felt, calm so deep! / The river glideth at his own sweet will: For example, the following lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson in the poem "Dated": "/ To whom could I enthrone thee, dear? In his dumb portents lies the mighty heart?" Brooks would employ this to show firstly, how Wordsworth uses paradox to express the hidden reality about the vitality of the city. The element of seemingly contradiction present here lays in the fact that on one hand, the boats are depicted as quiet and still, while on the other, the potential for their movement represents the rhythm of London.

b. John Donne's Holy Sonnet X ("Death, be not proud")

The given work of Donne brings Brooks many interesting materials for considering the topic of the paradox. Brooks is interested in how Donne submits to the reality of death by maskingly affirming the impossible statement: Death, thou shalt die. Due to the identified ambivalences, Donne's sonnet is filled with the discussed topics, which serve as the primary subject matter of Brooks' analysis of paradox. Brooks analyses how Donne faces the theme of death by the identification of the motifs contrasting with death, "Death, thou shalt die." Brooks affirms that these motifs overturn the stereotype of mortality and imply death beater in faith and eternal life. Brooks also shows how through an analysis of the rhetorical strategies, particularly paradox, the topic of death and mortality is not only transformed into a topic of hope and reassurance (Brooks, 1968, p 15).

Critiquing Cleanth Brooks' and Robert Penn Warren's "The Language of Paradox," paradoxical language is discussed as an essential element in the ways of voicing truth in poetry. As Brooks rightly mentioned, Donne's Holy Sonnet X ("Death, be not proud") is quite suitable when it comes to the explanation of the given aspects. Here are two examples integrating lines from Donne's poem with Brooks' analysis:Here are two examples integrating lines from Donne's poem with Brooks' analysis:

In this vein, Brooks supports the idea that reorganization is crucial to the meaning of a poem as it enables poets to convey complicated and frequently oppositional truths. Choosing the line, "Death, thou shalt die," from "Death, be not proud," my response will be as follows. This statement negates itself since it states that death will be ended – basically negating death, which is usually the final stage in life. Brooks focuses on this line for this reason to show us how through paradox, Donne is able to make people shift their perception when it comes to death. In general, such an assertion that death will die only emphasizes the presence of life within the soul and the triumph of spiritual aspect over the deathly one, which in turns makes the poem's themes even more profound.

A paradox, according to Brooks' reasoning, is more than just an opposite of another truth; it unveils further hidden meanings that are hard to decipher at surface level. Saunders' note that Donne's line — "One short sleep past, we wake eternally / And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die," — epitomizes this idea by framing it as a way of conquering death and attaining immortality. Due to the doubling of children at the dawn of day, the concept of death that is

presented as ‘short sleep till the morning of the resurrection’ called the reader to consider the tradition of the traditional apocalyptic thinking. Brooks would use this to show how Donne applies the paradox as a form of revelation of the spiritual truth that although there is death, it is not the finality of life but the transformation to an eternal life. This echoes Brooks’ argument that paradox is useful in elucidating latent layers of meaning in a poem, and in bringing into consciousness aspects that normally remain latent.

c. John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Keats’s "Ode on a Grecian Urn" gives Brooks a way to explore the complexity of art and reality. Brooks explores in detail lines “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter” and points out how Keats’s contrasting of the life and art highlights the fatally and aesthetical attempt to express the quality of art that is catered through a creation of an object that is meant to stay beyond the realm of perishable experiences. Brooks goes on to show how Keats utilises paradox to engage with this question about the endless call of the beautiful and the paradox of art and life (Brooks, 1968, p. 23).

In Cleanth Brooks’s “The Language of Paradox,” paradox in poetry is defined as a linguistic and structural technique that has the hermeneutic significance, portraying the world’s multitude of aspects and meanings. As Brooks has mentioned, the historical images present ‘ambiguity’ and ‘complex appeal’, and John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” demonstrates this best. Here are two examples integrating lines from Keats' poem with Brooks' analysis:

As Brooks claims, paradox is about revealing aspects that other techniques fail to uncover. Regarding this idea, Keats’ line **“Thou shalt remain in midst of other woe / Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’s t, / ‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.’”** offers one of the best expressions of this notion, by stating a paradox. Thus, the successful definitions of ‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’ offer a universal relation of two normally separated abstracts. Brooks employs this line to show how Keats is able to make seemingly contradictory assertions to express a complex existential principle about the confluence of beauty and existence. This paradox poses the question to the readers and forces them to reflect on the nature of beauty and truth with the help of the demonstrated and defined parameters as a complex and non-trivial task.

d. William Blake's "The Tyger"

Blake's poem, "The Tyger" offers Brooks plenty of paradoxes to contemplate, and the imagery is quite lush as a result. What Brooks does is to study how Blake builds up the imposing figure of the tiger and the innocent, vulnerable lamb, which is a rather paradoxical contemplation of life. He further refers to them as a paradox, which points to the masterpiece of creation and the inexplicable ways of the divine. Brooks illustrates how this antithesis contributes toward enriching the thematic dimension of the poem in terms of innocence and experience, the enigma of life experience (Brooks, 1968, p. 28).

Brooks' assertion that paradox is the essential feature of poetry is further supported by his view that it enables poets to convey the deeper, and frequently poles apart, meanings. In 'The Tyger,' Blake has: **"Tyger Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night."** This line is another example of an antinomy because it depicts an image of a powerful brightness in the darkness of the night forest. Brooks would have focused on this contrast to show how Blake was able to portray the tortured figure as both noble and monstrous. Vyasa seems to explain that the creature is both "burning bright" and yet also residing in the dark, indicating that the tiger – as a symbol of creation – is multi-layered and contains both the good and the evil. This raises the thematic density of the poem higher still by presenting the tiger as an embodiment of existence in its ambivalent form.

Brooks, with regard to the topic of paradox, opined that it can be said that beyond the given superficialities, there are hidden meanings or a hidden agenda. Blake's lines itself, **"Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"** sums up this idea of Deification in as much as it gives one the paradox of creation. The question compares the tender and the silly creature, the sheep and the powerful, strong, enraging, and frightening creature – the tiger, both are created by that divine Being. Brooks would then employ this line to elucidate on the role of paradox in the works of Blake and its application in the proposition of the duality of innocence and fierceness, light and darkness, or the bad and the evil in a single work of art. This thematic duality forces readers to think about the dark and bright, the black-and-white of the world and of the divine. This corresponds as well with what Brooks said about the paradoxical nature of poetry as a way to convey numerous layers of meaning and to search for the philosophical and the theological message behind the poem.

e. Emily Dickinson's "Much Madness is Divinest Sense"

Dickinson's poem gives Brooks a chance to discuss a theme based on paradox with reference to societal culture as well as unique personality characteristics. In "Much Madness is divinest Sense –," Brooks integrates issues of meaning by approaching Dickinson's reconception of the definition for sanity and madness. One can only agree with this idea and suppose that this paradox is intended to make the readers start thinking about normality and conformity and question what they really mean, or whether it is possible to get at the truth about a person. As Brooks shows, Dickinson subverts paradox to make readers stop thinking in a linear way and embrace experience's multi-layered nature (Brooks, 1968, p. 35).

In Cleanth Brooks' essay "The Language of Paradox," the exploration of how paradox operates in poetry can be effectively illustrated using lines from Emily Dickinson's "Much Madness is divinest Sense." Here are some examples integrating Dickinson's poem with Brooks' analysis: In Cleanth Brooks' essay "The Language of Paradox," the exploration of how paradox operates in poetry can be effectively illustrated using lines from Emily Dickinson's "Much Madness is divinest Sense.

Depending on all sorts of formal structures, individuals who claim to accept the normal standards of morality are, in fact, endorsing the bureaucracy as the only legitimate form of exercising authority.

According to Brooks, it is paradox that contains the meaning of the poem as through the use of opposite words a poet is able to tell more than a simple poet can tell in his/her straightforward language. Since Dickinson's line **"Much Madness is divinest Sense - / To a discerning Eye -"** constitutes a paradox where it is illogical to perceive madness as divine sense, thus one can see how this author subverts the more conventional wisdom of normality and enlightenment. This supports Brooks' proposition that paradox sharpens the thematic density of a poem because it offers two conflicting concepts whose sum creates further truth.

The specimens also look so realistic due to this feature. The fact is this because, as Brooks pointed out, paradox unmasks a truth that is hidden by accepting the surface as a fact. Another poem by Dickinson **(599: Much Sense – the starkest Madness – / 'Tis the Majority)** illustrated these ideas perfectly by showing that what is considered normal and reasonable by society, (Sense) is something which is rather insane (Madness), if looked at up close. Brooks would note this as an example as to how poets effectively employ paradox as a device in the sense that such a writing

disputes and redefines the reader's perspective of the real world with the ultimate view of unveiling the information about social compliance, and how each person sees the world.

In Brooks' opinion, the only serious approach to analyzing poetry is the one that amputates its contextual connotations and reduces it to a literal text: Brooks is very critical of the idea that there are only paradoxical meanings and that they are supposed to be read directly from the text. The critique of an enforced conformity is also evident in Dickinson's rhyme **"Assent – and you are sane – / Demur – you're straightway dangerous – / And handled with a Chain –"**. The coursework may seem to be a mere simplistic play with paradoxes while in essence; they speak about the society and the absurdity of bending to conform to authority or risking punishment. When it comes to interpreting these lines, Brooks would insist that understanding the paradox would permit a much deeper interpretation of Dickinson's commentary on American society today.

According to Brooks, there is a paradox that binds the concept of the two polarities in order to make sense of its information. Ah, Dickinson's poem captures this idea of coupling madness and sense, sense and the mad, sanity and perilous. This unification of opposite is very well captured in the lines "Much Madness is divinest Sense" on one hand, and "Much Sense – the starkest Madness," on the other hand, to form a more holistic opinion of the relation of 'folly and reason'. Brooks would utilize this as one of the instances of how he has incorporated the set of concepts that illustrate that the process of completion is based on the combination of opposed phenomena into a single whole, and therefore has a holistic view on the united meaning.

Brooks contends that paradox does so because it offers readers a primary reason to keep engaging and pondering about the two concepts that appear to be incompatible. In the poem Much Madness is divinest Sense - / To a discerning Eye -, Dickinson actively involves readers in interpretation by presenting authority with hindsight that seems, at first glance, to be a form of madness. This engagement is arguably consistent with Brooks' assertion that paradox does not only effectively share hard truths but also entices the audience into a more expansive form of reading that warrants contemplation.

Thus by comparing and contrasting Dickinson's "Much Madness is divinest Sense" to Brooks "How to Read to Write" readers are able to appreciate how paradox is a valuable technique used in poetry to also help engage the reader to think deeper which supports Brooks main ideas regarding the necessity of paradox in poems.

f. T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

Brooks finds in Eliot’s modernist opus a whole matrix with which to elaborate on the way in which paradox can enhance one’s understanding of modernity and existential anxiety. In the bit section of Brooks’ analysis, he looks at how paradoxical imagery and language create a conflict in Prufrock’s soliloquy which paints a picture of a man who is unsure of himself. Karl proceeds to demonstrate that Eliot’s employment of paradoxes is a manifestation of the realm of modern consciousness as well as the pivotal existential angst of the individual in question. This ambivalence fits to create the shock within the reader, which is discovered by Brooks as fitting to express the paradoxes of contemporary life (Brooks, 1968, p. 40).

Through the discussed examples of paradox in Brooks’ work, one can realize that the potential of poetry is far from being exhausted and the language used in classics does not require additions or exaggeration. In this way, he reveals all the significant details of these poems and shows the role of paradox as a powerful means of appealing to the existence and calling into question the world, causing a spiritual reaction.

Paradox as exemplified in Cleanth Brooks’ essay “The Language of Paradox” involves attitudes which mean more than they state, and this is clearly illustrated by T. S. Elliot in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. Here are some examples that integrate lines from Eliot's poem with Brooks' analysis: Here are some examples that integrate lines from Eliot's poem with Brooks' analysis:

According to Brooks, paradox occupies a critical position in poetry since it makes poets convey complicated realities. Paradox is evident in the poem ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ by T. S Eliot where the poet uses a clichéd coffee spoon to depict the monotonic nature of Prufrock’s life while he says, “**I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.”** This is a paradoxical statement of embracing a life but at the same time indicating irritation within the trivial things of life like coffee spoons to represent Prufrock’s lamp like sense of inadequacy and a monotonous life and such a paradox in the words of Brooks adds to the deeper thematic layering of the poem.

Brooks pointed out that paradox unveils further understanding behind fancy dramas that are normally out of concern. In the line **“Do I dare / Disturb the universe?”** The line creates the grandiosity of disturbing the universe whereas on the other hand it’s reduced back to Prufrock and his life. Brooks would point to this as evidence that poets employ opposites to reveal that the

anxiety and self-erosion which is the reality of existence is lurking behind such trivial issues Prufrock has to wring his brain about.

Brooks argues against the reductionist approach to reading poetry arguing that while such a strategy might help one to gather poetic literalisms it actually cripples one from understanding poetic paradox. Eliot's **"When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table,"** is quite vivid in comparison to the other poems I read, and it includes the contrast between social beauty and sickness. A mechanical reading might not get the complex message of this particular imagery, which would be an underlying representation of Prufrock's inability to feel in the modernist mode. Brooks would basically say that apprehending the irony in these lines is the key to the deeper understanding of the state of mind of the protagonist.

Brooks states about paradox that while two conflicting ideas will be highlighted, one will actually be a source and foundation for the other, creating one meaning. In Eliot's poem, the role of the women is represented by the line **"In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo"**, which on one hand depicts the usual, ordinary occurrence of women coming and going while on the other hand contrasts it with such a grand reference to Michelangelo. This perennial conflict sums up the study of the side of human life as nothing but the shallowness of companies and people while they casually speak about art. From this, Brooks would be extolling how paradox combines opposing facets to issue a singular message about the social interaction and the cultural meaning, extracting the public perception of the two films as empty and superficial.

To his instances, Brooks claims that paradox works within texts, forcing readers to search and ponder over such antitheses. The essay has also analyzed the effectiveness of paradox in relation to the quotation by Eliot cited as **"I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"** In this regarding, it was easier to determine how Prufrock's identification with Lazarus reflected his desire to be reborn and to reveal commenting on the contrary how his motivation to speak his truths are contained by his very nature as Such an engagement is in consonance with Brooks stating that paradox is not only a means of putting ideas across to audiences but also a way of making the reader be more involved in the reading process itself.

3.2.3 Paradox and the Unity of Opposites

A very crucial point in the essay is the fact that paradox assists in bringing together the opposites hence providing a much deeper understanding on the topic of the overall poem. He proceeds to demonstrate how this concept allows one to capitulate the polarities and have an integrated system. For instance, while discussing W. B. Yeats' poem “The Second Coming,” Brooks gives his argument about how Yeats is employing paradox to explain the oriental charge of history and prophecy and how destruction is intertwined with creation (Brooks 1968 p. 21).

In his essay "The Language of Paradox," Cleanth Brooks also examines the poem "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats, highlighting the poem's contradiction as an illustration of how paradox can be employed to convey a variety of interpretations. Here are some instances where Brooks' interpretation is combined with lines from Yeats' poem: Brooks’ theory of the relevance of paradoxes to poetry is centered on the view that complexity and contrariness are crucial to the written poetic works. When discussing the idea of the Second Coming, Yeats declares, **“The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity,”** where the most insightful and experienced individuals, who should know the right ways for society and lead it to peace, do not have confidence in themselves any longer, while the basest and most immoral individuals ‘burn with enthusiasm’ for what they are doing. This statement contrasts the sin of the best people beside enthusiasm of the worst, which expresses the confusion of the reversed morality. Brooks would argue that this increase hyperbolizes a breakdown further of the poem’s handling of societal dissolution alongside the loss of moral direction.

Brooks explains that antithesis does not describe how one idea is juxtaposed with its opposite to mean something; it describes how two polar opposites are combined to form a meaningful concept. A fine example of this is found in **“The Second Coming” where Yeats uses the lines “Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer;”** as a portrayal of the widening gap between the tried and failing attempt at order (symbolized by the falconer) and the increasing slide towards anarchy (the falcon). This way, the subject of the poem, the idea of disintegration, and the foreshadowing of the ensuing anarchy are tied together with the twist of a creature searching for what has been lost – its guide. Brooks would use this as an example of illumination of how paradox works out diametrically opposed elements in order to bring about a homogeneous thematic statement.

According to Brooks, the role of paradox is to continuously challenge readers and force them to discover contradiction and maladjustment. The hopes and fears that this four lines evoke in the readers are solicitously raised by Wordsworth through the title of the beast described in Yeats, What kind of being is coming to life to 'be born' in Bethlehem? This duality not only expresses an impending sense of gloom but also draws the readers into putting in efforts to trace through the poem's visionary lugubriousness. This is where Brooks also believes that paradox works in the sense that it actually leads the readers into being more complicitous and involved in the whole process of reading.

Brooks' discussion of the unity of opposites through paradox highlights a fundamental aspect of poetic expression: 'paradox' as the concept that best captures the thinking skills they require, particularly the capacity to embrace opposing views at the same time. Thus, not only does this approach enhance the thematic density of the poem but it also has the look of the poly dimensionality of the reality which one can observe in Yeats' oeuvre.

In "The Language of Paradox," Cleanth Brooks expounds on the ways by which paradox serves as a unifying principle. Here is a detailed elaboration on Brooks' exploration of paradox and the unity of opposites:

a. Reconciling Contradictory Ideas

As Brooks notes, in poetry paradox functions as a means of introducing the concept of the two opposites to solve the contradiction. The combination of opposites occurs when poets do not aim at creating simplicity, but rather, they always strive to mirror the nature of reality, which is always filled with controversy. According to Brooks, through paradox, poets are able to approach existence for its otherness and integrate this in their poetry for people to share in. For instance, although T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" is a montage of images and ideas, the juxtapositions set up a cacophony that presents the disintegration associated with the modern world; the cacophony is, nevertheless, meaningful (Brooks, 1968, p. 18).

Brooks thus argues that paradox lies at the heart of a poem and that it gives poets the possibility of stating the truth that is many-sided. In "The Waste Land", Eliot uses these words: **"April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain."** In this line, Eliot plays with the reader's expectations because April signifies a prosperous season, but Eliot paints it as lethal and sinister. This is an irony that signifies the struggles of rebirth have a pain that forges deeper the concept

outlined by Brooks that paradox enriches the theme of a poem. The clash of traditions due to historical changes is demonstrated in the 'April,' as spring symbolizes both renewal and pain, thus reflecting the schizophrenia of modernity, which is one of the central themes of "The Waste Land."

Paradox as in the case presented by Brooks, hides more truth than the normal face value would perhaps reveal. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot asserts, **"I will show you fear in a handful of dust."** This is quite paradoxical because the component of dust is typically regarded as earthly, non-vibrant, and lifeless while fear is quite the opposite: fraught and full of energy. This is how Brooks would explain this to her audience, to make them understand that paradox enables poets to reveal deep-seated realities pertaining to human life. The given line may be seen as summarizing the mood and theme of the poem with its focus on loneliness, and infinite fear present in the poem.

b. Creating a Unified Whole

A paradox enables poets to move beyond a head to head between these two ideas and originate a whole that is of a different dimension, with its otherness. Brooks goes on to explain how poets apply paradox in order to reduce the distance between two poles and bring together aspects of life that otherwise seem mutually exclusive but are in fact more linked than might meet the eye. For example, in *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman, the protagonist, and narrator exemplify the ethos of connecting the humane and the universe as one reality with the Two Selves concept of individualism. Whitman reconciles such contradictions together and, through this synthesis, provides a reflection of the subtlety of man's world and the intertwining of the universe (Brooks, 1968, p. 22).

c. Expressing Nuanced Truths

Explaining how poets still get to present a more profound reality than what is normally seen by straightforward dichotomy, Brooks avails that paradox is one thing that makes it possible for poets to arrive at the said position. This belief is the reason why within the context of poetry it is possible to think and accept the paradox, to show how the forces may work together and how there is no clarity when it comes to life. Building on the concept of lyric, Brooks takes readers through how poets like John Donne engage in the use of paradox to address some of the most established theologies and philosophies in the world today, including the mysteries of love and the existence of the soul and the bodily world. For this reason, through relying on oxymorons, the poet manages to express the contradictions of the divine love and the human tenderness for the Divine (Brooks, 1968, p. 27).

d. Reflecting the Complexity of Reality

A paradox is a kind of reflection of the fact that our environment and interactions are not simple, but are more real and diverse than we assume in our thinking. According to Brooks, there are contradictory aspects of life that cannot be explained, and by employing paradox in poetry, one can explain the same. Brooks goes on to show how the "power" present in the poetry of poets such as William Blake works through paradoxical descriptions of good/evil, innocence/experience to show how the polar opposites are inseparably intertwined within human nature (Brooks, 1968, p. 30).

e. Inviting Interpretative Engagement

According to Brooks, a paradox enables readers to read in between lines and through lines because it creates a paradox state that is crucial in comprehending the themes and concepts in poems. In so doing, the poets write texts that can be analyzed and subjected to hetero-hermeneutic readings. Brooks further shows how Dickinson turned paradox on American writers themselves, getting them to question their settled notions about the truth and reality of the world that they live in (Brooks, 1968, p. 35).

3.2.4 Paradox and Reader Engagement

Brooks pointed out that a paradox compels the readers into a state of wanting to reason out more and consequently they are compelled to understand the meanings that are held by the poems. Unlike the readers' disengagement that often occurs when they are just presented with information that they have to digest, this engagement is more than just conceptual but perceptual in that the readers are put through the struggles of having to deal with paradoxes. Through the analysis of Emily Dickinson's poetry, Brooks has demonstrated that poetry allows the audience to stop and think about the given state of affairs and the values of a particular society, as paradoxes present in the work of an author can force people to reconsider what they know (Brooks, 1968, p. 35).

Brooks underlines the interaction of the reader with the poem through her choice of words, which apply to reading poetry as well. Paradox contributes to making of meaning and engaging the readers in the perceiving mission which enriches the experience of reading poetry. Dickinson's paradox, as a part of the linguistic devices she employs in her poetry, is one way to express the idea that poetry makes people think more.

Check your progress:

1. According to Brooks, paradox is not merely a decorative element in poetic language. (True/ False)
2. Brooks examines the poem "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats to highlight the poem's contradiction as an illustration of how paradox can be employed to convey a variety of interpretations. (True/ False)

3.2.5 Critique of Literal Interpretation

Brooks, with characteristic humour and good spirits, takes issue with the literal readings of poems stating they violate the very nature of poetry. He might say that literate interpretation of poetry does not allow for pleasure, ambivalence and paradox that poetry provides for the reader of the text. He uses an example of the poem by Robert Frost 'The Road Not Taken,' where the contradictions that are complex about decide and individualism are concealed in a seemingly sound like the poem, literally asking readers to look beyond the outer layer (Brooks, 1968, p. 48).

It is, therefore, instructive to note that Brooks' critique is not a condemnation of literal interpretation but a challenge for the readers and critics to go further and read deeper into the poems. Cleanth Brooks has raised his voice against the notion of rendering literal interpretations of poetry. He states that the elemental interpretations fail to capture the essence and the richness of the probable. They deny the value of paradox as a literary device in poetry. In the next part, which is focused specifically on Brooks' critique of literal interpretation, we will provide further details.

According to Brooks, a simple and literate understanding of a poem is an insufficient means of capturing the politics of reading, and subtle messages within the text. Erotic language suggests figures and ceremony layer meanings to express concepts and feelings through poetry and metaphorical images that are not real, but illogical. According to Brooks, the approach of literal interpretation excludes these layers of meaning adding to the readers that richness and depth of the poem. For instance, it is possible to read Robert Frost's 'The Road Not Taken' merely as a story of a traveller who has to choose between two roads: a literal analysis will not capture the elusive hints of the measure of regret and the significance of the individuality of the selection made (Brooks, 1968, p. 48).

According to Brooks, poetry crops up vivid pictures of imagery, symbolism, and sentiments through the use of figures of speech. He argues having a literal understanding is insufficient. Brooks also points out that such an approach does not capture the typical idiom of a paradox and thus does not describe poetry's hidden meanings. He generally claims that paradox is stimulating readers and inspires them to rethink the possibilities and to widen their perspective emphasising that life is not black and white but rather multi-layered.

Receptiveness raises the problem of reducing the interpretative function of poetry to a mere literal dimension that demeans the reader to a simplistic level of comprehension. He contends that poetry creates a context for requiring its audience to read, to question, to search, and in so doing, they open their minds and hearts to a broader appreciation of poetry, essentially the poem at hand. Thus, when interpreting poetic works, the reader does not shy away from the ambiguity of 'poetic', but seeks to discover behind the seemingly confusing, more perspectives. This, according to Brooks, is made limited by a literal reading, a claim that seems to suggest that the reader is deprived of the textual depth and what is sparkling within the text.

In conclusion, Brooks' critique shows how a kind of simplistic interpretation of poetry and reduced realities can be severely limiting. He further presents his view on what poetry entails, pointing out that poetry is more than a single-dimensional language; it utilises a variety of elements such as figures of speech, symbols, and paradox to pass a richer message to the audience. But, this way, necessary elements of poetic language are omitted and a reader receives only the simple and plain meaning of a word which makes the beauty of the poetic language very less as compared to the potential depths it has.

Therefore, these reflect and briefly reveal the main points and concepts that are important for understanding the language of paradox according to Brooks' essay of the same name and highlight the fact that paradox is an essential tool in poetry.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying this Unit, you should have gained an understanding of Cleanth Brooks essay prescribed for your study. You should have an idea of the role of paradox in adding to the meaning of poetry.

3.4 Glossary

- **Paradox:** A statement or situation that is seemingly contradictory and often in conflict with a given paradigm while may contain a hidden, but more profound understanding.
- **Literal Interpretation:** Literalism in this context implies taking a text, analyzing it and interpreting it not with respect to the broader message or signs but just at a basic level of meaning.
- **Figurative Language:** Language that employs devices that are designed to describe objects or qualities otherwise than as they are, that deviate from the literal meaning of a statement.
- **Metaphor:** This type of figure of speech makes one dissimilar object equal, or akin, to another through the use of 'is, are, was, were' etc.
- **Symbolism:** Refers to the rhetorical techniques in which object, character, and/or incidents are invested with other meanings in addition to the obvious ones.
- **Juxtaposition:** Arranging two or more signs together where each is set off from the other, generally for purposes of creating contrast.
- **Nuance:** An intention, emphasis or inflection of the voice that differs very slightly from the standard or the norm.
- **Ambiguity:** Situations when a specific text can contain many different meanings or, in other words, semiotic interpretations.
- **Imagery:** Language that paints a picture and is emotive by depicting what is happening before the eyes of the audience.
- **Context:** Information that relates to the context of a given text; information that aids the understanding of the text by providing more information on the author, the time he or she was writing, the place, the culture among other factors.
- **Formal Elements:** The elements in a poem's physical nature which add further meaning and substance to that poem in the way they are arranged for example, the rhyming scheme, the metrical pattern, the rhythm and overall physical shape of the poem.
- **Interpretation:** Interpretation of the text wherein the analyst seeks to explicate the meaning of the text, sometimes in relation to aspects such as language, concept, imagery or structure among others.

- **Existential Themes:** Existential themes that are established within the context of human life, including the pursuit of identity, as well as the nature of real existence and subjectivity.
- **Philosophical Ideas:** Ideas or notions, which reflect the view of the world, the possibilities of knowing it, and existence, that may appear in literary creations.
- **Engagement:** Reading and analyzing a text actively in order to show that you are deeply interested in or involved with it.
- **Transcendence:** The act of going above and beyond what is deemed typical or customary, transcendence is typically associated with artistic or spiritual expression.

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions

1. What is a paradox?
    a) A straightforward statement
    b) **A contradictory statement that reveals a deeper truth**
    c) A comparison using "like" or "as"
    d) A descriptive passage
2. Which of the following best describes literal interpretation?
    a) Analyzing the deeper meanings of a text
    b) **Understanding a text based on its surface meaning**
    c) Considering the historical context of a text
    d) Examining the symbolic elements of a text
3. Figurative language includes all of the following except:
    a) Metaphors
    b) Similes
    c) **Facts**
    d) Symbols
4. In poetry, juxtaposition refers to:
    a) Using rhyme and meter
    b) **Placing contradictory elements side by side to highlight their differences**
    c) Describing a scene vividly

d) Repeating the same word

5. What does ambiguity in a poem create?

a) A single, clear meaning

b) **Multiple possible meanings**

c) A straightforward narrative

d) A predictable outcome

6. Which poet's work is used by Brooks to illustrate the use of paradox in "Death, be not proud"?

a) William Wordsworth

b) **John Donne**

c) Emily Dickinson

d) T.S. Eliot

7. What is a common effect of using paradox in poetry?

a) Simplifying the poem's message

b) Making the poem easier to understand

c) **Highlighting complex truths and contradictions**

d) Creating a humorous tone

8. Which term refers to the overall structure and form of a poem?

a) Imagery

b) Context

c) **Formal elements**

d) Interpretation

9. Brooks argues that poetry often relies on:

a) Literal language

b) Mathematical precision

c) **Figurative language**

d) Historical facts

10. The concept of "unity of opposites" in poetry refers to:

a) Keeping opposing ideas separate

b) **Creating harmony by reconciling contradictory elements**

c) Avoiding paradoxical statements

d) Focusing on one clear theme

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. What is the main argument of Cleanth Brooks in "The Language of Paradox"?
2. How does Brooks suggest that paradox contributes to the unity of a poem?
3. Why does Brooks criticize a purely literal interpretation of poetry?
4. Give an example of a paradox used in poetry and explain its significance.
5. How does the use of paradox in poetry enhance reader engagement, according to Brooks?

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss Cleanth Brooks' criticism of poetry's literal interpretation, including his arguments against it and his suggestions for alternative approaches to analysis. Give models from Streams' paper to help your conversation.
2. Utilizing specific examples from the poems that Cleanth Brooks examines in his essay, explain how he looks at the idea of paradox in poetry.
3. Cleanth Brooks emphasizes the significance of paradox in fostering reader engagement with poetry in "The Language of Paradox." Provide examples to support your discussion of Brooks' arguments regarding the influence of paradox on reader interpretation and analysis.

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Brooks, Cleanth. *The Language of Paradox.* 1947.

___. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1947.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938.

Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton University Press, 1957.

Wimsatt, W. K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry.* University of Kentucky Press, 1954.

Unit-4: Tzvetan Todorov: 'The Typology of Detective Fiction'

Structure:

4.0 Introduction

Detective fiction emerged in the 1800s, around the Industrial Revolution. Prior to this period, people generally lived in smaller towns, working and socializing within familiar circles. However, as industrial jobs attracted more people to cities, interactions with strangers increased, leading to a heightened sense of suspicion and a rise in crime. It was during this time that police forces were established: London's in 1829 and New York City's in 1845. The urbanization and increasing crime rates provided fertile ground for the development of detective fiction.

The genre's modern roots are often traced to Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 short story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which introduced private detective Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. At that time, the term "detective" had not yet been coined in English. The first detective novel followed soon after with Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*. Initially serialized in Charles Dickens's journal *All the Year Round*, it was published as a complete novel in 1868. *The Moonstone* is

significant not only as the first detective novel but also for establishing many of the genre's classic tropes. Its detective, Sergeant Cuff, was modeled after real-life detective Inspector Jonathan Whicher of Scotland Yard.

However, the detective character who truly shaped the genre is Sherlock Holmes. Created by Arthur Conan Doyle, Holmes is arguably the most famous detective in fiction. Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, "A Study in Scarlet," was published in 1887. He continued writing Holmes stories until 1927. The period from 1920 to 1939 is known as the Golden Age of Detective Fiction, dominated by Agatha Christie. Christie wrote sixty-six detective novels and fourteen short story collections, with her novel "And Then There Were None" remaining one of the best-selling books of all time. Holmes and Christie's works have left a lasting legacy on the genre, influencing countless detective stories and characters that followed.

In the wake of the popularity of the genre, Tzvetan Todorov penned an essay to offer a brief explanation of the genre and its evolution within society. In this Unit, we shall discuss in detail the essay.

4.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as to:

- understand the genre of detective fiction
- know about Tzvetan Todorov and his critical works
- explore various arguments of Tzvetan Todorov's essay
- interpret the concepts of subgenres of detective fiction

4.2 Tzvetan Todorov: 'The Typology of Detective Fiction'

4.2.1 About the Author

Tzvetan Todorov (1939–2017) was a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary theorist, cultural historian, and essayist. He is well-known for his work on literary theory, semiotics, and cultural criticism. Todorov made significant contributions to the study of literature and culture, drawing on various disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, and history. In the seminal work titled *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), Todorov explores

the concept of the "fantastic" in literature. He defines the fantastic as a literary genre that exists between the uncanny and the marvelous, where events occur that are inexplicable by the laws of nature, creating a hesitation between a natural and supernatural explanation.

His work *Introduction to Poetics* (1981) is an introduction to the field of poetics, offering a systematic approach to the study of literary texts. Todorov examines the principles and methods of literary theory, emphasizing the importance of a structuralist approach to literature. Todorov's *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (1982) is a historical and cultural analysis. In this work, he investigates the European colonization of the Americas, focusing on the encounter between Europeans and indigenous peoples. He explores the concepts of otherness and cultural identity, highlighting the ethical and philosophical implications of the conquest.

In *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* (1991), Todorov delves into the moral dimensions of human behavior in extreme conditions, specifically within the context of Nazi concentration camps and Soviet Gulags. Todorov examines the ethical choices and moral resistance exhibited by individuals in these extreme situations. In his book titled *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (1993), Todorov critiques the notions of nationalism, racism, and exoticism in French intellectual history. He analyzes how these ideas have shaped French thought and their implications for understanding human diversity.

Todorov explores the legacy of humanism in *The Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism* (2002). He argues for a renewed understanding of humanist values in contemporary society. He addresses the challenges faced by humanism and advocates for its relevance in addressing modern ethical and cultural issues. In *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2003), Todorov reflects on the events and ideologies of the twentieth century, drawing lessons from history to inform contemporary political and ethical debates. He emphasizes the importance of memory and hope in shaping a better future. Todorov's interdisciplinary approach and his ability to bridge different fields of study have made him a significant figure in contemporary thought, influencing literary theory, cultural studies, and philosophical inquiry.

Check your progress:

1. Tzvetan Todorov is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary theorist, cultural historian, and essayist. (True / False)

2. The book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* is written by _____.

4.2.2 'The Typology of Detective Fiction'

Tzvetan Todorov's "The Typology of Detective Fiction" is an influential essay published in 1966. In this essay, Todorov outlines a structural analysis of detective fiction, categorizing it into three distinct subgenres based on their narrative structures and thematic elements. His goal is to maintain a clear distinction between 'genre fiction' and 'literature'. Todorov's typology has been instrumental in highlighting the structural and thematic differences within the detective fiction genre. His analysis encourages readers and scholars to consider how narrative forms and conventions shape the reader's experience and the genre's evolution. By categorizing detective fiction into distinct subgenres, Todorov provided a framework for understanding the complexities and variations within this popular literary form. His typology has become a foundational framework in the study of detective literature. According to Todorov, there are three sub-genres of detective fiction. They are:

1. The Whodunit: The narrative is divided into two parts: the story of the crime (which is hidden) and the story of the investigation (which is revealed). The focus is on solving a mystery, with clues and red herrings leading to the final revelation of the perpetrator. The plot emphasizes logic, deduction, and the intellect of the detective. The reader is encouraged to solve the puzzle alongside the detective. Works by authors like Arthur Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes series) and Agatha Christie (Hercule Poirot series) fall under this category.

2. The Thriller: Unlike the whodunit, the thriller focuses on the process of a crime and its immediate aftermath. The narrative often follows the criminal's actions and the ensuing pursuit. The emphasis is on suspense, tension, and action. The reader often knows the identity of the criminal from the beginning and follows the unfolding drama. In this category comes works by authors like Dashiell Hammett (*The Maltese Falcon*) and Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep*).

3. The Suspense Novel: This subgenre combines elements of both the whodunit and the thriller. The narrative may involve the investigation of a crime, but it also emphasizes the emotional and psychological experiences of the characters involved. The focus is on creating an atmosphere of suspense and psychological depth. The reader experiences the tension and fear

alongside the characters. Works by authors like Patricia Highsmith (*Strangers on a Train*) and Alfred Hitchcock's film adaptations of suspense novels can be considered in this category.

4.2.2.1 Todorov's perspective on genre in detective fiction:

Tzvetan Todorov argues that a work of literature would be judged poorly if it does not sufficiently adhere to the rules of its genre. In the classical period, there was a stronger focus on genre conventions than on individual works. According to Todorov, defining the characteristics of different genres helps in setting clear boundaries for them.

Todorov notes that all detective fiction is fundamentally based on the concept of two murders: the first is committed by the murderer, which serves as a catalyst for the second, where the murderer becomes the victim of a pure and unpunishable act. This duality is central to the structure of a whodunit and guides the narrative.

In a whodunit, there are always two intertwined stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. This dual structure is essential to the genre, as it provides the framework for both the mystery and its resolution.

Todorov also comments on the trend of "developing" or "improving upon" detective fiction, arguing that such efforts often lead to writing literature rather than true detective fiction. He emphasizes that the investigation of genres requires a detailed structural description. In the classical period, critics could define genres based on abstract logical schemas, but Todorov insists that a more elaborate structural approach is necessary for contemporary genre analysis.

4.2.2.2 Types of detective fiction:

I. The whodunit: The whodunit is a variation of the detective subgenre, featuring: a) A plot-driven focus, and b) Various 'red herrings' and clues are provided to throw readers off the scene of who the actual culprit is. Some of the sub-genre of **whodunit** detective fiction:

1. The cosy mystery:

a) The cozy mystery genre of fiction downplays the more graphic and brutal elements of crime, frequently in a funny way, and centers its story around a tiny, tight-knit community.

b) In addition, the featured detective is an amateur and outsider who is working with contacts in the police department to try and solve the crime.

2. The police procedural:

a) A perennially popular subgenre in both print and film is police procedurals. This work of fiction centers on the methodical, routine processes used by law enforcement investigators.

b) These stories' realistic elements provide an enticing window into the workings of the legal system, the police, and crime investigation.

II. Thriller detective fiction: The crime stories are the most dramatic; thrillers are typically the most emotional, focusing on the fear, doubt and dread of the hero. a) This genre is a hybrid of mystery and horror, b) The thriller also shares a literary lineage with the epic and myth. Monsters, terror and peril prevail, and c) Thriller Subgenres. Features of thrillers are:

- *Psychological Thriller/Suspense*: The protagonist and/or his family are typically the subject of the threat, which is still demonic but more restrained and even personal. The hero is frequently a comparatively "ordinary" man, woman, or child.
- *Supernatural Thriller*: This subgenre is something of a hybrid, in that the nemesis presents an overwhelming threat—he might be Satan himself.

III. Suspense novel: Suspense is an important feature of the thriller genre.

- It fills the audience with a pleasant sense of intrigue and excitement that is tempered with stress, anxiety, and expectation.
- It emerges from a series of erratic, enigmatic, and provocative events that occur throughout the story and cause the reader or viewer to consider the possible outcomes of particular choices.
- It intensifies to create the most unforgettable last moments, no matter how brief.
- Until the conclusion is reached, the tension in a story keeps readers or viewers interested.
- It might stand in contrast to surprise and curiosity in terms of narrative expectations. The goal is to tell a story that is consistently tense, surprising, and full of a sense of approaching catastrophe.

4.2.2.3 Evolution of suspense fiction from whodunit and thriller:

Suspense novels retain the dual narrative structure of whodunits, with stories of both past and present, but they elevate the second story, akin to thrillers. The reader is engaged not only in uncovering what happened but also in anticipating what will happen next. This dual interest in past

events and future developments unites curiosity and suspense, keeping the reader invested in the unfolding narrative.

In suspense detective fiction, the mystery surrounding the characters' fates becomes the central focus. Unlike in whodunits, where the mystery is confined to the past crime, suspense novels use this past mystery as a starting point. The main interest shifts to the present events and their consequences, making the second story the driving force of the narrative.

Historically, suspense fiction has appeared in two key periods, serving as a bridge between whodunits and thrillers. This form also coexisted with thrillers, resulting in two distinct subtypes of suspense novels.

The first subtype, illustrated by the works of Hammett and Chandler, is the story of the vulnerable detective. Here, the detective loses his immunity, facing physical harm and constant danger. This detective is deeply integrated into the story's universe, becoming a participant rather than an independent observer. This integration aligns the structure of these novels more closely with suspense fiction.

Suspense novels also strive to move away from the conventional milieu of professional crime towards the personal crime typical of whodunits. This evolution results in what can be termed the story of the suspect as a detective. In this scenario, a crime is committed early on, and all evidence points to a particular individual. To prove their innocence, this suspect must uncover the real culprit themselves, effectively taking on the role of the detective.

It can be argued that suspense novels merge the curiosity-driven exploration of past events with the tension of anticipating future outcomes. This blend of intrigue and danger reshapes the narrative structure, making suspense a distinct and compelling form of detective fiction.

Check your progress:

1. Todorov subdivides the genre of detective fiction into whodunit, thriller and suspense novels. (True / False)
2. Thrillers are typically the most emotional, focusing on the fear, doubt and dread of the hero. (True / False)

4.2.2.4 Distinction between whodunit and thriller:

Crime fiction has captivated readers for centuries, offering a blend of suspense, curiosity, and the thrill of unraveling mysteries. Among the various subgenres, whodunits and thrillers stand out for their unique narrative structures and mechanisms of engagement. Tzvetan Todorov, a prominent literary theorist, provides insightful distinctions between these two forms of storytelling, emphasizing their dualities and differing appeals to readers.

The Dual Stories within Whodunits: Todorov posits that the whodunit is characterized by a duality where two stories are intricately interwoven. The first story is the story of the crime, which details the actual events that occurred. This story remains hidden from the reader, only to be revealed gradually through the second story, which is the story of the investigation. The narrative journey in a whodunit moves from the discovery of a crime to the methodical process of uncovering the truth behind it. This structure creates a layered reading experience where the initial intrigue is slowly peeled back by the investigative narrative.

In the first story, the narrator withholds direct revelations about conversations or actions of characters not involved in the crime. This deliberate omission maintains the mystery, ensuring that the reader's curiosity is piqued. The second story, often narrated by a friend of the detective, captures the investigative process. Here, conversations are heard, and actions are observed, allowing the reader to piece together the clues alongside the detective. This dual narrative structure is quintessential to the whodunit, creating a dance between what happened and how it is uncovered.

The Fusion of Stories in Thrillers: In contrast, thrillers operate on a different narrative principle. Todorov notes that thrillers fuse two stories into one seamless narrative. Unlike whodunits, where the crime precedes the investigation, thrillers present a continuous flow of action where the narrative coincides with the events themselves. This fusion eliminates the need for a separate investigation story because the unfolding action provides all necessary context and progression.

Thrillers generate interest through two distinct forms: curiosity and suspense. Curiosity in thrillers moves from effect to cause; for instance, the story might begin with a shocking event (like discovering a corpse) and then unravel backward to reveal the culprit and their motive. Suspense, on the other hand, drives the narrative from cause to effect, where the reader is aware of impending danger and follows the protagonist's efforts to confront or escape it. This dynamic movement keeps readers on the edge of their seats, as the threat of immediate danger is ever-present.

Contrasting the Detective's Journey: Another key distinction between whodunits and thrillers lies in the safety and risk associated with the detective's role. In a whodunit, the detective and the narrator often remain in a safe, observational role. Their primary task is intellectual: to piece together clues and solve the mystery from a distance. This detachment ensures that the narrative focus remains on the logical deduction and revelation of truth.

Conversely, thrillers place the detective (or protagonist) in constant peril. The narrative's immediacy and the fusion of action with storytelling mean that the detective is directly involved in the dangerous events unfolding. Here, everything is possible, and the detective risks not only failure but also their health and life. This heightened sense of risk amplifies the suspense and urgency of the thriller, making the reader's engagement more visceral and immediate.

The Essence of Crime Fiction: While both whodunits and thrillers delve into the realm of crime, their narrative strategies and reader engagements differ significantly. Whodunits rely on a dual-story structure that separates the crime from its investigation, fostering a cerebral and methodical unraveling of mystery. Thrillers, on the other hand, blend action with narrative, creating an immersive and suspenseful experience where the detective's safety is never guaranteed. Through these contrasting approaches, crime fiction continues to enthrall audiences, offering diverse pathways to explore the dark and intriguing facets of human behavior.

4.2.2.5 Major argument with which the author is contradicting the epigraph:

The epigraph suggests that detective fiction is best understood as a continuum of historically different forms, implying that the genre cannot be neatly divided into genres. However, Todorov challenges this notion by presenting a structured framework for subdividing detective fiction into specific genres. He argues that the articulation of genres within detective fiction is relatively straightforward, a statement he supports by meticulously outlining the distinct features of each genre and their comparative aspects.

Todorov proposes that detective fiction can be divided into three primary genres: whodunit, thriller and suspense. Each genre possesses unique elements that set it apart from the others. Todorov's division of detective fiction into these genres provides a clear and systematic approach to understanding the varied landscape of the genre.

A critical question Todorov raises is whether these genres evolved sequentially or exist simultaneously. This inquiry delves into the dynamic nature of detective fiction and its capacity for adaptation and transformation. By examining the relationships between the detective, criminal,

author, and reader, Todorov constructs a binary within detective fiction, particularly through the lens of crime vs. investigation and whodunit vs. thriller sub-genres.

Todorov regards detective fiction as a form of popular literature, suggesting that it cannot be improved without considering its genre-specific contexts. He argues that understanding the complex properties of each genre is essential for appreciating and enhancing detective fiction. By using examples from various works, Todorov demonstrates how these genres differ from standard literary texts, emphasizing their unique contributions to the literary landscape.

In concluding his essay, Todorov asserts that a new genre is not simply a negation of the primary features of an old one. Instead, a genre emerges due to a different form of complex properties it possesses. This perspective underscores the evolutionary nature of literary genres, where new forms arise from the intricate interplay of existing elements, leading to the continuous development of detective fiction.

4.2.3 Let Us Sum Up

Detective fiction has long captivated readers with its intricate plots and compelling characters. While some propose that this genre cannot be neatly divided into distinct kinds but rather offers historically different forms, Tzvetan Todorov provides a contrasting perspective. Todorov's analysis reveals a nuanced understanding of detective fiction, highlighting its ability to be subdivided into various genres, each with unique characteristics and historical significance. By dividing detective fiction into whodunit, thriller, and suspense, and examining their distinct features and historical contexts, Todorov offers valuable insights into the evolution and complexity of this popular literary form. His analysis not only challenges the notion that detective fiction cannot be categorized but also highlights the rich and dynamic nature of the genre, paving the way for a deeper appreciation of its various forms and their contributions to literature.

4.3 Learning Outcomes

After completing this Unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate Tzvetan Todorov and his critical works
- interpret different genres of detective fiction
- clearly present various arguments from Todorov’s essay

4.4 Glossary

- **Detective:** a person, especially a police officer, whose occupation is to investigate and solve crimes
- **Suspense:** a state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen
- **Thriller:** a work of fiction or drama designed to hold the interest by the use of a high degree of intrigue, adventure, or suspense
- **Typology:** a classification according to general type, especially in archaeology, psychology, or the social sciences.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," introduced a private detective _____. (**Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin**)
2. The detective Sergeant Cuff, whose character was modeled after real-life detective Inspector Jonathan Whicher of Scotland Yard, appears in _____. (**Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*.)**
3. The author of "A Study in Scarlet" (1887) featuring popular character Sherlock Holmes is _____. (**Arthur Conan Doyle**)
4. The Golden Age of Detective Fiction, i.e., the period from 1920 to 1939, was dominated by a popular crime fiction writer _____. (**Agatha Christie**).
5. Tzvetan Todorov's "The Typology of Detective Fiction" is an influential essay published in _____. (**1966**)
6. Todorov proposes that detective fiction can be divided into three primary genres: _____. (**whodunit, thriller and suspense**)
7. Sub-genres of whodunit detective fiction are: _____. (**The cosy mystery, and The police procedural***)*
8. The suspense in a story keeps the person hooked to reading or watching more until the climax is reached. (**True**/False)

9. The genre of Whodunit is characterized by a duality where two stories are intricately interwoven. (**True**/False)
10. The author of "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Fiction", which was first published in The American Magazine in September 1928, is _____. (**S. S. Van Dine**)

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Briefly comment on the emergence of detective fiction.
2. Write a brief note on Tzvetan Todorov's writings.
3. Critically comment on the genre 'whodunit' and thriller.
4. Shed light on the evolution of suspense novel.
5. Discuss Tzvetan Todorov's perspective on the genre of detective fiction.

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss Tzvetan Todorov and his literary contributions.
2. Write a detailed note on the key arguments of Todorov's essay on 'detective fiction'.
3. Based on your study of Todorov's essay, discuss detective fiction.

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Edwards, Martin. *The Golden Age of Murder: The Mystery of the Writers Who Invented the Modern Detective Story.* London: HarperCollins, 2015.

Knight, Stephen. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

Symons, Julian. *Mortal Consequences: A History from Detective Story to Crime Novel.* New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Typology of Detective Fiction." 1966; rpt. in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977. 42–52.

Unit-5: Post-Structuralism

Structure:

5.0 Introduction

This Unit will help you understand the nature of Post-Structuralism as a movement of mind and as a method of literary criticism, its basic premises and characteristic features. In the 1970s by radicalizing and challenging certain philosophical positions of Structuralism, Post- Structuralism was born in France. Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault are the three principal exponents of Post-Structuralism. Additionally, you will come across an analysis of Michel Foucault's stances on language, knowledge, truth, power, subjectivity, identity, criticism, and the consequences of Post-Structuralism. The limitations and applications of the post-structuralist approach to literary criticism are discussed in the conclusion.

5.1 Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Post-Structuralism as a movement of mind and as a method of literary criticism
- basic premises and characteristic features of Post-Structuralism.

- how post-structuralists radicalize the main insights of structuralists to de-stabilise the project of Western philosophy itself.
- limitations and uses of post-structuralist approach to literary criticism.

5.2 Post-Structuralism

The philosophical and literary theory movement known as Post-Structuralism emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, and it is mostly linked to the writings of Jacques Derrida and his contemporaries. It began as an opposition to Structuralism, which was initially seen in the linguistic studies of Ferdinand de Saussure. By the 1950s, Structuralism had found a role in literary theory (Barthes), anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), and psychoanalysis (Lacan), and it was thought that Structuralism might serve as the foundation for logical explanations across all fields in the human sciences. The intellectual movement known as Post-Structuralism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly in France. By questioning established meanings, definitions, binaries, and structures—viewing the boundaries of knowledge as essential to knowing itself—Post-Structuralism both attacks and expands upon Structuralism. It questioned Structuralism's seeming simplicity.

Following its rise to popularity in the 1970s, Post-Structuralism encompasses a wide range of philosophical viewpoints and critical approaches that both challenge and radicalize some aspects of Structuralism with relation to language and other signifying systems. Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes (in his latter phases of thinking), and others are influential post-structuralist philosophers. Many other thinkers, including Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Guattari, also exhibit post-structuralist themes and approaches. Even though the terms "postmodern" and "post-structural" are sometimes used synonymously, it is helpful to take note of the scholars who suggest that "postmodern" pertains to current advancements in literature and other artistic forms, while "post-structural" is limited to contemporary theories of criticism and intellectual pursuits in general. Phenomenology, Freudian psychoanalysis, existentialism, and Structuralism are the main sources of Post-Structuralism.

The goal of Structuralism, a rather older philosophical movement, was to identify and characterize the patterns that underlie language, culture, and behavior in humans. Post-Structuralism does not completely contradict Structuralism, even though it denies universal systems and truths. However, it refers to a loosely organized intellectual movement that arose from

Structuralism after some of its proponents either claimed to have discovered elements of Saussurean linguistics that, taken to their logical extremes, were self-defeating and undermined Structuralism itself, or they became dissatisfied with the restrictions and limitations of that theory. Language, meaning, social structures, and the concept of self are all challenged by Post-Structuralism. In fact, a lot of post-structuralists started out as structuralists who wanted to take the movement to the next level.

The term "post" in the title alludes to the fact that several of the writers, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva, were structuralists at one point in the past but later turned against it. The post-structuralists often see culture as inseparable from meaning, which is a sharp contrast to Structuralism's assertions of meaning that is independent of culture. According to John Sturrock, Post-Structuralism is a criticism of Structuralism carried out from inside, meaning that it exposes basic flaws in Structuralism's methodology and turns some of its claims against itself, something that structuralists have chosen to overlook. Moreover, it may be asserted that the term “Post-Structuralism” describes the theoretical advancements in continental philosophy and critical theory that resulted from French philosophy in the 20th century. It also describes a mode of thought that stresses the severe ambiguity of information, especially knowledge in language, and holds that the idea of "truth" is not static but rather is always changing depending on your social, political, cultural, and economic standing in the world.

Additionally, Structuralism's emphasis on frameworks and structures as gateways to "truth" was met with hostility by the school of thought known as Post-Structuralism. Similar to deconstruction, Post-Structuralism highlighted the changing nature of meaning. Post-Structuralism recognized the unavoidable gap across signifier and signified, whereas Structuralism saw language as a closed system. Post-Structuralism made the reader—not the writer—the primary figure. The reader's interpretation of the author's intended meaning took precedence over the writer's, who could never be certain of it. Similar to other postmodern theories that scrutinized cultural presumptions, the post-structuralists emphasize the importance of examining both the text itself and the knowledge systems that give rise to it.

Although it is challenging to categorize or describe, Post-Structuralism may be generally regarded as a collection of unique responses to Structuralism. This issue stems from two key factors. It does this by first rejecting definitions that purport to have found indisputable "truths" or facts about the world. Second, most persons who identify as "post-structuralists" have done so

because others have labelled them that way. As a result, nobody has been driven to create a post-structuralist "manifesto." Thus, there is disagreement about the precise definition of Post-Structuralism and whether it constitutes a distinct philosophical movement.

It has been noted that the majority of purportedly "post-structuralist" thought comes from Europe, where the phrase is not commonly used, and that American academics and publishers are primarily responsible for the establishment of the post-structuralist theoretical framework. Although post-structuralists continue to use Structuralism's techniques, they no longer have the structuralists' confidence in their capacity to identify the defining structures of the mind (Sigmund Freud), narrative (Vladimir Propp), or society (Claude Levi-Strauss). Even linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure's foundation for Structuralism, has changed significantly since his day.

Check your progress:

1. Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault are the three principal exponents of Post-Structuralism. (True / False)
2. The post-structuralists often see culture as inseparable from meaning, which is a sharp contrast to Structuralism's assertions of meaning that is independent of culture. (True / False)

5.2.1 Post-Structuralism as a Method of Literary Criticism

Post-structural practices often function based on a few fundamental presumptions. According to the post-structuralists, the idea of the "self" as a unique, integrated thing is a construction. However, an individual is made up of various tensions and knowledge claims (related to, among other things, gender, class, and profession). As a result, in order to fully analyze a book, the reader must comprehend how the work relates to their own sense of self. One's understanding of meaning is significantly influenced by their self-perception. Though opinions on the self (or the subject) vary across philosophers, discourse (s) is frequently cited as having constituted it. Lacan's explanation has a psychoanalytic element, but Foucault emphasizes the impact of power on the individual. The reader's interpretation supersedes the author's original meaning.

The concept that a literary work has a single meaning, purpose, or existence is rejected by Post-Structuralism. Rather, each reader gives a particular work a fresh, unique purpose, meaning, and existence of their own. Leaving literary theory aside, this viewpoint may be applied to any

circumstance in which a subject interprets a symbol. As in Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, meaning (or the signified, according to Saussure's theory) is created by an individual from a signifier. For this reason, the signified is said to 'slide' beneath the signifier, which clarifies the discussion of the signifier's 'primacy'. In order to provide a complex reading of a book, a post-structuralist critic has to be able to draw from a range of viewpoints, even if these interpretations contradict one another. Analyzing how a text's meaning changes in connection to specific variables—mostly the reader's identity—is especially crucial.

5.2.1.1 Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida shared a fascination with the fundamental patterns of language, similar to that of structuralists. Nevertheless, his theory of deconstruction raised doubts on the notion that actual meanings can be figured out by carefully examining a language's structure, comprising binary oppositions (for instance, rational / emotional, speech / writing, or male / female. good / bad, black / white, bourgeoisie / working class man; heterosexual / homosexual, high / low, etc.) that it may include. Binary opposition was a key notion connected to Structuralism. This idea suggested that a text's structure is made up of certain theoretical and conceptual opposites that are frequently placed in a hierarchy. In this connection, Derrida argued that rather than the other way around, these constructions demonstrated the inherent instability and unpredictability of language. This is due to the fact that a term loses all meaning when its primary meaning is derived from what it is not.

According to a structuralist, people accept the meaning of "black" because they understand it to be different from "white." Conversely, a post-structuralist may argue that people can understand the meaning of "black" because it cannot be "red," "green," "dog," "piano," and so on, suggesting that the meaning of "black" is dependent on an infinite web of other meanings. As a result, when doing a post-structuralist literary analysis, readers should be aware of the range of interpretations that may be made from a text as well as the circumstances that affect them. Moreover, Derrida pointed out, binaries might reflect society beliefs since they often include hierarchies. Derrida proposes readers to be skeptical of commonly held dichotomies and to break them down so they may more easily examine each of its components.

Consequently, a greater understanding of the consequences of binaries within the context of each work and in wider society has been attained. Post-Structuralism exposes these linkages and the dominance of the dominating word on its seemingly subordinate counterpart, rejecting the

idea that the dominant relation in the hierarchy possesses an intrinsic feature. Deconstructing the presumptions and knowledge structures that give rise to the appearance of solitary meaning is the only way to comprehend these meanings in their entirety.

Destabilized meaning: In textual analysis, the reader takes the place of the author as the main object of study in the post-structuralist method. Despite having the most impact on the text itself, this displacement is frequently referred to as the author's "destabilizing" or "decentering". The post-structuralists look to other sources (readers, societal norms, other literature, etc.) for meaning instead of focusing just on the author. These substitute sources never hold official authority and make no representations.

Deconstruction: Deconstruction is a style of literary and philosophical analysis that, through a close reading of the language and logic of philosophical and literary texts, challenges the basic conceptual distinctions, or "oppositions," in Western philosophy. It is primarily based on work started in the 1960s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. However, in the 1970s, the term “Deconstruction” was used to describe the writings of Derrida, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and Barbara Johnson, among other researchers. Furthermore, in the 1980s, the term “Deconstruction” referred to a wide range of radical theoretical works in the arena of social sciences and humanities, including (in addition to philosophy and literature) psychoanalysis, architecture, anthropology, law, religion, women's rights, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) studies, political studies, the writing of history and film studies.

5.2.1.2 Roland Barthes

If one poses the question, who gets to decide in the end what a novel's meaning is – a structuralist may respond that it is the writer as he/she is the genius behind it. However, it may be observed that Roland Barthes in his well-known 1967 article "The Death of the Author," notably asserts against this viewpoint, stating that once a book is published, the author loses all control over how it will be understood since “it's impossible for anyone to know the author's exact intentions at the time of writing.” Further, Barthes suggests that we approach literary analysis with the assumption that the author is dead as “we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.” Although this sounds somewhat destructive, Barthes intended it to be a sharply worded criticism. He disagreed with the inclination of classical theorists to elevate the intentions, sentiments, and views of writers in the process of analyzing literature. Barthes considered this to be an antiquated

and restrictive method that disregarded the myriad ways in which a reader may understand a work and the fruitful conversations that could ensue about society as a consequence.

Metalanguage: There was obviously no agreement on how Structuralism was to be replaced, even if a majority thought that it was necessary. The frequent criticisms of Structuralism form the basis of a large portion of post-structuralist research. Roland Barthes holds immense importance in the realm of post-structuralist philosophy. *Elements of Semiology* (1967) is where Barthes developed the idea of the "metalanguage." Beyond the bounds of a conventional (first-order) language, a metalanguage is a systematized means of discussing ideas like meaning and syntax; in a metalanguage, symbols take the role of words and phrases. First-order languages may genuinely be replaced by metalanguages insofar as one metalanguage is necessary for one explanation of a first-order language, and vice versa. Barthes reveals the regressive nature of this structuralist system: as language orders depend on a metalanguage for explanation, deconstruction runs the risk of turning into a metalanguage itself, opening up all languages and discourse to criticism.

5.2.1.3 Michel Foucault

Foucault's main undertaking was researching the origins of several significant organizations and societal constructs, such as sexuality, knowledge, lunacy, and clinics. These studies serve as the foundation for his philosophical beliefs. One of his fundamental tenets is that, despite seeming to us as absolutely given realities, the concepts of madness, illness, sexuality, knowledge, etc. that we regard important are social productions. This argument may be demonstrated by looking at Foucault's description of the history of the societal understanding of madness. Rather than being an objective, non-historical given, the idea of madness is only a determined cultural phenomenon with a genealogy. According to Michel Foucault, there are three separate phases in the evolution of the idea of madness. The Middle Ages are when the first stage is observed. During this time, people believed that madness was a natural part of being human. Although it was seen as an alternative to reason, madness was acknowledged as a manner of human life.

Additionally, it was viewed as a significant challenge to reason regardless of being detested and opposed. It could engage in ironic dialogue with reason or claim to be a dimension of human experience and understanding that reason does not have access to. The second stage is typified by the Classical Age (17th and 18th centuries). During this time, people's perceptions of madness evolved. It was perceived as the denial of reason, a quality that makes humans unique. It was a

complete leap into animality and irrationality. It meant nothing to humans. As a result, the insane were conceptually excluded from human society. Their physical separation from human civilization through institutional confinement matched this intellectual exclusion. Moral censure followed the physical and intellectual isolation. The moral defect was not the usual type. While ordinary moral fault is a transgression of one or more human community rules, madness is a more severe moral fault in which one chooses to reject humanity and the human society altogether in favor of a life of pure animality.

Furthermore, it may be observed that madness is perceived differently in the modern day. During this age, the abnormal are once again seen as members of the human community, rather than as animals outside of it. They are part of the human society; yet, they are now viewed as moral criminals, violators of certain societal standards, who should feel guilty about their situation and need to change their views and actions. Likewise, there are methods of treating the abnormal in the current period that involve subjecting them to societal standards as part of a moral treatment rather than just isolating them. Moreover, it may be noted that the Classical Age's purely custodial detention is giving way to the contemporary therapeutic asylum. Foucault views this institution as little more than a more sophisticated and comprehensive means of regulating the insane, despite the fact that it was largely considered as a humanitarian development. It is a "gigantic moral imprisonment". One may naturally assume that those who are abnormal belong in the medical community as he/she considers them to be "mentally ill." However, Foucault asserts that moral power, rather than medical authority, truly sets the rules in the institution. Physicians are in positions of power not because they are medical experts but rather because they stand for societal moral standards.

Additionally, it may be asserted that psychoanalysis and other modern psychiatric procedures are clear examples of this. Medical science's agencies are present in the practice, but the therapist's moral authority – which functions as a social value tool – remains crucial to the treatment. Furthermore, Foucault demonstrates in his *The Order of Things* and *Archaeology of Knowledge* that every era has a unique underlying "episteme" (the langue) that shapes and limits the explicit discourses (the parole) of that time. Therefore, the contemporary episteme and its strange ideas about truth, science, humanity, etc., are not absolute. Michel Foucault, who gathered the papers of Herculine Barbin, spent the most of his career as an intellectual historian studying the impact of culture on the individual's ability to provide an account of himself/herself. The

categories an individual is familiar with not only enables this justification, but also holds him/her accountable, bringing the individual in line with the norms and proprieties that society develops. Societies enlist individuals as subjects, subject them to their ideals, and encourage them to be accountable, responsible citizens, ready to give an account of themselves in language he/she has acquired from that societies' defining behaviors.

In addition, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* examines how societies have punished people who defied their standards. In absolutist France, for example, offenders were publicly tortured and murdered, and the book starts with a comprehensive and extremely unpleasant description of a regicide sentence in 1757. Foucault instantly contrasts this with a set of instructions for a juvenile offenders' facility in the mid-nineteenth century. The specific allocation of their time is prescribed by the rules: they must rise at six, dress silently for five minutes, prepare their beds for another five minutes, work until ten and then eat after washing their hands, attend school from twenty to eleven for two hours, and so on, until bedtime at half past eight. If the public execution served as a display for the state's brutal ability to punish those who dared to oppose the monarch, then the institution seems to be more constructive, merciful, and forgiving. And so it is, in a manner that is obviously clear. However, its goal is to punish the prisoners, body and spirit, under a system that is specifically intended to mold them into conforming citizens—that is, subjects, in both meanings of the word—who learn to function independently while adhering to the norms of their community.

Of these two regimes, which one gives greater room for resistance? Unexpectedly, however, Foucault contends, the first. Regime 1: The condemned, who were to be tortured and killed in public, responded courageously at times, and even rose to prominence as heroes. Moreover, these individuals shared their side of the tale in ballads that were circulated. Sometimes the executioner was attacked by the mob present. Regime 2: However, by being separated and conditioned to absorb new disciplines, prisoners were more efficiently compelled into becoming submissive participants, with their determination to resist being subjugated.

According to Foucault, all relationships are, in this sense, power interactions. For instance,

a) when socializing children, parents and teachers subject them.
b) in the process of defining the knowledge needed to enter their fields, professions also create examinations.

c) when someone instructs or demonstrates something to another person, they are using their authority over them. This has nothing to do with desire or intention. Knowledge is transmitted through instruction, and learning requires surrender.

Therefore, norms are constructed by society and – to the extent that they enforce discipline – they constitute a kind of repression.

According to Foucault, power is creative because it generates ideals to strive for and ways of living. His last two books, which he intended to contribute to the extensive history of sexuality but never got around to writing, examined the traditional "arts of love," which offered guidelines for enhancing pleasure via the development of an "ethics" of behaviour. The 'good' life attracted subjects as though for their own advantage, encouraging them to take in a discipline that subtly subjected them to its definition of what is good. Thus, Foucault argues that every aspect of morality, despite its nature, is made up of two facets that go together: "codes of behaviour and forms of subjectivation." However, does this imply that we are incapable of opposing our own subjugation? Indeed, it is quite unlikely, yet there may be implications to be accepted.

Foucault asserts that power cannot exist without the potential for resistance, and the term has heroic connotations for a generation that greatly admired the risks associated with the French underground's refusal to surrender to the German occupation. Resistance is the distinguishing characteristic of power. Moreover, the aspect of crime is the defiance of law; eccentricity is a denial of social regulations; and 'vice' is a refusal of socially acceptable behaviour. Power is not a substance or a value that an individual attains or loses, but an element of confrontation. The writings of Foucault are replete with tragic heroes: criminals, abnormal people, and suicides who confronted against their own subjugation. In his later years, he led a life that extended beyond the bounds of respectability. He passed away from complications related to AIDS.

5.2.2 Themes

Post-structuralist philosophers have varied backgrounds and are focused on different intellectual areas. For example, Derrida's roots are in the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Heidegger, Lacan is a psychoanalyst following Freud, and Foucault is a historian of social institutions. Despite having various interests and concerns, their thoughts display common themes that are characteristic of Post-Structuralism. While it is difficult to identify a common theme among all post-structuralist philosophers, there are recurring elements in their works. These include a focus on language, power, and desire within the context of meaning production,

questioning universal truths and meanings; a scepticism over binary thinking and a preference for acknowledging the subordinate; a critique of the humanistic view of the individual as autonomous and transparent, instead highlighting the subject as a complex intersection of forces; and a rejection of universality in favor of recognizing diversity and fragmentation. After Structuralism, these philosophical thinkers can be located in terms of three key themes: revival of historical thought, reappearance of focus on the subject, and stress on differentiation.

5.2.2.1 Theme I

There are numerous perspectives through which post-structuralist philosophical thinking in France can be seen as a resolution to the excessive focus on synchrony in structuralist literature. There is no single explanation to this, and French philosophy after Structuralism explores various ways to consider time, temporality, and history. While the structuralists focused on analysing the operation of agencies outside of time (such as social, psychological, economic, or literary), philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Lyotard concentrated on the historical development of the subjects they studied. Partly, the focus on time, temporality, and history can be seen as a result of the intellectual mechanisms that these thinkers used, tools that were not always key to the work of their structuralist predecessors. For instance, Foucault refers to the examination of the history of science and scientific transformations in the writings of Georges Canguilhem and Gaston Bachelard, whereas Deleuze looks back to Henri Bergson's concepts of time and duration, along with Nietzsche's eternal return. Derrida mainly sees Heidegger's emphasis on Being and the history of philosophy as the forgetting of the ontological difference (difference between Being and beings) as what prompts him to view metaphysics as a history of logocentrism and ontotheology.

5.2.2.1 Theme II

While structuralists often discussed the "death of the subject," the majority of philosophers labeled post-structuralist did not actually share this belief. Thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze were always uneasy with the subject-focused ideas of existentialists and phenomenologists. However, they were just as uneasy with the openly anti-humanist language used by structuralist philosophers such as Althusser or Lévi-Strauss. Therefore, when asked about the "death of the subject," Derrida could assert that the subject is "completely necessary" and explain that he does not eliminate the subject, but rather places it within the context of "its origins and operations." However, in an essay like "What Is an Author?" (1969), which is considered

antihumanist, Foucault does not seek to completely remove the subject despite wanting to diminish its importance in terms of knowledge and discourse. Foucault doesn't aim to understand the subject as a simple entity, but rather as a multifaceted product of discourse and power dynamics. He questions the emergence of a subject within discourse, rather than its ability to give meaning to things. What position can it hold in various types of discourse, what roles can it take on, and how should it adhere to which regulations?

After Structuralism, feminist thinkers focused on challenging assumptions about the subject as sexed or gendered male or masculine in their work. The feminists do not protest against gendering or sexing the subject, but their criticism is towards the subject being male when sexed/gendered. While Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva have distinct theoretical stances, as "difference feminists" they all emphasize the importance of sexual difference and the significant contrasts between male and female desires, leading them to highlight the differences between male and female subjects. And to support this claim, they had to reject the structuralist plan of completely eradicating the subject.

5.2.2.1 Theme III

According to Saussure, "in language there are only differences without positive terms" is one of the central ideas of his linguistics. By saying this, he meant that language operates as a network of interconnected elements where the significance of each individual element is determined by the presence of other elements and how each element distinguishes itself from the rest. The structuralists focused on analyzing relations instead of things, emphasizing the differential relations between objects rather than the objects themselves. Although the structuralists acknowledged this theme, the focus on difference didn't fully prevail until after the structuralist paradigm's dominance subsided. It has been recognized that the topic of sexual difference is one that nearly all post-structuralist feminist thinkers have explored. The post-structuralist focus on difference has manifested in various forms, with sexual difference being just one example.

As Derrida's philosophical work started by aiming to break down the logocentric history of metaphysics that centers on the present moment, his creation of the term différance aimed to emphasize the importance of difference in deconstructive analysis by focusing on the dual meanings of the French verb différer: to delay over time and to be spatially distinct. Différance is

the transcendental condition that allows for differentiation by encompassing both temporal deferring and spatial differing, thus enabling the possibility of differences.

5.2.3 Characteristic Features of Post-Structuralism

Post-Structuralism views 'reality' as more fragmented, varied, uncertain, and culture-specific compared to Structuralism. As a result, Post-Structuralism places more importance on: (a) detailed historical accounts and unique local backgrounds; (b) placing the individual within the fabric of time and history; (c) details of cultural working and cultural practices; (d) importance of language and text in shaping our perception of reality and sense of self.

Post-structuralists claim that Post-Structuralism has historical roots and view Structuralism as being explanatory. This terminology pertains to linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's differentiation between historical (diachronic) and descriptive (synchronic) theories of language. Post-structuralist analysis frequently brings back the historical aspect to examine descriptive, diachronic ideas stemming from this essential differentiation. The reintroduction of historical aspects disrupts the set definitions imposed by structuralist classifications. Michel Foucault's analysis in works like *Madness and Civilization*, which explores the history and societal perceptions of madness, is a notable example of post-structuralist examination.

Furthermore, Post-Structuralism adopts a historical perspective, in contrast to the descriptive outlook of Structuralism. Structural analyses focus on the object in its current state, ignoring its history, context, and evolution. Instead of that, Post-Structuralism applies diachronic studies, it reaffirms the significance of history, and by doing this, it formulates fresh theoretical interpretations of the topic. Likewise, post-structuralists aim to comprehend the way in which cultural concepts have evolved and how they are perceived by current readers through studying their changes over time. Considering the past, Post-Structuralism is well-known for questioning hierarchies found in identifying binary oppositions, such as Saussurean binary oppositions, which are typical not only in Structuralism but also in Western metaphysics. One final key aspect of Post-Structuralism is the decentralized individual. The post-structuralist works refuse the conventional concept of a unified identity and advocate for an irrational and decentralized self, one rife with contradictions and paradoxes. This perspective is definitely not in alignment with the concept of a core identity for the individual and therefore, it goes against essentialist and humanist perspectives.

The reader's self significantly impacts the meaning of the text due to the relationship between the reader and the text. Therefore, in order to analyze a text, a person must comprehend

how the text connects with their individual perception of self. Different post-structuralist analyses diverge in various ways: Lacan focuses on psychoanalysis, Derrida highlights the impact of power on the individual, and so on. Scholars typically do not identify themselves as post-structuralists, which makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. Scholars like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, who were linked to Structuralism, also gained recognition in Post-Structuralism. Three major post-structuralists, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, were initially part of the influential group known as the "Gang of Four" in Structuralism along with Lévi-Strauss. Prominent examples of Post-Structuralism include the works of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Julia Kristeva. Many people who originally thought texts could be interpreted solely based on cultural and social structures, eventually realized the reader's culture and society played an equal role in interpretation.

The post-structuralists question the reality's existence, or they highlight how the distinction between "ideas" and "reality" is mostly a result of discourse. In other words, if there exists a reality, it might not influence our perception of "truth" in any way. Moreover, the post-structuralists often highlighted the lack of consistency in discourse structures, or at the very least the conflicts and uncertainties arising from the presence of multiple structures. post-structuralists typically concentrate on polysemy, which refers to the multiple meanings and the propensity for meanings to proliferate uncontrollably. The post-structuralists also simplify, but they aim to highlight the overlooked distinctions in the simplification process. They indicate that these variances form openings in the structure that can be exploited to question or potentially dismantle the existing structures. post-structuralists have abandoned the quest for "Universal truths." While structuralists seek commonalities, post-structuralists emphasize differences.

In their opinion, this highlights the flexibility of humanity – a modern interpretation of the existentialist belief that "existence comes before essence." The post-structuralists are not strictly humanists as they also examine how language and discourse influence thinking, yet they aim to give the subject some degree of power or creativity. Although they understand the influence of structures in defining boundaries, they desire to maintain a certain level of spontaneity or unpredictability for individuals navigating within those boundaries. post-structuralists place their emphasis on the reader/speaker who is functioning within the framework.

Even though Post-Structuralism is resistant to being clearly defined, this essay analyzes three key post-structuralist thinkers to explore how their ideas relate to communication studies.

Initially, in accordance with Derrida, post-structuralist ideology encourages a critical analysis of all communication claiming to be entirely logical, focused, and rational. Post-structuralist approaches do not contradict a position by using opposing arguments based on a different set of principles. Instead, it breaks down a discussion by inhabiting it and revealing the spaces, contradictions, paradoxes, and delays, thus uncovering that its established hierarchies, binaries, logical conclusions, and principles are much less rigidly structured and multi-voiced than its defenders claim.

Secondly, in line with Barthes, Post-Structuralism rejects the idea of identifying a singular origin point for a text that can serve as the foundation of its meaning, especially through reference to the author. Barthes does not deny the existence of writers, but he rejects the idea of equating the meaning of a text with the author's personal life and intentions. Instead, he encourages various interpretations from individual readers who experience the text as a distinct occurrence. Hence, individual texts and their authors, like discourses, lack a singular structure. Finally, in accordance with Foucault, Post-Structuralism encourages an examination of how discourses, texts, and acts of communication are consistently involved in power dynamics that influence potential behaviors. After the initial two propositions, Post-Structuralism does not view these power relations as entirely organized and fixed. Power dynamics are always in constant interaction with resistance, allowing for freedom and opportunity to exist.

Check your progress:

1. Michel Foucault's analysis in works like *Madness and Civilization*, which explores the history and societal perceptions of madness, is a notable example of post-structuralist examination. (True / False)
2. Three major post-structuralists, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, were initially part of the influential group known as the "Gang of Four" in Structuralism along with Lévi-Strauss. (True / False)

5.2.4 Limitations and Uses of Structuralist Criticism

Post-structuralist methods in literature have had a massive impact. Nevertheless, they have also faced numerous criticisms. Initially, Post-Structuralism may be criticized for its minimal emphasis on the author. By completely ignoring the author's life and beliefs, one could say that we

are also absolving the author of any responsibility for their written work. Moreover, if post-structuralists argue that there is no set meaning, would this also challenge the concept of a post-structuralist movement with its unique method? If that is the case, it could be suggested that Post-Structuralism is too contradictory to be viewed as credible.

5.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying this Unit, you should have:

- a knowledgeable and analytical grasp of post-structuralist ideas.
- a deep understanding of the main issues in post-structuralist theory.
- developed research inquiries and predictions to tackle issues within the scope of post-structuralist ideology.
- understood the ways in which Post-Structuralism applies to your own lives and cultures.

5.4 Glossary

- **Binary Opposition:** A concept from Structuralism where two ideas (e.g., good/bad, male/female) are presented as opposites. Post-Structuralists argue these binaries are socially constructed and often hide power imbalances.
- **Deconstruction:** A method developed by Jacques Derrida that involves breaking down binary oppositions in texts to show how meaning is fluid and contingent, not fixed by the writer's intent.
- **Diachronic vs. Synchronic Analysis:** Diachronic analysis studies changes over time (historically), while synchronic analysis examines a system at a particular moment, without considering its evolution.
- **Episteme:** A term used by Michel Foucault to refer to the underlying knowledge framework or paradigm that shapes what is considered true or valid in a particular historical period.

- **Logocentrism:** A term coined by Derrida referring to the Western tradition's focus on speech and logic as superior to writing. Deconstruction aims to challenge this bias by exposing inconsistencies in texts.
- **Metalanguage:** A language or system used to discuss or analyse another language. Post-Structuralists argue that metalanguages, like all languages, are also subject to ambiguity and interpretation.
- **Post-Structuralism:** A movement emerging as a critique of Structuralism, arguing that meaning is unstable, subjective, and shaped by cultural and social contexts, not fixed structures. It highlights ambiguity and the dynamic nature of truth and language.
- **Signifier and Signified:** Terms from Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory. The signifier is the word or symbol (e.g., "dog"), and the signified is the concept or meaning associated with it (the idea of a dog). Post-Structuralism argues that this relationship is not stable.
- **Subjectivation:** A process described by Foucault, referring to how individuals are shaped by societal norms and discourses, becoming subjects who internalise and embody those rules.
- **Structuralism:** A theoretical framework that analyses cultural elements (like language or literature) by examining underlying structures, such as binary oppositions. It focuses on finding universal patterns across human culture.

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions

1. What does Post-Structuralism challenge according to the passage?
   a) The existence of language
   b) The concept of self, meaning, and social structures
   c) The importance of history and tradition
   d) The application of scientific principles to language
   Answer: b) The concept of self, meaning, and social structures
2. Which philosopher is most closely associated with the concept of deconstruction?

a) Michel Foucault

b) Roland Barthes

c) Jacques Derrida

d) Claude Lévi-Strauss

Answer: c) Jacques Derrida

3. What does Derrida's notion of 'binary opposition' focus on?

   a) Opposition between different cultures

   b) Hierarchical opposites within language and meaning

   c) Mathematical structures of meaning

   d) Relationships between history and language

   Answer: b) Hierarchical opposites within language and meaning

4. According to Barthes, what must happen for the ‘birth of the reader’?

   a) The author must clarify their intention

   b) The text must be interpreted within historical context

   c) The ‘death of the author’ must occur

   d) The reader must ignore the text’s structure

   Answer: c) The ‘death of the author’ must occur

5. What concept does Saussure’s theory of language highlight?

   a) Meaning is static and universal

   b) Language operates through binary opposition only

   c) Meaning arises from differences between elements

   d) Language is culturally irrelevant

   Answer: c) Meaning arises from differences between elements

6. How does Post-Structuralism differ from Structuralism in terms of interpretation?

   a) It emphasises the author’s intentions

   b) It allows multiple interpretations based on the reader

   c) It rejects any structural analysis of meaning

   d) It prioritises scientific methods over philosophical reasoning

   Answer: b) It allows multiple interpretations based on the reader

7. What was the main purpose of Foucault's historical studies?

a) To advocate for psychiatric reforms

b) To show how concepts like madness are social constructs

c) To emphasise the importance of rationality in society

d) To demonstrate the need for classical confinement of the insane

Answer: b) To show how concepts like madness are social constructs

8. According to the passage, why is Post-Structuralism considered difficult to define?

   a) It denies the relevance of historical analysis

   b) Post-structuralists avoid clear definitions

   c) It is based purely on scientific frameworks

   d) Post-structuralists oppose any form of intellectual progress

   Answer: b) Post-structuralists avoid clear definitions

9. What is one of the limitations of Post-Structuralist criticism?

   a) It places too much focus on the author's intentions

   b) It dismisses all forms of reader interpretation

   c) It minimises the author's responsibility for the text

   d) It emphasises a single, fixed interpretation of meaning

   Answer: c) It minimises the author's responsibility for the text

10. Which of the following themes is central to Post-Structuralism?

    a) Establishing universal truths

    b) Exploring synchronic language structures

    c) Questioning binary thinking and universal meanings

    d) Promoting strict adherence to historical analysis

    Answer: c) Questioning binary thinking and universal meanings

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Briefly comment on some of the criticisms of Post-Structuralism?
2. Compare and contrast Structuralism and Post-Structuralism in terms of their approach to meaning, language, and the individual.
3. Explain the role of binary oppositions in Derrida's theory of deconstruction
4. Analyse the significance of Barthes' concept of 'The Death of the Author' in Post-Structuralist literary criticism.

5. Explain the notion of 'decentered self' as discussed in Post-Structuralism.

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss how Post-Structuralism emerged as a response to the limitations of Structuralism. Use examples from the text to support your arguments.
2. How does Michel Foucault's historical approach illustrate the role of social constructs in shaping human experience? Explain.
3. Discuss the significance of history and temporality in Post-Structuralist thought, referencing the work of thinkers like Foucault and Derrida.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* Manchester UP, 2009.

Belsey, Catherine. *Post-Structuralism: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford University Press, 2002.

Habib, MA Rafey. *Literary criticism from Plato to the present: An introduction.* John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Williams, James. *Understanding Post-Structuralism*. Routledge, 2014.

Web:

Deconstruction and Post Structuralism: IMC MANUU - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3tqsxNzqNU

Unit-6: Marxism: Critique of Marxism

Structure

6.0 Introduction

This Unit will help you to understand the principles and implementation of Marxism, as promoted by Karl Marx and others. The module will help you understand the connection between Marxism and literature. Furthermore, it delves into the beginnings and evolution of the Marxist perspective and how it has influenced art, culture, and literature.

6.1 Objectives

After going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- look at the early forms of socialism before Marx, including utopian socialism.
- list, explain and analyse the fundamental principles of Marxism.
- discuss other significant elements of Marxist theory
- evaluate Marxism and discuss its current significance
- assess Marxism from a critical perspective.

6.2 Marxism: Critique of Marxism

6.2.1 What is Marxism?

Marxism typically denotes the theories of the German thinker, Karl Marx. However, Marxism encompasses more than just the concepts of Marx. It encompasses the beliefs of Marx, Friedrich Engels, and their followers, who identify as Marxists. In this way, Marxism encompasses primarily the ideas of Karl Marx. Marxism remains a vibrant philosophy. Marxist intellectuals are consistently adding to the Marxist philosophy. Therefore, although Marx himself is no longer living, Marxism continues to thrive. The ideology of Marxism predated the arrival of Karl Marx into the world. David Mclellan has written three books on Marxism: Marx before Marxism (1970), The Thought of Karl Marx (1971), and Marxism after Marx (1980). In the same way, Leszek Kolakowski, a Polish philosopher, has written three books on Marxism.

The main idea is that Marxism encompasses more than just the views of Karl Marx. Marxism offers a sociological perspective and analysis of cultural expressions, be it a movie or a book. As previously mentioned, it places all cultural forms within the social and economic circumstances of a specific society. Therefore, it is of the opinion that cultural expressions mirror societal realities, with novels or films frequently exposing the realities of class dynamics, conflicts, and power structures in a given community. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was mainly known as a theorist and historian, not the nefarious communist threat that McCarthyism feared.

By analysing social structure scientifically, he developed a method for political science and recognized human history as a sequence of conflicts between social classes - the oppressed and the oppressors. While Freud believed in the power of "sexual energy" as the driving force of human actions, Nabokov prioritised artistic inspiration. On the other hand, Marx viewed "historical materialism" as the ultimate motivator, focusing on resource distribution, profit, and production. The alleged progress of politics would include feudalism, bourgeois capitalism, socialism, and utopian communism. In capitalist society, the bourgeois elite depend on the proletariat, the working class essential for their own existence.

Marx proposed that if profits are not used to improve conditions for workers but to expand factories, workers will become increasingly impoverished until temporary solutions no longer work. During a critical moment, rebellion can result in a reorganisation of the system. In order for

a political system to qualify as communist, it is necessary for the lower classes to possess the means of production, rather than the government or police force. Hence, apart from specific early Christian groups and temporary communal societies, true communism has not been fully realised. State-run capitalism is what the Soviet Union actually was. Marx is famous for stating that "Religion is the opiate of the masses," showing his understanding of a problem that Lenin also addressed.

Lenin believed that workers are not fully aware of their oppression because the state manipulates them to be unselfish. Many distractions exist in various political systems that can divert attention from addressing unfair economic conditions, often referred to as "opiates of the people." Marxism contends that capitalism involves an exploitative and unequal dynamic between a ruling minority, who control production and wealth, and a powerless majority, whose labour is exploited for the benefit of the ruling minority. Marxism posits that the capitalist economy shapes the superstructure, which comprises all other social institutions such as the government, law, and criminal justice system, making it a structuralist theory. All these institutions exist to further the interests of the ruling class in upholding the capitalist economy and the resulting class inequality.

Marxism as a Theory:

Marx's theory primarily focuses on the conflicts present in capitalist society during his era. He expressed that the most important aspect is the aspect of production. To survive, a person needs to consume food, which is why they engage in production. He viewed production as a process that involves society. In this system of production, individuals engage in relationships that are not based on their consent. This indicates that the relationships predate the individuals involved and are likely to persist unless altered. Let's first explore Marx's view on the foundation of society and then discuss how class and conflict emerge within this society.

6.2.2 Fundamental Principles of Marxism

The fundamental principles of Marxism include dialectical materialism, historical materialism, surplus value theory, class conflict, revolution, proletariat dictatorship, and communism. Now, let us delve deeper into these principles.

Dialectical Materialism: Dialectical materialism is the method of scientific inquiry created by Marx and Engels to understand history. Here, Marx has drawn extensively from those who came before him, especially the German thinker Hegel. Dialectics, an ancient approach, is used to uncover truth by highlighting contradictions through the clash of opposing concepts. Hegel

improved upon it by elaborating on the trilogy of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The Dialectical Triad is commonly referred to as its popular name. Advancement or development occurs through the dialectical procedure. At each phase of development, contradictions are a defining feature. These inconsistencies bring about additional alterations, advancement, and growth.

The thesis is being contradicted by its opposite. Both consist of elements of both accuracy and inaccuracies. Truth remains constant, while falsehood is temporary. During the clash between the thesis and the anti-thesis, the truth prevails while the mistaken components are eliminated. These untrue components are contradictory. The synthesis combines the genuine aspects of the thesis and the anti-thesis. Over time, this synthesis that has developed evolves into a thesis and is then challenged by its opposing anti-thesis, leading to another synthesis. This cycle of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis persists until the point of achieving perfection. In the evolutionary journey, there will eventually be a time when there are no more inaccuracies present. These will be eliminated during various phases of development. In the end, only truth endures, as it is indestructible. It will form the ideal platform with no conflicts, thus preventing any additional development. The dialectical process will reach its conclusion upon attaining the ultimate truth. Contradictions drive the dialectical process, and removing all contradictions signals the conclusion of the process.

Historical Materialism: Historical materialism involves applying dialectical materialism to understand history. It involves analysing world history through an economic lens using the Marxian approach of dialectical materialism. In other words, the traditional perspective of history from a Marxist standpoint. Engels describes it in the introduction to Socialism: Utopian and Scientific as aiming to explain the primary cause and main driving force behind significant historical events, which he attributes to the economic progress of society, shifts in production and trade methods, resulting in the formation of different social classes, and their subsequent conflicts. Marx and Engels characterise historical materialism as a scientific, empirical theory, but in reality it serves as a structure or roadmap for historical interpretation, and is judged mainly by the cohesive understanding it offers and the accomplishments of the research it fosters.

Historical materialism posits that shifts in a society's productive forces result in social unrest, with resulting social structures mirroring the foundational means of production (base and superstructure). One of the primary challenges in grasping Marxism is linking historical materialism with historicism, the belief that history follows a set, predetermined course, resulting

in movements and goals that do not align with this course being predestined to fail. In theory, historical materialism does not inherently imply any fatalistic interpretation, and Marx made sure to clarify this.

Theory of Surplus Value: Marx created the concept of surplus value in order to clarify the exploitation present in capitalist societies. In this case, Marx was impacted by the ideas of traditional economists. He endorsed the labour theory of value. The value of a product is decided by the quantity of work involved in making it. Work is also a product that can be bought and sold. It can be purchased and traded just like any other goods. Labour is the most crucial out of the four factors of production. Without it, the other production factors have no value. Factors of production include land, capital, and organisation. Applying labour to these production factors is what increases their productivity. Without labour, they cannot reproduce.

Marx's examination of surplus value focuses on differentiating between labour and labour power. The labourer trades their labour capacity for wages equal to that capacity's worth. The worker provides labour that creates value for the capitalist. If workers received payment based on their work output, they would either be compensated fully with no added value, or they would be underpaid, contradicting the idea that value should be exchanged equally. In any case, it would not be viable to justify capitalism based on the exchange of equal values. The excess value is the amount of social product produced that exceeds the necessary resources for the producers' survival. Labour time is used as a measure of labour, therefore surplus value is the result of the unpaid labour time worked by producers.

In capitalist society, profit is obtained by the capitalist as surplus value. The capitalist possesses the means of production as private property, therefore the workers must sell their labour power to the capitalist in order to survive. The capitalist possesses not just the tools for production and the worker's labour that was purchased for production, but also the resulting product. Once the capitalist has paid the workers their wages, they gain ownership of the surplus value generated from the worker's labour beyond their labour-power's value.

Class Struggle: Marx stated that the entire history of society up to the present day is a history of conflict between social classes. All ages in history, except for the primitive communist stage, have been defined by the conflict between the ruling and subordinate classes, or between those who possess wealth and those who do not. These conflicts arise from class differences, stemming from the property-owning class exploiting the class without property. In every period of

history, there have always been two opposing classes. In the system of slavery, there were the masters and the slaves, in feudalism, the feudal lords and the peasants, and in capitalism, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The owners of the means of production are the masters, the feudal lords, and the bourgeois.

Nevertheless, the production is completed by the slaves, peasants, and proletariat, yet their exploiters confiscate their output and only provide them with the bare minimum for sustenance. Through owning the means of production, the class with property takes advantage of the class without property. This is the primary origin and reason for class conflict. The conflicting classes have interests that cannot be reconciled. There can be no compromise or reconciliation between the conflicting classes. The conflicting classes in each era can only be resolved by eliminating the exploiting classes.

Revolution: The conflict between social classes leads to the emergence of revolution. The struggle between social classes is not easily noticeable, however, the revolution is easily seen. Increased class conflict sets the stage for a revolution. The conflict between classes lasts a long time, while revolution is quick, intense, and aggressive. According to Marx, revolution is crucial for societal transformation. Revolution is the mechanism through which societies move from one historical stage to another. The slavery system was abolished by the feudal revolution; feudalism was ended by the bourgeois revolution and capitalism will be brought to an end by the proletariat revolution.

Therefore, every significant social change is always the result of a revolution. Revolution happens when there is a conflict between the methods or abilities to produce goods and the social structures governing production. Revolution is initiated to address this incompatibility, leading to necessary adjustments in the relations of production and the superstructure in order to align with the forces or means of production. Advancements in technology lead to alterations in methods of production. The handmill produces a society with the feudal lord, while the steam-mill creates a society with the industrial capitalist.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat: Marx believed that all states have functioned as dictatorships, including the socialist state. It is equally a dictatorship. The ruling class has consistently utilised the state to oppress the subordinate class. In a socialist society, the working class will utilise the state's coercive institutions like the military, law enforcement, prisons, and courts to control the bourgeoisie class. Marx contends that if democracy is defined as majority

rule, then the proletarian state is the most democratic state as power is finally in the hands of the majority for the first time in history. Prior to the establishment of the working class state, power was always held by a minority. If we consider majority rule as the standard, then a democratic state can only be referred to as a proletarian state.

Communism: Under the nurturing guidance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist state will develop into communism. Socialism represents a transitional phase. It will create the conditions for communism to eventually come into existence, which remains steady and enduring. This is going to be the era of societal development and the implementation of communism – there will be no more societal transformations. The dialectical process will reach its conclusion. A flawless, logical societal structure will be created, devoid of conflicts and inconsistencies. There will be no conflicts between classes and therefore, no fighting between classes. Communism will be a society without classes, states, private property, and exploitation.

In a communist community, there will not be any individual ownership of the means of production in the form of private property. The community will have ownership of the means of production. Collaboration, as opposed to fierce competition, will serve as the foundation of a communist society. The focus of production will be on consumption rather than on making a profit. Social needs will take the place of profit motive. With the absence of private property, exploitation will not exist. If there is no exploitation, there will be no division of classes, no distinction between those who own property and those who do not, no disparities between the haves and have nots, and no superiority of one class over another. Without any class distinctions, there is no class conflict, therefore the state is not necessary. This explains why a communist society will be a society without classes and without a state.

Check your progress:

1. Hegel elaborates on the trilogy of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which are often referred to as The Dialectical Triad. (True / False)
2. Historical materialism posits that shifts in a society's productive forces result in social unrest. (True / False)

6.2.3 Marxism and Literary Criticism

It might be beneficial to offer a concise explanation of the key ideas in Marxist philosophy and literary analysis. The long-standing Marxism tradition has offered a strong and enduring criticism of capitalist institutions and ethics. Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), the German thinker and revolutionary, is the one who established it. Marx's ideas have had a huge impact on the course of modern world history. Until the breakdown in 1991 of the communist systems in the USSR and Eastern Europe, around one-third of the global population had been residing under political regimes that were founded on Marx's principles. He has had a significant influence on various fields of study including sociology, philosophy, economics, and cultural theory.

Marxism has also created a diverse history of criticism in literature and culture. Various contemporary forms of criticism, such as historicism, feminism, deconstruction, postcolonial and cultural criticism, draw influence from Marxism, which was largely influenced by Hegel's philosophy. What sets Marxism apart is that it encompasses not just a political, economic, and social theory but also practical application in all of these areas. Marxists, along with other scholars, believe that literature mirrors the social institutions it originates from and is also considered a social institution with a specific ideological purpose. Literature often portrays class conflict and materialism by frequently depicting characters defined by their pursuit of wealth.

Marxists typically see literature "not as works created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as 'products' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era" (Abrams 149). Literature mirrors the author's social status or assessment of social class interactions, no matter how deep or superficial the analysis is. Marxist criticism has had a significant impact on critical theory. Critical theory deals with the dynamics of power relationships. One belief it holds is that systems, customs, and regulations which harm certain groups more than others are purposely designed, meaning they are utilized by those in power. Marxist critical theory highlights how social class creates hierarchical power dynamics within critical theory. Marxist critical theory and critical theory overall both support different ways to fight against oppression and enhance the freedom of marginalized or oppressed groups. Marxist literary theory seeks to understand social and economic power structures through literature and cultural expressions.

During the middle of the 20th century, the term 'Critical Theory' specifically denoted a cluster of intellectuals called the Frankfurt School, which included figures like Adorno and Horkheimer,

and Marcuse. These intellectuals were influenced directly by Marx, as well as other sources. As the 20th century advanced, 'critical theory' started being utilized more widely to encompass any method of social critique with an aim of liberation (as opposed to solely speculative or theoretical). One example is *The Sexual Contract* by Carole Pateman, which can be seen as a form of critical theory as it seeks to expose how the concept of the social contract hides and justifies the oppression based on gender. Marxist analysis examines literature based on the historical circumstances that give rise to it; likewise, it must acknowledge its own historical context.

Marxist criticism is a component of a broader theoretical analysis that seeks to comprehend ideologies - the thoughts, values, and emotions through which individuals perceive their societies in different eras. Some of those concepts, beliefs, and emotions can only be accessed through literature. Understanding ideologies helps us gain deeper insight into the past and present, ultimately leading to our liberation. Marx sought to analyze the underlying reasons for what he perceived as a system of exploitation by capitalists, and to propose remedies in the realms of economics and politics. Marx recognized that capitalist society represented a significant historical progression beyond centuries of outdated feudalism. Marx praised the historical progress of the bourgeoisie for its focus on reason, practicality, technological advancements, rational law and justice, individual freedom, and democracy. He did not suggest that communism would completely replace capitalism, but rather that it would achieve these values. Unfortunately, the majority of what has been considered "communism" is only loosely related to the teachings of Marx, Engels, or their supporters.

Marxism provides a distinctive and sharp analysis of capitalism and its crises through an internal critique. Marxism has played a vital role in questioning the law's supposed eternal nature, the bourgeoisie's claim to represent the whole nation's interests, and the universality of individuality and freedom. It has also played a vital role in studying the subjugation of women as a structural component of capitalism. Before modern literary theory, these ideas were expressed: a) language as a social practice with a material dimension, b) truth as an interpretation based on consensus, c) the world created by human labor, d) acknowledgment of dialectical thinking, and e) analysis informed by historical context. Ultimately, it may be noted that Marxist criticism should pay close attention to power and materialistic matters and consider questions related to them while analyzing a text or artwork. A few being:

1. How does social class influence the work and what is the author's evaluation of class dynamics?
2. What strategies do characters use to defeat oppression?
3. Does the work promote or challenge the current status quo through propaganda?
4. What message does the work convey about oppression; or do social conflicts get overlooked or shifted elsewhere?
5. Is there a utopian vision suggested in the work as a way to address the issues faced in the work?

Is Marxism Still Relevant Today?

Although certain aspects of Marxism may no longer be relevant and may not offer a complete framework for social transformation, they can still provide insights into the fundamental social dynamics in a class-based society. Marxism provides a framework for comprehending history and economics, as well as insight into the worldwide capitalist crisis. One could argue that exploitation remains central to a capitalist system enforced by the upper echelons of society. Marxism also explains the development and impact of capitalism on different world regions, particularly the uneven development compared to one another. Marxists believe that uncontrolled commodification leads to environmental dangers, the expenses of which are becoming more evident.

6.2.4 Criticisms of Marxism

Lack of Revolution: The main critique of Marxism is that the revolution he predicted to lead to a communist society has not happened yet. Marxists view capitalism as a system prone to instability that will ultimately lead to a succession of crises. As capitalism expands, more individuals will exploit it, leading to further oppression, degradation, and exploitation of the proletariat. According to Marxists, capitalism will eventually lead to a proletariat uprising. This will result in the abolishment of capitalism in order to establish a socialist or communist society. Marx contended that a social revolution involved transitioning the current capitalist society to a communist one by altering the social and political system. In a communist society, there is absence of social classes and private property. Marx did not provide clear details on the circumstances that would trigger the revolution or on the subsequent events. There is no assurance of achieving social and economic equality in a communist society.

Although Marx thought the proletariat revolution would occur shortly in the 1800s, it ultimately did not take place in any highly industrialized society. Communist principles have been implemented in certain nations and have proven to be unsuccessful. An example is the collapse of communism in the ex-socialist nation of the USSR. Although Marx's concept of a communist society may seem hopeful in theory, it may not be entirely feasible in reality. In numerous capitalist countries, the economic situation for the working class showed gradual improvement. Marx did not forecast major changes in capitalist societies, like the working class gaining the right to vote, the end of child labor, and the freedom for workers to join unions. Contrary to Marx's ideology, workers in capitalist nations prioritize enhancing their working conditions over initiating a revolution.

Economic Determinism: The primary assumption of Marxism also contained a notable contradiction. Marx simplified everything to historicism and determined that all concepts originate from different economic influences in different times. Marx's entire framework relies on economics and the belief that economic factors are the primary reason for all occurrences in society, ranging from inequality to social transformation. Moreover, Marx believed that economic factors dictated societal forces, with history's fatalism also playing a role in this determination. Critics argue that Marxism's view of society divided into just two social classes is too simplistic. Society has varying levels of wealth, leading to the existence of multiple social classes.

Similarly, Marx's theory fails to address additional factors that can play a role in social inequality, like an individual's ethnicity and faith. Marxism also largely overlooks an individual's gender. Feminists argue that gender creates a more significant societal divide than social class. Weber contends that Marxism fails to acknowledge the influence of ideas on societal transformation. He believed that individuals' ideas were shaped by societal forces which in turn shaped the individuals. This reasoning suggests that Marxism was actually predetermined by past events and phenomena, ironically reducing it to just a series of thoughts. According to Marx's own reasoning, his method was not superior to other philosophies throughout history and should not be treated as particularly important.

Communism did not work: Marx's failure to address what would happen after achieving the communist utopia exposes a flaw in his theory. Marx believed that there is nothing constant, and all things are subject to change. Feudalism would transform into capitalism, and capitalism would evolve into communism. Nevertheless, once the bourgeoisie is dethroned and communism

is established, the ongoing cycle of change comes to an abrupt stop. The working class would experience everlasting utopianism, with communism remaining unchanged. Marx fails to consider the stopping of this cycle of perpetual change. In addition, history demonstrates that Marx was incorrect in his belief that communism would be the ultimate culmination of events.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and China's shift from communism to a market-based economy demonstrate not only the inaccuracy of Marx's predictions, but also his intellectual simplicity. Russia, formerly a strong advocate of Marxism, is now led by Vladimir Putin, who has publicly rejected communism and positioned himself as a loyal supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church. Additionally, countries like China, India, Poland, and others have gradually shifted away from strict centralized economic planning. It is clear that Marxism has not lived up to the expectations of its early supporters.

Historical Necessitarianism: Marx consistently emphasized a historical determinism that completely dismissed the concept of human choice, claiming that the progression and decline of capitalism, along with the ultimate success of global communism, were bound to happen. He argued that fatalism is as unyielding a force as gravity. Nevertheless, Marx continued to make the appeal: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!” (Marx & Engels, 1848). If history was completely predetermined and unavoidable, Marx wouldn't have to make appeals since the bourgeoisie's overthrow would be guaranteed by history itself. Therefore, his demand for action was obvious, self-sabotaging, and paradoxical.

The Ironic Repudiation of Faith, Family and Culture: Marx's historical irony lies in his dismissal of faith, family, and culture. The kibbutzim, monasteries, and tribal families were the only communities that had thrived for an extended period without adopting private property and had instead embraced communal living, in line with Marx's ideals. Kibbutzim were based on voluntary participation. Monasteries concentrated on the belief in life after death. Clans were formed based on familial connections. Furthermore, religious elements were profoundly ingrained in all of them. Although Marx's approach is scientific, his supposed all-encompassing examination of history ignores the historical events that could support his theory's fundamental principles with some empirical evidence.

Marx’s Hypocrisy: Marx is well-known for stating: “The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness” (Marx, 1844). However,

even though he rejected his Jewish heritage and his family's faith, his philosophy still maintains the basic structure and key aspects of any religion. Indeed, he makes no mention of the Mosaic Law or the expectation of a messiah. Yet, within the narrative of Marxism, Karl Marx is depicted as the prophetic leader chosen by history to guide the working class, known as the proletariat, away from the control of the wealthy bourgeoisie and the oppression of capitalism. Through a violent revolution akin to crossing the Red Sea, they would reach a communist utopia where they could reside eternally under the governance of a powerful, comprehensive government.

Check your progress:

1. Marxist criticism is a component of a broader theoretical analysis that seeks to comprehend ideologies - the thoughts, values, and emotions through which individuals perceive their societies in different eras. (True / False)
2. Marx's failure to address what would happen after achieving the communist utopia exposes a flaw in his theory. (True / False)

6.2.5 Marxism and Culture

A Marxist perspective on culture examines the creation and use of cultural objects. This means that it emphasizes both the creator and the viewer. Marxism looks for a tangible foundation for abstract concepts such as aesthetics or truth through examining the components and procedures of production. The text implies that depictions of beauty or ideals in literature and art are linked to material realities of economics, class relations, power, and suffering, whether directly or indirectly. Marxism requires us to find a physical foundation for culture. The Marxist perspective rejects the concepts of 'artist-as-genius' or 'artist-as-solitary-thinker'. This idea of the artist separates them from the environment where they have certain experiences and, as a result, produces specific types of objects. Put simply, Marxism prompts us to consider the writer's social standing.

A Marxist perspective focuses on the financial and cultural gains that impact the type of work created by artists and writers. When writing was established as a career in 18th-century England, the act of writing underwent a transformation. Writers, along with other craftsmen, were creating works for the purpose of selling them. Therefore, the 18th century marks the period when artists started becoming professionals. A Marxist perspective considers not only the social context in which the text and author exist, but also the role of the reader. Readers interpret texts in specific

ways based on their social status like their class, caste, race, and gender. The availability of inexpensive books due to the printing press revolutionized literacy in early modern England. The readership transformed, allowing more middle-class individuals to access reading materials. This meant that books had to meet the needs of this new type of readers.

Furthermore, it may be noted that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) appealed to readers from Asia, South America, and Africa because he described the racialized aspects of colonialism in a way that no white author had done before. Achebe's literature was popular with readers because they could connect, based on personal experiences and memories of colonialism, to the struggles faced by Okonkwo and other African characters. Consequently, a Marxist perspective on culture also prompts us to consider the social environments in which cultural consumption takes place, such as those of readers, movie enthusiasts, theater buffs, and television audiences. Marxist literary and cultural theory has specific methods for analyzing cultural texts.

6.2.6 Limitations of Marxist Criticism

It has been asserted by Edmund Wilson that Marxism in Russia has reached a dead end or a hopeless situation. Marxism alone is not capable of determining the value of a piece of art. A Marxist must consider more than just the artistic value when evaluating a piece of art. He considers the ideological integrity of a piece and disregards its artistic appeal. While Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky had a taste for literature, the Marxists who came after them did not possess the same aesthetic sensitivity.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying this Unit, you should have gained the knowledge and skills to:

- recognize and assess theoretical advancements after Marx.
- show a knowledgeable and analytical grasp of Marxist ideas.
- show a deep understanding of the main issues in Marxist theory.
- develop research inquiries and predictions to tackle issues within the scope of Marxist ideology.
- analyse and assess individual research and the research conducted by others in a critical manner.

- create arguments in consideration of various intellectual and historical backgrounds.

6.4 Glossary

- **Bourgeoisie:** The capitalist class that owns the means of production and exploits the labour of the proletariat to generate profit.
- **Class Struggle:** The ongoing conflict between different social classes (e.g., bourgeoisie vs. proletariat) due to their opposing economic interests, which Marx believed drives historical change.
- **Communism:** A stateless, classless society envisioned by Marx where the means of production are communally owned, and there is no private property or exploitation.
- **Dialectical Materialism:** A philosophical approach developed by Marx and Engels to understand history and societal change through contradictions (e.g., thesis vs. antithesis) leading to progress. It emphasises that material conditions shape ideas.
- **Economic Determinism:** The idea that economic factors are the primary force driving social change and shaping political, legal, and cultural systems.
- **Historical Materialism:** A method of studying history from an economic perspective, arguing that changes in production methods drive social structures, class conflicts, and historical development.
- **Ideology:** A system of beliefs, values, and ideas that shapes how individuals perceive their world and maintain social structures, often used by the ruling class to justify power dynamics.
- **Proletariat:** The working class, which does not own the means of production and must sell its labour to survive in a capitalist society.
- **Superstructure:** A Marxist term for the societal institutions (e.g., government, law, culture) built upon the economic base and functioning to maintain the interests of the ruling class.
- **Surplus Value:** A concept in Marxist economics referring to the extra value produced by workers, above what they are paid, which is appropriated by capitalists as profit.

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Who are the two main founders of Marxism?
   a) Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud
   b) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
   c) Friedrich Engels and Lenin
   d) Karl Marx and Adorno
   Answer: b) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
2. What does Marxism identify as the primary driving force in history?
   a) Religion
   b) Artistic inspiration
   c) Historical materialism
   d) Sexual energy
   Answer: c) Historical materialism
3. What is the concept of 'surplus value' based on?
   a) The value of technology used in production
   b) The value derived from the unpaid labour of workers
   c) The amount of wealth produced by the capitalist
   d) The cost of maintaining the workforce
   Answer: b) The value derived from the unpaid labour of workers
4. Which political system did Marx argue would follow capitalism?
   a) Feudalism
   b) Bourgeois democracy
   c) Socialism
   d) Anarchism
   Answer: c) Socialism
5. What does Marxism argue about cultural expressions?
   a) They are purely artistic endeavours without economic influence
   b) They reflect the economic and class structures of society
   c) They transcend social realities and ideologies

d) They are independent from political and social change

Answer: b) They reflect the economic and class structures of society

6. According to Marx, what is the role of the state in a capitalist society?

   a) To maintain the freedom of all citizens equally

   b) To protect the working class from exploitation

   c) To further the interests of the ruling class

   d) To encourage artistic and cultural development

   Answer: c) To further the interests of the ruling class

7. What is the ultimate goal of the dialectical process in Marxism?

   a) Perpetual conflict between opposing classes

   b) Attaining absolute truth and ending contradictions

   c) Establishing religious unity among different communities

   d) Achieving a balance between socialism and capitalism

   Answer: b) Attaining absolute truth and ending contradictions

8. What criticism is directed at Marxism regarding economic determinism?

   a) It overlooks technological progress

   b) It reduces all aspects of society to economic factors

   c) It ignores the role of democracy in political systems

   d) It denies the significance of family and religion

   Answer: b) It reduces all aspects of society to economic factors

9. What distinguishes communism from socialism, according to Marx?

   a) Communism involves government ownership of property

   b) Communism eliminates class distinctions and private ownership

   c) Socialism allows for some level of individual competition

   d) Socialism focuses solely on cultural and ideological production

   Answer: b) Communism eliminates class distinctions and private ownership

10. Which philosopher significantly influenced Marx's concept of dialectics?

    a) Sigmund Freud

    b) Max Weber

    c) Hegel

d) Leszek Kolakowski

Answer: c) Hegel

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Explain the concept of class conflict in Marx's theory.
2. Evaluate the idea of surplus value and its importance in understanding capitalist exploitation.
3. How does Marxism approach cultural criticism?
4. Discuss the concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' Why does Marx consider it necessary?
5. In what ways has Marxism influenced other modern theories, such as feminism and critical theory?

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the role of 'historical materialism' in Marxist theory. How does it shape the interpretation of history?
2. Critically assess the differences between socialism and communism as described by Marx.
3. Examine the limitations of Marxism, particularly its failure to predict the outcome of capitalist societies.

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* Manchester UP, 2009.

Boucher, Geoff. *Understanding Marxism.* Routledge, 2014.

Habib, MA Rafey. *Literary criticism from Plato to the present: An introduction.* John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Glaser, Daryl, and David M. Walker, eds. *Twentieth-century Marxism: A global introduction.* Routledge, 2007.

Singer, Peter. *Marx: A very short introduction.* Oxford University Press, 2018.

Unit-7: Jacques Derrida: ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the History of the Human Sciences’

Structure

7.0 Introduction

Jacques Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" serves as a cornerstone in the evolution of Post-Structuralism and the articulation of deconstruction as a critical method. Delivered as a lecture at the Johns Hopkins University in 1966, this seminal work challenges the fundamental tenets of Structuralism, a dominant intellectual framework at the time, while laying the groundwork for a new mode of inquiry into language, meaning, and representation.

Derrida's essay begins by situating itself within a broader intellectual context, addressing the prevailing influence of Structuralism, particularly the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropological Structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss. He acknowledges the structuralist emphasis on binary oppositions, such as presence/absence, speech/writing, and nature/culture, as well as the pursuit of a stable center or origin within systems of meaning.

However, Derrida proceeds to dismantle these foundational assumptions by introducing the concept of "play." He argues that the presence of these binary oppositions and the quest for a

fixed centre are themselves contingent and provisional, subject to the inherent instability of language and signification. Language, for Derrida, is a field of perpetual movement, where meanings are deferred and deferred indefinitely, with no ultimate grounding or stable reference point.

This notion of "play" disrupts the structuralist belief in the coherence and stability of systems of meaning, revealing them to be characterized by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and multiplicity. Derrida coined the term "différance" to encapsulate this process of deferral and differentiation, highlighting the ways in which meaning is both deferred and differentiated through the interplay of signs.

The significance of Derrida's essay lies in its radical critique of Structuralism and its invitation to rethink traditional understandings of language, meaning, and representation. By decentering the authority of fixed structures and revealing the play of signifiers within language, Derrida inaugurates a new mode of inquiry that emphasizes contingency, instability, and openness to interpretation.

In the field of Post-Structuralism, Derrida's essay marks a decisive break with the foundational assumptions of Structuralism, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of discourse and power. Deconstruction, as articulated by Derrida, becomes a method of critical analysis that seeks to uncover the hidden contradictions and tensions within texts, revealing the underlying instability of meaning and the impossibility of achieving closure or finality.

Check your progress:

1. What is différance?

_____

2. What is the name of the essay where Derrida talks about Deconstruction?

_____

7.1 Objectives

This Unit has the following objectives:

- develop a comprehensive understanding of post-structuralist theories, particularly Derrida's critique of Structuralism and the concept of deconstruction.

- identify and explain key concepts such as différance, trace, arche-writing, and the supplement.
- cultivate critical thinking skills by analysing derrida's arguments and evaluating their implications for the study of language, meaning, and interpretation.
- engage with complex theoretical concepts and texts to identify underlying assumptions, contradictions, and tensions.

7.2 Jacques Derrida: 'Structure, Sign and Play in the History of the Human Sciences'

7.2.1 Background and Context

Jacques Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" was written in the mid-1960s, a period marked by significant intellectual ferment and theoretical innovation in the humanities and social sciences. The essay emerged within the context of broader debates surrounding Structuralism, a dominant theoretical paradigm in fields such as linguistics, anthropology, literary theory, and philosophy.

Structuralism, as articulated by figures like Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Roman Jakobson, posited that human culture and meaning are organized by underlying structures or systems of signs. These structures were believed to be governed by binary oppositions and organized around a central, stable structure or origin. Structuralism exerted a profound influence on various disciplines, offering a powerful framework for understanding language, culture, and society.

However, by the mid-20th century, Structuralism faced increasing criticism and scrutiny from scholars who questioned its foundational assumptions and its ability to account for the complexities of human experience. It is within this context of intellectual ferment and critique that Derrida's essay emerges.

Derrida's essay challenges the core tenets of Structuralism, particularly its reliance on binary oppositions and the notion of a fixed center or origin. He argues that the structuralist emphasis on stability and coherence overlooks the inherent instability and contingency of language and meaning. Derrida introduces the concept of "play" to disrupt the structuralist notion of fixed structures, highlighting the perpetual movement and indeterminacy within language.

The influence of Derrida's essay on the study of humanities and social sciences has been profound and far-reaching. It marked a decisive break with the structuralist paradigm, opening up new avenues for inquiry and critique. Derrida's concept of deconstruction, which emerged from his critique of Structuralism, became a powerful tool for analyzing texts and uncovering the hidden contradictions and tensions within them. Deconstruction emphasized the contingency and multiplicity of meaning, challenging the idea of a single, fixed interpretation.

In addition to its impact on literary theory and philosophy, Derrida's essay has also influenced fields such as cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and political theory. It has inspired scholars to rethink traditional approaches to language, meaning, and representation, fostering a more nuanced understanding of discourse, power, and identity. In an earlier Unit, you have already discussed Structuralism in detail. Let us know quickly look at the main concepts of Structuralism and the prominent structuralists.

7.2.2 Main Concepts of Structuralism:

1. **Ferdinand de Saussure:** Saussure, considered one of the founding figures of Structuralism, focused on linguistics. His key concept was the "sign," which he divided into the signifier (the sound image or written word) and the signified (the concept it represents). He argued that meaning arises from the relationship between signs rather than from the signs themselves. Saussure also emphasized the importance of language as a system of differences, where meaning is derived from the contrast between linguistic elements.
2. **Claude Lévi-Strauss:** Lévi-Strauss extended structuralist principles to anthropology and cultural studies. He applied the concept of binary oppositions to the analysis of myths and social structures. Lévi-Strauss argued that myths are structured by underlying oppositions (e.g., nature/culture, raw/cooked), which reflect universal cognitive structures. He believed that these oppositions reveal deep-seated patterns of thought and meaning in human societies.

Derrida's Critique of Structuralism and Development of Deconstruction: Jacques Derrida's critique of Structuralism, as articulated in "Structure, Sign, and Play," challenges its central assumptions and lays the groundwork for deconstruction:

1. **Critique of Binary Oppositions:** Derrida critiques the structuralist reliance on binary oppositions, arguing that these oppositions are not stable or fixed but are instead contingent

and subject to change. He suggests that the emphasis on oppositions obscures the fluidity and complexity of meaning, leading to a reductive understanding of language and culture.

2. **Deconstruction:** Derrida's concept of deconstruction emerges from his critique of Structuralism. Deconstruction seeks to destabilize hierarchical oppositions and reveal the underlying tensions and contradictions within texts. Rather than seeking to uncover a single, fixed meaning, deconstruction emphasizes the multiplicity and indeterminacy of interpretation. It challenges the notion of a stable center or origin, arguing that meaning is always deferred and open to reinterpretation.

Derrida's critique of Structuralism and his development of deconstruction represent a radical departure from the structuralist paradigm. By challenging the stability and coherence of meaning, Derrida opens up new possibilities for understanding language, culture, and representation. Deconstruction becomes a method of critical analysis that seeks to uncover the hidden complexities and ambiguities within texts, inviting readers to engage with language in a more nuanced and reflexive manner.

7.2.3 Summary of of the Text

In Jacques Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," he critiques the foundational principles of Structuralism and introduces the concept of deconstruction. Derrida argues against the stability and coherence posited by structuralists, particularly in their reliance on binary oppositions and the search for a fixed center or origin. Instead, he emphasizes the inherent instability and indeterminacy of language and meaning. Derrida introduces the notion of "play," suggesting that meaning is constantly deferred and deferred through a process that he terms "différance." This perpetual movement within language disrupts the structuralist notion of fixed structures and invites a more nuanced understanding of discourse, power, and interpretation. Ultimately, Derrida's essay challenges readers to recognize the contingency and multiplicity of meaning, opening up new possibilities for critical inquiry and engagement with texts.

1. **Deconstruction of Binary Oppositions:** Derrida challenges the structuralist reliance on binary oppositions as fundamental to meaning-making. He argues that these oppositions are not stable or fixed but are instead contingent and interconnected. For example, the opposition between presence and absence, often central to structuralist analysis, is not a clear-cut distinction but rather a dynamic interplay where each term relies on the other for

its definition. Derrida's deconstruction reveals the fluidity and complexity inherent in these oppositions, undermining the structuralist claim of their stability.

2. **Critique of the Notion of the Center:** Structuralism often posits the existence of a fixed center or origin around which meaning is organized. Derrida challenges this notion, suggesting that the search for a center is ultimately futile and that meaning is not anchored to any stable reference point. He argues that the center is always deferred and displaced, disrupting any attempts to establish a hierarchical structure of meaning. Instead, Derrida proposes a vision of language and meaning as constantly in flux, characterized by multiplicity and indeterminacy rather than by fixed structures.

The discussion of "play" in Derrida's work further complicates the structuralist understanding of language, meaning, and interpretation:

1. **Significance of "Play":** Derrida introduces the concept of "play" to describe the inherent instability and indeterminacy within language. He suggests that meaning is not fixed but is constantly deferred and deferred through a process of play, where signifiers continually shift and interact with one another. This playfulness disrupts any attempts to pin down a definitive meaning, highlighting the fluid and contingent nature of linguistic signification.
2. **Implications for Understanding Language and Meaning:** The notion of "play" challenges the structuralist belief in the stability of linguistic structures and the coherence of meaning. Derrida's discussion underscores the multiplicity and ambiguity inherent in language, suggesting that meaning is always open to interpretation and reinterpretation. This has profound implications for understanding how language operates and how meaning is constructed, emphasizing the dynamic and contingent nature of linguistic communication.
3. **Implications for Interpretation:** Derrida's discussion of play invites readers to engage with texts in a more reflexive and open-ended manner. Rather than seeking to uncover a single, fixed interpretation, readers are encouraged to recognize the plurality of meanings that emerge through the play of signifiers. This challenges traditional approaches to interpretation and invites a more nuanced understanding of texts as sites of ongoing negotiation and contestation.

Derrida's critique of Structuralism and his discussion of "play" disrupt conventional understandings of language, meaning, and interpretation, opening up new possibilities for engaging with the complexities and ambiguities of linguistic communication.

7.2.4 Key Concepts:

In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Jacques Derrida introduces several key themes and concepts that challenge traditional understandings of language, truth, and representation:

1. **Différance:** Derrida coins the term "différance" to describe the dual process of deferral and difference within language. Différance highlights how meaning is deferred, never fully present or stable, and how differences between signifiers create meaning. This concept challenges the traditional notion of language as a transparent medium for conveying fixed meanings, instead emphasizing its inherent ambiguity and instability.
2. **Trace:** The concept of the trace refers to the absence or lack that marks the presence of a signifier. Derrida suggests that every sign contains a trace of its absence, as it points beyond itself to other signifiers and meanings. This challenges the idea of language as a closed system of signs with determinate meanings, suggesting instead that meaning is always deferred and open-ended.
3. **Arche-writing:** Derrida introduces the notion of arche-writing to describe the prelinguistic condition of inscription that underlies language. Arche-writing refers to the process of inscription that precedes and enables linguistic communication, such as the marks or traces left by the hand. This concept disrupts the idea of language as a purely conceptual or symbolic system, emphasizing its material and contingent dimensions.
4. **The Supplement:** Derrida explores the concept of the supplement to describe the way in which meaning is both added to and deferred within language. The supplement is that which is added to fill a perceived lack or deficiency within a sign or structure. However, Derrida argues that the supplement is never truly supplementary but is instead integral to the structure it supplements, revealing the inherent instability of linguistic representation.

These concepts challenge traditional understandings of language, truth, and representation in several ways:

- **Language as Stable and Transparent:** Derrida's concepts undermine the notion of language as a stable and transparent medium for conveying fixed meanings. Instead,

language is portrayed as inherently ambiguous and contingent, with meaning deferred and deferred through a complex interplay of signifiers.

- **Truth as Fixed and Absolute:** Derrida's ideas challenge the idea of truth as fixed and absolute, suggesting that meaning is always subject to interpretation and reinterpretation. Truth is not something to be discovered but is instead continually constructed and negotiated through language.
- **Representation as Direct and Immediate:** Derrida's concepts disrupt the traditional understanding of representation as direct and immediate, revealing the mediation and supplementation inherent in all acts of representation. Meaning is not simply mirrored or reflected in language but is instead produced through a process of deferral and difference.

Check your progress:

1. What is 'trace' in deconstruction?

_____

2. What is meant by Arch writing?

_____

7.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have gained a thorough understanding of post-structuralist theories, particularly Derrida's critique of Structuralism and his development of deconstruction as a method of analysis. You should have learned to recognize the key concepts and themes underlying post-structuralist thought and their implications for the study of language, meaning, and interpretation.

7.4 Glossary

- **Arche-writing:** A concept introduced by Derrida to describe the prelinguistic condition of inscription that underlies language, emphasizing the material and contingent dimensions of linguistic communication.

- **Binary Oppositions:** A fundamental concept in Structuralism, referring to pairs of opposites (e.g., presence/absence, nature/culture) that structure meaning and thought. Derrida critiques the stability of binary oppositions and their reliance on hierarchical structures.
- **Deconstruction:** A critical method developed by Derrida that seeks to uncover the hidden contradictions and tensions within texts, challenging binary oppositions and revealing the instability of meaning.
- **Différance:** A term coined by Derrida to describe the dual process of deferral and difference within language, highlighting the inherent instability and indeterminacy of meaning.
- **Supplement:** A term used by Derrida to describe that which is added to fill a perceived lack or deficiency within a sign or structure. Derrida argues that the supplement is never truly supplementary but is instead integral to the structure it supplements.
- **Trace:** In Derrida's work, the trace refers to the absence or lack that marks the presence of a signifier, highlighting the deferred and supplementary nature of meaning within language.

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions

1. What term did Derrida use to describe the inherent instability and indeterminacy of meaning within language?

a) Binary oppositions

b) Deconstruction

c) Différance

d) Structuralism

2. According to Derrida, what concept challenges the structuralist notion of fixed structures and hierarchical meaning?

a) Binary oppositions

b) Arche-writing

c) The supplement

d) Play

2. Which of the following is NOT a key concept introduced by Derrida in his critique of Structuralism? a) Trace b) Arche-writing c) Binary oppositions **d) Linguistic stability**
3. What does Derrida mean by the term "supplement" in his essay? **a) Something added to fill a lack or deficiency within a sign or structure** b) A stable and fixed meaning within language c) The process of deferring meaning within language d) The absence or lack that marks the presence of a signifier
4. Which of the following best describes Derrida's concept of deconstruction? **a) A method of critical analysis that uncovers hidden contradictions within texts** b) A belief in the stability and transparency of language c) A reliance on binary oppositions to structure meaning d) An emphasis on fixed meanings and clear definitions

True or False

1. True or False: Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" critiques the foundational principles of Structuralism. **True**
2. True or False: Derrida's concept of différance refers to the stable and fixed meanings within language. **False**
3. True or False: Derrida argues that the center is always present and stable within linguistic structures. **False**
4. True or False: The supplement, according to Derrida, is something added to a structure that does not alter its meaning. **False**
5. True or False: Derrida's work has had little to no influence on contemporary debates within the humanities and social sciences. **False**

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Define deconstruction and explain how it challenges structuralist approaches to language and meaning.
2. What is différance, and how does it highlight the instability of meaning within language?
3. Describe Derrida's concept of the supplement and provide an example of how it operates within a linguistic structure.
4. Explain the significance of Derrida's discussion of "play" in understanding language and meaning.

5. How does Derrida's concept of trace disrupt traditional understandings of linguistic representation?

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss Derrida's critique of Structuralism as articulated in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences."
2. Analyse the concept of différance in Derrida's work. What does différance reveal about the nature of language and meaning?
3. Explore the implications of Derrida's discussion of the supplement for our understanding of language and representation.

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Bennington, Geoffrey. *Jacques Derrida*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Cornell University Press, 1983.

Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, Routledge, 2001, pp. 278-293.

Norris, Christopher. *Derrida*. Harvard University Press, 2008.

Unit-8: Raymond Williams: Excerpts from *Marxism and Literature*

Structure

8.0 Introduction

Literature as a term has evolved in its meaning over many centuries. One significant contribution to its meaning is made by cultural theorist and literary critic Raymond Williams. This Unit will help you understand Raymond Williams' life and works, and introduce you to his ideas pertaining to literature which appear in his book *Marxism and Literature* as a section.

8.1 Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Raymond William's life and contribution to criticism
- a critique of his essay "Marxism and Literature" which traces the origin and development of Marxist attitude to art and literature, and points out its limitations

8.2 Raymond Williams: Excerpts from Marxism and Literature

8.2.1 Raymond William's Life and Work

Raymond Williams (1921-1988) was a widely impactful cultural critic and theorist. He played a pivotal role in the advancement of cultural studies and his contributions greatly influenced the areas of literature, sociology, and politics. Some of his other famous works are *Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution*, and *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Scholars have extensively examined Williams's perspective on Marxism and literature, with his concepts remaining pertinent in modern conversations about culture and society. Raymond Williams was a Marxist cultural theorist, author, commentator, and socialist intellectual. He covers a broad spectrum of literary, cultural studies, and history in his writing. Despite being a Marxist thinker, he played a significant role in the Marxist literary theory tradition yet hesitated to identify as a Marxist. Nevertheless, he identified as a socialist. Williams' theory is defined by the fact that his concepts are a reflection of his hands-on participation in political events, rather than just a product of his knowledge.

Furthermore, Williams was the most influential Marxist critic of the twentieth century, and a prominent member of the New Left movement. His contributions to the journal *New Left Review* and the "Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" set the groundwork for Cultural Studies as a field, and his development of ideas such as "hegemony" and "ideology" aided future scholars in examining cultural behaviours. By examining the origin and development of the word "culture" (originally meaning cultivation, care, etc.), Williams revealed the underlying beliefs that influence word meanings - specifically, how a word's evolving significance can be tied to a shifting "new social and intellectual movement." He illustrated how political processes influence cultural practices in his *Culture and Society*, analyzing English social change post-Industrial Revolution through works of Blake, Wordsworth, Edmund Burke and George Orwell, showing that culture is inherently political.

In his early writing career, Williams focused on the importance of closely analyzing literary texts. Afterwards, he shifted his focus more towards cultural studies in his research. Despite not being a complete departure from literature, Williams remained connected to the literary world through his fictional writings. Williams viewed literature as just another cultural practice and did not believe it held a special status. Another one of his beliefs about literature is that it should not

be viewed independently, but rather in relation to its cultural surroundings. He also didn't care about the term literature, as he believed it only included certain types of writing while excluding others. He believed that the term 'writing' rather than 'literature' is more suitable to cover all types of written works.

Despite being a theorist, Williams was always willing to acknowledge the flaws of theory. He maintained that rejecting history through theories like Formalism, Structuralism, and Post-Structuralism is incorrect. To him, denying history means denying the chance for change. This belief leads him to have confidence in the power of human actions to alter the circumstances of life. He was a Marxist humanist in that regard. Williams supported the idea of human agency and its significance in history, in contrast to Post-Structuralism's focus on 'de-centering' human beings. His peers thought that meanings and values were unattainable. However, Williams had faith in the capacity of humans to be creative and formative, which he believes can alter their own interpretations of significance and worth. His position conveys potential and receptiveness while rejecting limited theoretical ideas.

In his analysis, Williams deviated from the traditional base/superstructure equation and created "cultural materialism," which argues that the ways in which cultural practices are produced are always material, regardless of their purpose. Cultural Materialism aims to understand cultural practices within various frameworks, including institutional structures (film industry, publishing industry), intellectual contexts (modernism, postcolonialism), forms and their boundaries (western novel history, oral epic tradition in India, magical realist novel from Latin America), modes of production (printing, digital printing, mass media), organization and regulations (copyright laws, patents), and dissemination processes (sales, exhibitions, censorship, adaptations, reviews). He challenges the conventional Marxist idea of base being inflexible, stating that the economic base is dynamic rather than fixed. The foundation must encompass not only the sector that creates goods but also the work done by individuals to sustain it, in other words, all social activities. Therefore, his concept of cultural materialism includes examining the connections between the economic, political, social, and cultural elements within society.

Williams took from Althusser a key idea, "overdetermination" - the elements that influence a cultural activity. He described "determination" as something that can be felt on a personal level but is always influenced by social interactions and specific social structures. He also proposed that individuals internalize social influences and that various social pressures shape the characteristics

and behaviors of a cultural activity (known as "overdetermination"). Therefore, Williams argued that the conventional Marxist base/superstructure classifications are not always sufficient to elucidate art forms or cultural practices, as he introduced the ideas of "cultural materialism" and "determination".

Check your progress:

1. Raymond Williams' contributions to the journal *New Left Review* and the "Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" set the groundwork for Cultural Studies as a field. (True / False)
2. Cultural Materialism aims to understand cultural practices within various frameworks, including institutional structures, intellectual contexts, forms and their boundaries, modes of production, organization and regulations, and dissemination processes. (True / False)

8.2.2 Development of Marxist Thought: Early Marxists

Exploring the Intersection of Marxism and Literature: Raymond Williams explores the intricate connection between literature and Marxist ideology in Marxism and Literature. He starts by exploring the historical evolution of the idea of literature, following its origins back to ancient times up to modern times. Williams contends that literature's definition has always been shaped by the prevailing social and economic systems, making it inseparable from the society in which it originates. Williams goes on to talk about the literary theory of Marxism. Further, he asserts that according to Marxism, literature is a result of the current economic system and functions to uphold the existing state of affairs. He discusses the idea of base and superstructure, illustrating how the economic foundation of a society influences the superstructure, which encompasses literature, art, and culture.

Exploring the Role of Literature in Society: Williams delves deeper into the function of literature within society. He posits that literature is not simply a mirror of society, but is also shaped by intentional human actions. He presents the idea of cultural materialism, highlighting the importance of human creativity and agency in creating literature and culture. Williams stated that literary works serve as more than just representations of the dominant ideology; they are also

spaces for challenge and discussion. He defines the idea of hegemony as the control of a certain ideology over others, and discusses how literature can support or oppose this dominant ideology.

The Creative Process and Marxist Theory: Subsequently, Williams focuses on the creative process. He suggests that producing literary pieces is a complicated procedure that includes a dialectical connection among the writer, the text, and the community. He criticizes the deterministic perspective on literature found in certain Marxist theories, which oversimplify the creative process as just mirroring the economic foundation. Instead of that, Williams supports a more complex comprehension of the connection between literature and society. He proposes that the economic base does not dictate literary works, but influences them in intricate ways. He also highlights the significance of personal initiative and the author's independent creativity in creating literature.

8.2.3 What is Marxism and Literature about?

The book *Marxism and Literature*, published by Raymond Williams in 1977, delves into the complex connection between literature and socio-political beliefs. Here's the reason why devoting your time in this book is valuable: By conducting thorough examination of literature, it reveals the way in which art mirrors and impacts societal frameworks, prompting analytical thought. Through an exploration of Marxist theory and its influence on cultural output, the book provides a distinctive viewpoint on comprehending literature in a wider framework. It questions traditional ideas about literature and ideology, sparking conversations and expanding perspectives, guaranteeing a stimulating and enriching reading experience.

Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature* delves into the connection between literature and society from a Marxist perspective. Williams explores how literature mirrors and sustains social hierarchies, beliefs, and systems of authority. He also explores how literature has the potential to question and undermine these systems, providing an insightful evaluation of literature's role in sparking revolutionary change. The book explores the current Marxist literature and includes Williams' theory of cultural materialism. The book was initially released by Oxford University Press in 1977. It has been reprinted in multiple versions since then.

Williams was a drama instructor at the University of Cambridge and is recognized for his impact on New Left philosophical schools. His ideas paved the path for a completely fresh perspective on Marxist beliefs and Marxist evaluations of arts and culture. Williams wrote this

book at a time when Marxist ideas and the concept of "society" were under intense scrutiny and faced challenges. Williams has a precise main idea for this piece. He plans to examine established, unquestioned Marxist concepts and reveal their flaws and inadequacies. He also talks about a significant issue he finds in literary theory and how it causes division. In order to address these issues, Williams suggests a fresh approach - cultural materialism. He thinks that cultural materialism is essential to all Marxist thought, and that by combining Marxist language theories and Marxist literature theories, he can redefine Marxism.

The book is structured into three main sections—basic concepts, cultural theory, and literary criticism. Even though Williams addresses these elements individually, he shows how they are interconnected and the importance of combining them. In the initial chapter, the general principles of culture, society, and economy are discussed. Williams clarifies that the concept of "culture" is experiencing a significant change in perspective, making it crucial to revisit its fundamental definition to identify any existing issues. He points out that we are adhering to the bourgeois values of culture, society, and economy, which are centered on commerce and capitalism. Williams highlights that culture is currently synonymous with civilization, which is based on sophistication, advancement, and recognition of this modern "order." In essence, our society emphasizes cultural enlightenment as the objective, so anything not economically beneficial is deemed worthless. Williams is worried that conventional Marxism does not sufficiently question the bourgeois cultural norm, leading to its failure. The book is largely supported by studies in language.

Williams argues that Marxism does not contribute significantly to the comprehension of language, so Marxists must take advantage of overlooked chances to rethink language. He discusses how meanings of words, signs, etc. are formed through cultural use and social exchanges. Despite words potentially having multiple supposed meanings, their meanings are flexible and not fixed or innate. Williams believes Marxism should take language into account in addition to culture. Williams focuses on the specialized use of language in literature. He discusses the evolution of literature's significance, objectives, and worth in response to capitalism, requiring Marxism to reassess its theories on literature. The focus has shifted from the act of writing to how the writing is perceived and evaluated. The idea that literary criticism is now a job demonstrates Williams' point - literature's worth has become something that can be bought and sold. It is commonly linked with the bourgeois class as well. Williams emphasizes the need to update

Marxist ideology theories, since "ideology" has become a broad term encompassing non-Marxist views. This statement concludes the first section of the book.

Part II examines the base and superstructure, fundamental components of Marxist theory. Williams disapproves of the notion that the base, which includes the dynamic between the oppressed and oppressor, serves as the underlying structure for the development of the superstructure in a society. Williams contends that society will always be biased towards the dominant group due to the way the oppressor suppresses the oppressed. This implies that the basic relationships within society must change in order for the superstructure to change. Williams is concerned that Marxism neglects ideas like traditions, which Marxists usually view as only a component of the historical superstructure. Nevertheless, traditions enable society to draw from its history and influence its current state, and they are also not fixed. Williams details how this change starts within establishments, like educational institutions or places of worship. This provides equal importance to the superstructure, which has the ability to impact the foundation.

Part III examines literary theory and how literature serves as both aesthetic and a way to capture artistic excellence. Williams thinks it's important to keep aesthetics and literature separate in order to prevent them from being marginalized in society. Nonetheless, Williams also argues that literary theory is now so deeply ingrained in society that it cannot be viewed in isolation. He claims that traditional Marxism falls short in this aspect. Marxists need to analyze how authors engage in self-creation and its connection to a shared consciousness. This will merge literary theory and language theory to address issues with conventional Marxist ways of thinking, including Williams' theory of cultural materialism.

8.2.4 “Literature”

Williams is interested in literature, which is a specific type of language use. The meaning of literature has been devalued by being disconnected from its production context, now often associated with works reflecting “immediate lived experience.” Just like society, economy, and culture, the concept of literature also evolved with the rise of capitalism. It used to pertain to a specific area within the medieval liberal arts that focused on rhetoric and grammar for the purpose of developing expertise in reading. Literature was a type of knowledge that people of elevated social status could attain, a reading ability that indicated a certain level of refinement, a social privilege.

Literature could encompass all published works, not just those categorized as "fictional" or "imaginative." The meaning of literature changed to represent a "taste" or "sensibility," indicating the work itself rather than the reader, coinciding with the restriction of literature to fiction, and the idea of "tradition" being associated with nationalism, leading to the emergence of "national" literatures. Taste and sensibility were common characteristics associated with the middle class, known as “characteristically bourgeois categories,” applicable to literature, etiquette, wine, and poetry alike. At this time, literary criticism also became professionalized through the deliberate cultivation of 'taste,' 'sensibility,' and 'discrimination.' It evolved as a notable specific manifestation of the overall trend in literary thought towards focusing on the consumption of works rather than their creation. In the professionalization of criticism, literature was defined as the subject of analysis, creating a consistent area for bourgeois values to be expressed. Limiting literature to imaginative or fictional works is a result of capitalist production becoming more automated and suppressing human creativity.

The ideas of art characterized by creativity and sensitivity, aesthetics focusing on beauty and quality, and literature as a reflection of fiction, known as the carrier of "imaginative truth," all emerged in reaction to the suppression of human creativity in daily life. Using these new ideas, bourgeois critics aimed to distinguish between works worthy of being called "literature" and those that were not, focusing on "literary values" derived from a national tradition that determined what made a work "great." Williams believes that the Marxist theory of practical consciousness has not been used in the field of literature. Literature is commonly linked with ideology, reflecting a specific class identity. This has benefited by acknowledging popular literature as just as important as the "great" works identified by bourgeois critics but has not yet successfully challenged bourgeois ideas about literature, art, and aesthetics. Williams highlights cases where this does not apply – such as Lukács, the Frankfurt School, Formalism – stating that a successful Marxist literary theory should contest these bourgeois ideas. Thus, the challenge needs to start with an inherent critique of Marxist ideas.

Check your progress:

1. Williams argues that Marxism does not contribute significantly to the comprehension of language, so Marxists must take advantage of overlooked chances to rethink language. (True / False)

2. Literature could encompass all published works, not just those categorized as "fictional" or "imaginative." (True / False)

8.2.5 Marxism and Literary Theory

Marxist literary criticism focuses on the themes found in Karl Marx's philosophy. Marx believed that to comprehend any aspect of a society, it was essential to examine its economic foundation. This involved examining which individuals or groups had power over the resources used for creating goods in a community. Marx defined the bourgeoisie as this group, and referred to the working class - those without ownership of means of production - as the proletariat. The economic relations within a society dictated the nature of various other aspects of society such as religion, gender roles, family life, and literature. Marx referred to literature, art, religion, etc. as the superstructure constructed on top of the economic foundation.

Marxist literary criticism is founded on the idea that class conflict is a continuous aspect of history, as proposed by Marx and Engels. Key aspects involve the concept that upper classes maintain control by means of ideology, a type of false consciousness or misrepresentation of reality that Marx differentiates from theory, the factual foundation on which he believed Marxism was built. Marxist literary analysis seeks to reveal the deceptions or illusions utilized by the ruling class to uphold their power. Marxist literary theorists focus on the specific economic, social, and historical circumstances in which literary works were created during their analysis. While traditional literary criticism ignores these factors, Marxist theorists argue that a complete comprehension of literature is impossible without recognizing its production methods and reasons. In this regard, Marxist literary theory considers literature to be a component of society's superstructure.

According to Marxism, the superstructure refers to the cultural aspect of society, including art, ideas, and morality. The world relies on the base, which serves as the economic backbone of society. In order to comprehend the superstructure, including literature, it is necessary to grasp the economic foundation from which it emerges. Certainly, the connection between base and superstructure in classical Marxism is mutual, however, the base definitely takes precedence. The foundation is what ultimately dictates the structure built upon it. A piece of literature is created in specific economic and historical settings. Marxists do not consider a play or a novel to be a source of eternal truths that exist independently from the society in which they originate. Literature,

morality, and the culture of a society all require consideration of the economic and historical circumstances that influence their development.

Hence, when examining a piece of literature, Marxist critics typically focus on how it mirrors the societal framework of the culture responsible for its creation. They could also examine how it represents bourgeois ideals or how it could be utilized to convince individuals to embrace their financial situation. At times, they might inquire if it effectively depicted class dynamics or the impacts of industrialization. Let us have a look at some questions posed by Marxist theorists for interpreting a text:

A. In what way does the work mirror the societal/historical circumstances?
B. In what part of the text is class conflict displayed as the root cause of struggle and tension?
C. Does the job promote or display capitalist or classicist ideals and hierarchical systems of power?
D. How does the work appear to advocate for Marxist ideas while also demonstrating a misguided belief that ultimately upholds the existing system?
E. In what areas does the work go against or break down its own structure?

These inquiries hold significance as they assist Marxist theory in preparing for a societal revolution and serving as a foundation for other critical theories that seek to ignite a revolutionary transformation. Marxist criticism argues that literature mirrors the economic and social conditions of the author's era and location. Literature is impacted by society and also has an impact on society, with Marxist critics highlighting the role of literature in molding social awareness.

Marxist critics examine how literature portrays social class, power dynamics, and oppression. They think that literature upholds prevailing ideologies and supports social class divides. Literature is perceived as a type of ideology that upholds cultural, political, and economic conventions. Marxist analyses examine how literature influences and mirrors social class identity by reflecting the realities of society. This critique entails examining the power dynamics between the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class). Marxist critics aim to recognize how literature either supports or questions these power dynamics within a specific society.

Marxist critics also analyze how literary form can either support or challenge social norms. They concentrate on how literary norms mirror class conflicts and social inequity. Marxist

criticism analyzes the structural aspects of literature, like characters, storyline, and symbolism, in order to expose the inherent class struggles present in them. Marxist literary critics examine the themes and language employed by authors to gain insight into the power dynamics that writing can represent. In George Orwell's "Animal Farm," Marxist critics would analyze how the pigs of the bourgeoisie class exploit the animals of the working class on the farm. The novel symbolizes the power dynamics between the ruling class and the working class in a communist society. In a critical perspective, Marxist analysis would examine how Orwell incorporates animal characters, simple storytelling, and harsh satire to contribute to the novel's overall criticism of communism and authority.

Finally, it may be noted that Marxist criticism is a theory of literature that examines how social and economic relationships impact literary works. This form of examination looks at social class disputes and power structures in society, examining how literature influences and mirrors cultural, political, and economic standards. Marxist literary analysts assess the language, structure, and themes of literature to enhance comprehension of the larger criticisms of contemporary society depicted in written pieces. The Marxist criticism lens exposes the ideological basis of literature and how it connects to social class dynamics, power, and resistance. Marxism has impacted many critics in the 20th century within the field of literature, contributing to the advancement of a comprehensive literary theory. The appearance of the radical critical movement in England during the 1930s, which influenced Leavis and his followers, demonstrates the broad appeal and credibility of a theory based on materialism. During the thirties, forties, and beyond, English critics, influenced by materialism, had to consider the significance of historical context in literature.

The increasing impact of Marxism on literary criticism has shifted the focus of appreciation for prominent nineteenth century fiction writers from abstract to concrete contexts in our modern era. If the prominent fiction writers of the nineteenth century seem like unwavering activists, much of the recognition should be attributed to the historicist principle that gained popularity through Marxist literary criticism. It is important to acknowledge that the Marxist perspective occupies a central position in current debates seeking approval. No matter if it is Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, deconstruction, or end of history theory, the goal remains the same: the belief that ordinary working classes have the power to alter the course of history.

Marxism has forced today's intellectuals and critics to rethink their limited focus on individual helplessness or the abstract idea of moral decay in the modern world. We know that Structuralism believed in the existence of highly resistant structures within language, society, and culture. Nonetheless, the structuralist theory failed to consider human initiative, a fundamental principle of Marxism, making it essentially deterministic. Marxism empowers the working masses to challenge the restrictive social environment. The modern bourgeoisie sought to refute the Marxist concept of change. Deconstruction was a different approach to criticize Marxism.

Deconstruction criticized the concept of the author or narrator as the main controlling element in a representation and denied the presence of a central point in the text. Additionally, it focused solely on the text itself rather than the author or work, aimed at challenging the transformative power of literature. Faced with these theories, Marxist criticism has developed even more complex arguments to tackle new inquiries. This can be seen in the writings of Marxist critics like Raymond Williams, Frederic Jameson, and Terry Eagleton, who effectively connect the literary piece with its creator. Marxism has furthered literary criticism by developing new materialist ideas on culture, ideology, realism, modernism, political unconscious, etc., to successfully challenge bourgeois theorists.

Marxist criticism emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the writer and the reader when engaging with a work of literature. Constructing meaning for a work to meet the positive humanist needs of our time is a challenging critical responsibility. What is the approach Marxist literary criticism should take when analyzing and interpreting a piece of literature? In response to this question, Frederic Jameson suggests the choice between studying the objective structures of a cultural text and focusing on interpretive categories or codes. The question is well formulated. Marxist criticism is intriguing because it considers both the author-text and reader-text, using either the author's time and context or the readers to analyze the text. In fact, Jameson stresses the importance of interpretation because a text for Marxist criticism must be relevant to both the past and present, with the goal of supporting current needs associated with the concept of radical transformation. This should provide us with a glimpse into the purpose of criticism that is motivated by the desire to steer historical circumstances in a new radical direction.

8.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

Marxism and Literature presents a provocative analysis of the connection between literature and Marxist beliefs. Williams disputes the oversimplified notion that literature simply

mirrors the economic foundation, advocating instead for a more fluid and reciprocal connection between literature and society. He also stresses the importance of human involvement and innovation in creating literary pieces, underscoring the intricate and varied aspects of this connection.

8.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying this Unit, you should have the knowledge and skills to:

- recognize and assess theoretical advancements after Marx.
- show a knowledgeable and analytical grasp of Raymond Willaims' ideas.
- show a deep understanding of the main issues in the application of Marxist theory.
- understand how literature as a field remains critical of and changes with the current era.
- create arguments in consideration of various intellectual and historical backgrounds.

8.4 Glossary

- **Base:** The ways of producing goods in a particular community.
- **Cultural materialism:** Raymond Williams developed a theory stating that cultural texts, which are designed to convey meaning to an audience, are created in a manner similar to consumer items. This means that the meaning they convey is shaped by various factors before, during, and after their production.
- **Ideology:** A framework of concepts and principles that underlie economic or political theories, frequently criticized in Marxist examination for benefiting the dominant class.
- **New Left:** a leftist political movement in the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s that was largely led by students.
- **Paradoxical:** something that appears to be contradictory.
- **Superstructure:** The area where cultural processes, products, institutions (legal, social, political), religions, etc. are created.

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Questions

1. What is one of the key contributions of Raymond Williams to Marxist literary theory?

   a) Structuralism

   b) Deconstruction

   c) Cultural Materialism

   d) Psychoanalytic Theory

   Answer: c) Cultural Materialism

2. Which movement did Raymond Williams belong to?

   a) Frankfurt School

   b) New Left

   c) Symbolist Movement

   d) Existentialism

   Answer: b) New Left

3. Who made the' base/superstructure' model of socio-economic relations?

   a) Marx

   b) Galilio

   c) Bacon

   d) Hobbes

   Answer: a) Marx

4. What does Williams argue about the term 'literature'?

   a) It encompasses only fiction.

   b) It excludes valuable written works.

   c) It is synonymous with culture.

   d) It should remain a specialized field.

   Answer: b) It excludes valuable written works.

5. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams critiques which theory for ignoring history?

   a) Formalism

   b) Romanticism

   c) Humanism

d) Postcolonialism

Answer: a) Formalism

6. According to Williams, what is the correct relationship between literature and society?

   a) Literature reflects only dominant ideologies.

   b) Literature is isolated from cultural practices.

   c) Literature interacts dialectically with society.

   d) Literature is purely aesthetic.

   Answer: c) Literature interacts dialectically with society.

7. What role does Williams assign to human agency in his Marxist theory?

   a) It is marginal in shaping history.

   b) It is central to altering social structures.

   c) It is irrelevant compared to economic forces.

   d) It leads to deterministic outcomes.

   Answer: b) It is central to altering social structures.

8. Who among the following is not a member of The Frankfurt School?

   a) Marcuse

   b) Horkheimer

   c) Adorno

   d) Arnold

   Answer: d) Arnold

9. What is Williams's critique of traditional Marxist base-superstructure theory?

   a) It overemphasizes the superstructure.

   b) It simplifies the role of economic base.

   c) It overlooks human creativity.

   d) It ignores the role of language.

   Answer: b) It simplifies the role of economic base.

10. The premise of Marxist Criticism is that literature can be viewed as_____.

    a) psychological

    b) ideological

    c) biological

d) physiological

Answer: b) ideological

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short on the “creative process and Marxist theory.”
2. Discuss Marxism and Literature.
3. What is the Marxist perspective on the connection between Ideology and Literature?
4. According to Marx, how is the basis of a culture established?
5. What is “superstructure”?

8.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. What are the primary characteristics of the Marxist literary theory?
2. What does Williams think of the literary criticism of Marx himself and of earlier Marxist criticism?
3. What were social implications associated with categories of "taste" and "sensibility"? To whom did these appeal? What factors led to a perceived need for a field of "criticism"?

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology*. London: Verso, 1982.

---. Ed. *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*. London: Blackwell, 1989.

Ward, J.P. *Raymond Williams*. Cardiff: Uni. of Wales Press, 1981

Williams, Raymond. “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory.” New Left Review, no. I/82, 1973, https://newleftreview.org/I/82/raymond-williams-base-and-superstructure-in-marxist-cultural-theory

---. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). Revised edition, Oxford UP, 1985.

---. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford UP, 1977.

---. *The Long Revolution*. 1961. Broadview Press, 2001.

Unit-9: Feminism

Structure

9.0 Introduction

In the contemporary world, no matter where we are located, we are all part of the feminist discourse. I hope you will agree with me that today all of us believe in human potential. Society has now recognized biological identity as one of the many parameters which decide who we are. As we grow and evolve, several factors affect us to eventually create our unique identity. You are born into what the society has predetermined as a male identity or a female identity. But this is regressive as many of us do not feel manly or womanly in the true sense. As such, feminism today is a broad umbrella term that focuses on empowerment of people who are forced to conform to pre-determined identities that are rigidly set by a society that has been universally (with rare exceptions) dominated by men. Traditionally, feminism has been an engagement with issues concerning women.

As a theoretical perspective, Feminism examines and challenges social, political, and economic inequalities based on gender. It seeks to dismantle patriarchy, advocating for women's rights, gender equity, and the inclusion of marginalized identities. Feminism has evolved through distinct waves: first-wave feminism focused on legal rights, such as suffrage; second-wave

feminism addressed social and cultural inequalities; third-wave feminism embraced intersectionality, considering race, class, and sexuality; and fourth-wave feminism engages with digital activism and global gender justice. Feminist theory intersects with disciplines like Marxism, postcolonialism, and queer theory, analysing how power, privilege, and identity shape human experiences and institutions.

9.1 Objectives

Our objectives in this Unit are to:

- understand the term 'feminism'
- overview the various phases of feminism
- engage with differing perspectives on feminism
- consider oppositions to feminism

9.2 Feminism

9.2.1 Origin of Feminism

'Feminism' as a recognized, formal movement evolved in Europe with the explicit purpose of voicing the concerns of women so that women feel valued and empowered. Women have traditionally been assigned to the domestic sphere with limited, even negative, access to economic participation. While male education and employment is universally accepted, for women this is largely a privilege. If we revisit ancient political, social, economic, scientific texts, and works of art and literature, we realise that these works have been created, with rare exceptions, by men. *Where are the women*? *Why are there no women*? These questions make us feminist. Across the globe, whether we are located in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Central/East/South Asia or East Europe, we find ourselves constantly involved with gender-based issues that constitute our social and **ethical** codes. Look around you and you will realise that what we consider as morally correct or improper is a trained and internalized reaction. How should married couples interact? What are the duties of men and women? What are the legal and natural rights of the LGBT community? The minute we tackle these ponderous questions we challenge patriarchy which believes that men are stronger than women and are the natural head of their families. Feminism is

a fight for equality among sexes ideally without discrimination in jobs, wages, promotion and access to housing projects and medical facilities.

As a formal movement, feminism began formidably in Britain during the industrial revolution. Industrialization in England had resulted in urbanization, overcrowded cities and increasing crimes against women. In Wollstonecraft's time, women could get education only as an indulgence or special treatment while employment remained out of question. These were times when women were seen as liability, not an asset. Once she was married, her husband gained legal ownership of whatever she possessed; the husband became the legal guardian of their children. The woman was completely at the mercy of her husband. It was expected that a woman was only useful as a wife and a mother. If the marriage broke down, the woman would invariably find herself on the road with nothing to sustain her economically or emotionally since all her possessions and properties now legally belonged to her husband. We can clearly get the broad picture of a society where a woman had virtually no identity of her own. A woman's existence was justified only if she could look after her family. Wollstonecraft made a forceful argument for women education and gainful employment. She ignited a revolution across Europe which gradually gained momentum, and today empowers people who are victims of patriarchal apathy. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published her seminal book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which is generally considered as the first work on feminism.

You will find it rather interesting that the movement for women empowerment was not met by opposition. By and large, women were heard and accommodated. Their social status improved. However, the term *feminism* only began to be used in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The French philosopher Charles Fourier is generally credited with coining it. In 1872 Fourier used *feminism* to describe "the illness of womanly qualities appearing in men." Obviously, it was derogatory. However, *feminism* gained acceptance and was used as a term to describe the universal oppression of women in a male-centric society. While we obviously feel the excitement and appreciate the enthusiasm of the first flush of feminism, we ought to remember that this was the beginning of a movement that would gain momentum and sweep and grow beyond its prescribed parameter. At this historical juncture in the nineteenth century, feminism was largely elitist and limited to the educated, wealthy middle-class European women across Europe and America. This should not make us forget that in America, women of British ancestry were vocal over African American rights. Today we are bang on into feminism – a movement that defies

straightforward interpretation and is impassioned about the rights of those who are forced to adhere to biological binaries (male/female).

All of us, irrespective of where we come from, have experienced sexual hierarchy and have unknowingly or purposively been part of it. Feminism has made us conscious of patriarchal bigotries. Today feminism encompasses a wide range of resistances to liberate those who are not allowed to freely express their sexual identity, and to enable women to have a voice in how their bodies are dealt with and the employment they aspire to. Depending on the thrust of feminism, it is usually subdivided into various types or categories. It is also interpreted on a historical trajectory that is studied as *waves* of feminism. An extremely complex movement, feminism is a global phenomenon to which many nations and regions/locale/groups have added a local sensibility. It is imperative that we are sentient to the various manifestations of feminism which is a movement for sexual diversities, liberation and empowerment.

Check your progress:

1. Feminism is a fight for equality among sexes ideally without discrimination in jobs, wages, promotion and access to housing projects and medical facilities. (True / False)
2. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published her seminal book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which is generally considered as the first work on feminism. (True / False)

9.2.2 Waves of Feminism

We have a sense of the complexity involved in feminism. It is commonplace to chart the movement chronologically as it enables the movement to be seen in phases according to what were its central concerns. However, this kind of analysis has a Western slant as it takes into account the way feminism grew across the Western hemisphere. The word *waves* was used in 1968 by an American journalist, Martha Weinman Lear in her article, 'The Second Feminist Wave: What Do These Women Want?' published in *New York Times*. The term became a descriptor of the nature of feminism according to its goals and the years that it took to reach the goals. In keeping with the issues that engaged the feminists over time, three major waves have been identified, which gradually ebbed as they achieved their proposed goals. Since 2020, it is generally thought that we

are in the midst of an ongoing fourth wave. The concept of *waves* has provided us insight into feminism and its achievements. The limitation, however, of mapping feminism according to the wave-theory is, as we have emphasised earlier, that it does not account either for the early phases of feminism or the trajectory of feminism in the non-Western hemisphere.

The *first* wave of feminism began in 1848 with the Seneca Convention in New York. The main issue that women fought for was the right to vote. They felt that they could work toward better employment opportunities, equal wages and rights if they could vote and participate in forming the government. In July 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, with some of her friends and allies, arrived at the Abolitionist Convention at Seneca where these women were treated shabbily and not allowed to speak. Stanton held an impromptu National Convention of Women on July 19-20, attended by over 300 people. The convention brought out a *Declaration of Sentiments*, which was signed by 68 women and 32 men. This declaration detailed the unjust treatment meted out to women.

The first wave pitted against the *cult of domesticity* – a husband having legal ownership over his wife, her wealth, and their children. The inspiration for a woman mass movement came from the French Revolution in which a phenomenal number of women had participated. In 1791, the female French playwright Olympes de Gouges wrote a 'Declarations of the Rights of Woman and Female Citizen' where she asserted that "Women are born free and are men's equal in law. Social distinctions can only be founded on social utility." (https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/feminism-first-wave-0) The first wave feminists similarly contended that the sexes were equal, and women were arbitrarily considered secondary to men. The first wavers demanded that women should have voting rights, property ownership rights as well as reproductive rights.

In 1916, Margaret Sanger opened the first ever birth control clinic at Brooklyn to disseminate information about birth control and planned parenthood. She distributed contraceptives and discussed abortion despite stringent laws, legal backlash and threat of imprisonment. She established ABCL (American Birth Control League) in 1921 to promote birth control clinics and enable women to plan families. In 1920, after more than 70 years, the 19th amendment was passed in the United States which gave women the right to vote, irrespective of their colour. Various newspapers and magazines, such as *The Lily, The Lady's Studies* were all

women publications that contributed to the first wave in a big way by giving women a platform to discuss their grievances and ideas.

The first wave lost its impetus once women secured voting rights. Nevertheless, it was a pioneering effort to give women a voice and an identity of their own. Women of colour too participated in it and made notable contributions despite being sidelined. The movement remained by and large a White middle-class movement canvasing the rights of White women. Women of colour who joined protests and marches were debarred from speaking and forced to walk behind the White protestors. In 1851, while delivering her famous 'Aint I a Woman' speech at the Women's Rights Convention, the African-American Sojourner Truth was shouted down by many White women. It remains a bitter truth that White feminists gave tacit support to structural racism though they were by and large abolitionists. In 1837, the first ever Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women was held by women activists in New York. (https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/feminism-first-wave-0) Feminism gained much by the relentless activism of the African American feminists whose collective effort led to the second wave feminism.

a. Second Wave of Feminism

The 1960s ushered in the Second Wave of Feminism and *women liberation*. In 1949 Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* which had her famous sentence, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" demonstrating how women are gendered into believing that they are not as efficient as men, and therefore incapable of independent decision making. As women became aware of arbitrary impositions on their sex, they began demanding control over their bodies and employment opportunities. Betty Friedan's publication, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) triggered a feminist wave across the United States. *The Feminine Mystique* was a compendium and analyses of surveys and interviews conducted by Friedan to assess the degree of frustration among women who had to accept being stay-at-home wives and mothers. She strongly criticized the *mystique* that was deliberately projected and perpetuated to encourage women to believe that true feminity was finding fulfilment in taking care of home and children and not entering either politics or active employment. She called *feminine mystique* "a problem that had no name." A 1969 essay by Carol Hanisch popularised the phrase, *The Personal is Political*. *Personal is political* argued that every woman's personal condition was not natural but politically manipulated. To change a woman's condition mandated political change. The second wavers organised

"consciousness-raising" groups where they promoted the concept of sisterhood. As a result of concerted activism, J.F. Kennedy soon signed and sanctioned Equal Pay in 1963. Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited employers from sex-based discrimination.

During the 1968 Miss America **pageant** at New Atlantic, protestors said that women were being treated as cattle and made to forcibly conform to sexist standards of beauty set by the Whites. Items like cosmetics, false eyelashes, high heeled footwear, playboy magazines and brassieres were burnt in a symbolic freedom trash can. 1973 saw women win the right to abortion and access to birth control pills. Marital rape became criminal, though many states across America did not criminalise it till 1990s. Women-only spaces were encouraged as it was believed that certain issues could only be resolved by women. The term eco-feminism was coined and women were seen as central to the concerns of environmentalism.

In 1973 NBFO – National Black Feminist Organisation – was formed by Black women activists to highlight and address the racism and sexism that their community endured. Their concerted efforts helped end forced sterilisation of people of colour and people with disabilities. After initial hiccups, the second wave of feminism gave space to lesbianism which had been derogatorily labelled as "Lavender Menace" by Betty Friedan. Thanks to the second wavers, *Women Studies* was introduced as an academic subject for the first time in 1970 at San Diego State University. The second wave of feminism was remarkable in that feminism was no longer merely about achieving equality with men. More and more women believed that women had distinctive needs which had to be addressed per se, not in conjunction with the patriarchy. Generally three strands of feminism are identified in the second wave – mainstream or liberal, radical and cultural. Liberal feminism is about giving women the same opportunities that are available to men. Radical feminism focuses on female oppression at the hands of men. Cultural feminism believes that a woman-centric society would be better than patriarchy.

b. Third Wave of Feminism

Intersectionality is at the core of the third wave feminism. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term refers to the various social factors that collectively shape an individual. These social factors range across a variety of power structures like racism, caste, gender, patriarchy, ethnicity, class and religion which oppress, suppress or strengthen in endless ways. The third wavers believed that feminism was no longer merely about gendering but about how to recover the individual essence and express one's unique self. For the third wavers it did not matter what

you wanted as long as you were not apologetic about it. Gender and the biological self was seen as a construct. Even before an individual could begin discovering and understanding the self, society forced the person to live according to pre-conceived notions of sexual and social identity. Judith Butler's book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) made the third wave feminists re-visit and question the very foundation of identity. Butler's main premise was that identity and gender is performative, while the sexed biological identity given at birth is an arbitrary, limiting construct. Influenced by this, the third wavers refused to ascribe to correct/proper feminism which forced women to conform and become undifferentiated and homogeneous. Their contention was that each individual should be comfortable being whosoever in whatsoever way feasible to them. Unlike the first and second wavers, the third wavers were not anti-patriarchy: to them masculinity, girliness and androgyny, all were alternative manifest ways to bring out the self. They embraced high end fashion, cosmetics and other symbols of sexuality which the earlier feminists saw as objectifying women.

In 1991, Anita Faye Hill, an African American lawyer levied charges of sexual misconduct on the U.S. Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas. She was tried by an all- White all-male judiciary and lost her case despite clearing the polygraph test. Clarence Thomas was successfully inducted into the Supreme Court. Women, especially women of colour were appalled. In 1992, Rebecca Walker, a Black feminist, wrote in her article, *Becoming the Third Wave*: "I write this as a plea to all women, especially women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation… this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger… if they do not prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave." And, the *third wave* began. A careful reading of Walker's statement reveals that the third wavers considered themselves as *postfeminists* for whom men were no longer a competition: their main aim was to help women and the gender-atrophied achieve their intimate identity.

Feminist punk subculture emerged in the 1990s. It created music around difficult issues like rape, domestic violence and female empowerment. *Riot Grrrl* incited and encouraged women to resist female stereotyping. This group entered a male-dominated music scene and provided an example to women to embrace their individuality and defy stereotypes. Eve Ensler's radical play, *Vagina Monologues* (1996) brought into public discussion issues around sexuality, like consensual and non-consensual sex and sexual violence.

The third wave insisted that a person had to consciously reconstruct an authentic sexual identity which would correspond to what that person felt. Transgender and homosexual activism was an intrinsic part of the movement. Unlike the second wave feminists, the third wavers did not outrightly condemn pornography, which they felt could be a site of resistance rather than exploitation. One of their central consciousness raising issues was whether feminism should be about male-bashing or about empowering the sexually marginalized. It is remarkable how the third wavers rose against categories; even feminism was suspect. They refused to look at gender as us versus them. The third wave did not see gender and gender rights as an exclusive category but as a dynamic trope that was constantly evolving through the interplay of several other factors like ethnicity, cultural biases, economic factors, personal preferences, etc.

c. Fourth Wave of Feminism

The advent of the 21st century has seen the world getting integrated in an unprecedented way, thanks to the worldwide web of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The anonymous and genderless interactive space of the internet has enabled feminism to become inclusive and diverse. People of colour, transgenders and LGBT community as well as men who do not ascribe to traditional masculine tropes are now part of the fourth wave. Intersectionality remains a core concern with the fourth wavers, who celebrate eccentricities and non-conformism. Thanks to the ubiquity of AI, feminist activism is everywhere – the streets, home, workplace and entertainment.

Though it is extremely difficult to define the origins of the fourth wave since it was spontaneous and online, the movement began in 2006 with Tarana Burke, a sexual assault survivor. She launched the #MeToo movement to generate awareness of sexual abuse at workplace and home. Tara L. Conley started Hashtag Feminism in 2013 to initiate awareness and conversation around feminist discourse so women could be empowered. 2017 saw actress Alyssa Milano raise sexual abuse allegations against producer Harvey Weinstein using #MeToo which encouraged millions of women across the world to share similar experiences. Many men too came forward and talked about being sexually abused. 2011 saw a transnational *slutwalk* to protest rape culture that blamed the way women dressed as the reason for rape. Across the world, women took to streets at night to protest and campaign. Many women talked about their experience as rape survivours. Donald Trump's election in 2017 witnessed a Women's March across the globe. Approximately 5 million women participated to protest against Trump's misogyny.

Fourth wave feminism has made use of social media to raise issues of gender, sexual violence and trans-rights. It is because of their global consciousness raising and activism that today we have anti-sexual harassment cells at workplace and people resist victim shaming of rape/assault victims.

9.2.3 Types of Feminism

We understand that feminism is about empowering people who do not ascribe to the arbitrary heterosexual binaries of male/female. The movement is generally understood and analysed from the Western perspective. However, we have to be aware that gendering is as ancient as the human race. Since we exist as communities, we have created laws that have gradually lost their relevance but are in circulation because of lack of initiative. However, society has always had people who resist conformism, and it is because of them that change happens for the best. The way we see it, feminism began as an all-White movement where the coloured were allowed minimal participation. But with consistent effort, the voices of the marginalised races and the LGBT became manifest. Here we will discover some distinct feminist trends.

i. Black Feminism

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement swept across America to end racial segregation. African American women actively fought for their rights. They protested against feminism as a White woman's movement that sidelined the concerns of the African American community. The black woman realised that their experience was unique and complex since they had to fight sexism, racism and poverty along with gendering. NBFO (National Black Feminist Organisation) black activists, thinkers and writers like Kimberely Crenshaw and Pauli Murray highlighted intersectionality as the central issue in Black lives which have queer people among them whose experiences are unique. In 1963, Alice Walker coined the term **womanism** to describe a coloured woman's experience of gender complicated by race and socio-economic status. Womanism and black feminism are interchangeable terms.

ii. Marxist and Socialist Feminism

According to Karl Marx capitalism created and accumulated surplus wealth to exploit the proletariat, i.e. the worker/labour who was not allowed to share the profits. Capitalism was seen as leading to patriarchy where man accumulated and the woman remained slave-like. However, Marxism did not account for sexism and racism which factored in perpetuating patriarchy. In the 1960s there was a realization that gender legal parity did not translate into correcting patriarchy.

As such socialist Marxism came to existence. It researched ways of empowering women who were working emotionally and socially but were not being accounted for economically. Today, it is because of the concerted efforts of these socialist feminists that women get paid maternity and child-care leave, and single mothers state support.

iii. Consumer Feminism

Consumer feminism or commodity feminism is an irresponsible and derogatory use of feminism. Here woman power is equated with a woman's purchasing power. Feminism is no longer about helping women gain equal opportunities and legal empowerment but about selling feminism as a concept that focuses on the kind of commodities women buy and their bodies and hairstyles. Money purchasing power is seen as synonymous with feminist empowerment where women are objectified and commodified. This kind of pseudo feminism has come under much censure. Generally, consumer feminism can be traced back to the 1920s when a post war generation of women – called flappers in the U.S. – focused on short hairstyles and short dresses to express their individuality and defy anxiety.

iv. Lipstick Feminism

This brand of feminism was part of third wave feminism. It reclaimed respect for women who liked to put on makeup and wear high heels and fashionable clothes which had been seen as symbols of woman objectification by the second wavers. Lipstick feminism became a symbol of choice and defiance of the establishment. It was an attempt to claim female autonomy.

Check your progress:

1. The *first* wave of feminism began in 1848 with the Seneca Convention in New York. (True / False)
2. In 1963, Alice Walker coined the term "womanism" to describe a coloured woman's experience of gender complicated by race and socio-economic status. (True / False)

9.2.4 Opposition to Feminism

Feminism has given a voice and space to women and individuals who do not ascribe to the traditional/conservative male/female binary. Nevertheless there are many who feel that feminism has lost its relevance. They believe that women have gained a strong foothold in the corporate

sector and give stiff competition to men in academics as well as jobs that were male bastions. It is often held by contra-feminists that feminists are misandrists who believe in male-bashing. Feminists are generally considered to be home-wreckers and are held responsible for broken marriages and broken homes.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the concept of feminism
- grasp the origin and development of feminism
- identify the waves of feminism
- get a broad picture of the types of feminism
- identify the central features and personalities of feminism

9.4 Glossary

- **androgyny:** combination of masculine and feminine traits
- **apathy:** indifference and hatred
- **gender-atrophied:** unable to grow because of gendering that destroys natural growth
- **pageant:** beauty/fashion show
- **patriarchal bigotries:** arbitrary preferential treatment to men and a second-hand treatment to women, a negative treatment to the LGBT
- **tropes:** images
- **ubiquity:** present everywhere

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions

1. The term "waves" was coined by _____. (**Martha Weinman Lear**)
2. _____ criticized the stay-at-home culture for women. (**Betty Friedan**)
3. American women got the right to vote in the year _____. (**1920**)

4. #Metoo Movement was started by _____. (**Tarana Burke**)

5. The term "feminine mystique" refers to

a. female beauty

b. women education

c. woman empowerment

d. women are most happy at home

6. 'Cult of domesticity' is best described as

a. home is the best place

b. women are properties owned by their men

c. home management is an art

d. women are owners of their home

7. Rebecca Walker is

a. an African American feminist

b. famous for the phrase 'third wave'

c. wrote "I am not a post-feminism feminist"

d. all the above

8. Match the following:

1. Eve Ensler	a. Mary Wollstonecraft
2. Freedom Trash Can	b. Third Wave
3. Riot Grrrls	c. Vagina Monologues
4. Vindication of the Rights of Women	d. Marxist Feminism
5. Women are Proletariat	e. 1968 Miss America pageant

Answer: 1-c, 2-e, 3-b, 4-a, 5-d.

9. NBFO was formed by _____ women in 1973. (**Black**)

10. The term _____, which is at the core of the third wave feminism, was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. (**Intersectionality**)

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. How did the fourth wave of feminism spread?
2. What did the first wave protest?

3. Who is a contra-feminist?
4. What is lipstick feminism?
5. What is the purpose of hashtag feminism?

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Examine in detail feminism.'
2. Explain the different waves/phases of feminism.
3. Discuss feminism as a literary theory.

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life.* Duke University Press, 2017.

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Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* Routledge, 1990.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, & Class.* Random House, 1981.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique.* W.W. Norton & Company, 1963.

hooks, bell. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.* South End Press, 2000.

---. *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism.* South End Press, 1981.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches.* Crossing Press, 1984.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics.* Doubleday, 1970.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity.* London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* J. Johnson, 1792.

Web:

Adichie, Chimamanda. "We should all be Feminists". TEDx. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

---. "The Danger of a Single Story". TED. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

Unit-10: Post-Colonialism

Unit-11: Gayatri Spivak: 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism'

Structure

11.0 Introduction

Countries co-exist because of respect for national boundaries. This creates a peaceful world because every nation accepts the uniqueness of its neighbours and geographically distant nations. The earth becomes prosperous in every sense of the word as mutual respect promotes international trade and the movement of humanitarian aid. Nations are like a network of extended families where trust and support help them stay together. We must however not forget that humans paradoxically are community/social beings who have strong egos. As such, there is a constant power negotiation which causes fracture in society when someone starts to dominate and forces others to comply by creating **imperative** rules.

Literature is a mirror to this socio-cultural ethos. Gayatri Spivak analyses three English literary texts, which have been celebrated as feminist novels, to show how feminism advocated by Europe is prejudiced. Through detailed textual evidence, Spivak makes us understand that these

novels celebrate European culture by using derogatory language and imagery for colonies under their control, and by subtly nuancing Europe as culturally, ethically and intellectually superior. The novels have strong central characters who give us a visionary glimpse of an alternative world order where women live, dream and are emboldened to follow their dreams, but with a rider. These female icons of individualism remain in tacit complicity with Britain's empire building strategies. Spivak's astute critical analysis of *Jane Eyre*, *Frankenstein* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposes how women writers gained recognition and global acceptance by not challenging (even chumming up to) the European misadventure of global empiricism we today know as *imperialism*.

11.1 Objectives

Our objectives in this Unit are to:

- know our critic (author), Gayatri Spivak
- understand imperialism
- categorical imperative
- review the storyline of the "three texts"
- revisit feminism in the Romantic Age of British literature
- explore how imperialism defines and limits individualist feminism
- uncover strategies of excluding the non-European/ the non-Whites
- be aware of the need to have an inclusive world order

11.2 Gayatri Spivak: 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism'

11.2.1 Gayatri Spivak: A Short Introduction

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is an influential scholar, best known for her work in postcolonial theory, literary criticism, and feminist thought. Born in India, she gained global recognition with her translation and introduction of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976). Spivak describes herself as a "para-disciplinary, ethical philosopher," blending multiple fields in her scholarship. Her work explores themes of power, language, and marginalization, applying deconstruction to understand how the voices of the oppressed are silenced. Her famous essay, "Can

the Subaltern Speak?", challenges how marginalized groups are represented in academia and highlights the ethical responsibilities of intellectuals.

In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999), she critiques both Western philosophy and postcolonial theory, addressing issues of representation, ethics, and the politics of knowledge. In *Death of a Discipline* (2003), Spivak reflects on the future of comparative literature, arguing for a more global and interdisciplinary approach to literature and cultural studies. The collection of interviews titled *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990) captures her reflections on a variety of topics, from feminism to Marxism, offering a glimpse into her evolving thought.

11.2.2 Imperialism: A Critical Overview

All of us have heard and read about kingdoms and empires, their rise, their wars and their conquests. Let us revisit this fascinating subject to make sense of imperialism as empire building. A king is the head of the land over which he rules. Over-ambitious rulers who interfere in or capture other kingdoms create unrest and bad blood. When this happens excessively it is called imperialism. Though imperialism has existed since antiquity, the term was coined to specifically describe the French general, Napoleon Bonaparte's ambition to make France an absolutist, incontestable power in Europe. The term has since then been used widely to describe a country's unethical control over foreign lands to become a world power. Wikipedia describes imperialism as an umbrella term for strategies and ideologies that are created, perpetrated and circulated to maintain hegemonic sway. Central to imperialism is spreading inferiority complex among nationals who are under subjugation. This shamelessly enables imperialists to project themselves as capable and intelligent administrators and statesmen. Contemporary research has exposed the limitations and manufactured prejudices of Euro-centric and Western theories and philosophies like feminism and Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. We will be discussing these terms a little later.

11.2.3 Three Women's Texts: The Storyline

Three novels set in the nineteenth century are taken up by Spivak as case studies to demonstrate the tactics of imperialism. Readers and critics generally consider these as strong, progressive feminist statements. Spivak strips off their gloss to demonstrate how feminism here is an abettor to imperial ideology and intent. All the three novels have a strong storyline, which we

must know in order to understand and appreciate Spivak's essay. The following are the three novels:

***1. Jane Eyre*:** Written in 1847 by Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* is the story of a young British girl. Her life is extraordinary. She is an orphan who is bullied as a child but cannot be written off into the margins. Her spirit is remarkable: despite the torment in her life, she remains level headed. At home, her aunt treats her harshly and her cousins are nasty to her. Jane does not indulge in self-pity but shows incredible resilience by retreating to a room where there is a library. Later, she is sent to a girls' boarding house that has a formidable reputation. It is built around a typical nineteenth century British morality which considers women as secondary to men and meant to be trained into becoming ideal wives. Female friendship too is not appreciated as it is widely believed that women are irresolute with weak minds which worsen if women are allowed to mix freely. Jane has an extremely trying time at the boarding. She manages to make a friend, Helen Burns. However, Helen's health deteriorates and she dies of malnutrition. Jane is not allowed to meet her though she somehow manages to slink in to stay with Helen while she breathes her last.

Jane has a good heart and finally wins over the authority's confidence. She completes her education to eventually move out into the world. With a sound education and a perceptive mind, she clinches employment as a governess where she meets Rochester, her male **alter ego**. She saves the mansion from a fire that starts mysteriously. Rochester and Jane grow fond of each other and decide to marry. However, on their wedding day it is revealed that Rochester is already married. Jane's world is shattered. She learns that Rochester's wife, Bertha suffers from bouts of insanity and violent behaviour because of which she is kept in captivity. Jane leaves the mansion, upset over Rochester's deception.

In the ensuing years she inherits wealth and meets St. John Rivers, a missionary. Rivers makes a marriage proposal to her, justifying their prospects together as future missionaries to India where they could have an enviable lifestyle. Jane introspects and realises that her feelings for Rochester run deep. She returns to Thornfield to learn that Rochester's wife has burnt down the mansion and Rochester has become blind and lost a hand. Jane's love for Rochester does not waver. Despite Rochester's misgivings over how Jane's life could be unsettled after their marriage, Jane persuades him to marry her. The novel concludes with the two living companionably, with a son born to them after ten years of marital bliss, and Rochester's eyesight restored to some extent.

***2. Wide Sargasso Sea*:** The novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966 as an imaginative prequel to *Jane Eyre*. Its central character is Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife. The novelist Jean Rhys portrays to us Bertha's probable social, psychological and ethical trajectory. She tries to rationalize her insanity as a corollary to her exceptionally stressful social circumstances. Rhys draws upon her own life experiences as a Creole (person from the Caribbean islands in Central America) with European antecedents to paint Bertha's pain of rejection by the British and the Caribs who saw her as an outsider/interloper. Bertha's story is the unheard scream of a woman whose trauma is written into the margins by a society that celebrates itself as benevolent and compassionate. Her story ends with her committing suicide, which is considered **sacrilegious**. Paradoxically, her end enables Jane Eyre's story to blossom and reach its rosy conclusion.

Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is born as Antoinette to be later christened as Bertha, after her marriage, by Rochester. Antoinette is born to ex-plantation/slave owners who face animosity of the Caribbean natives. Apparently, the slave emancipation act has been passed and there has been a rebellion against plantation owners who are now devastated economically. Their ordeal does not make the natives sympathize with them. The White Creoles and their properties – even in ruins – translate into surviving symbols of racism and European convoluted cruelty. Antoinette's childhood is trauma personified where she internalises her mother's experience of being othered by her husband's European family members. Insanity seems to run in Antoinette's genes but the truth is more sinister. Their descent into a maelstrom of madness is their only way to cope with reality where there is only unabashed scorn for them.

Rochester's marriage proposal to Antoinette is a calculated move. Being the second child, he is a victim of the law of primogeniture. He acquires his wife's wealth and estate on marrying her. He treats her shabbily, stripping her off of her identity and taking her away from her homeland. He baptises her with the name, Bertha - which he considers appropriately British and suited to his status. Subsequently, he moves with her to England where alone and friendless, she becomes hysterical. Her deteriorating psychological condition hardens Rochester's resolve to be strict with her. He makes her a virtual prisoner who finally expresses her inordinate grief and inexorable anxiety by burning down the manor and committing suicide as an act of ultimate defiance. The Sargasso Sea that is in close proximity to her homeland becomes symbolic of her descent into irrevocable madness. The ocean currents across the Sargasso Sea are such that shipwrecks are an

inevitable feature here. The Bermuda triangle too lies here which is a no man's land – any ship or plane that has ever entered this area has never ever been retrieved.

***3. Frankenstein*:** An 1818 Gothic novel, *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley is the story of an ambitious university scholar's monstrous humungous creation. Victor Frankenstein is an ambitious young man who is devoted to studying natural sciences, occult and mathematics. His absolute one-minded absorption in studies ignite in him a passion to experiment with and create life in his private laboratory. He succeeds in creating a living monstrous creature with body parts and organs collected from corpses and animals. However, terrified by its awful appearance he mangles it and runs away from the lab. Later when he returns to his lab, he discovers that the monster is alive and absconding. Soon thereafter, a string of mysterious murders is reported which Frankenstein believes are committed by the monster. He intercepts it following his youngest brother's murder and his adopted sister's wrongful execution. In one of the most eloquent and moving passages in the novel, the monster tell Frankenstein about his agonising loneliness and society's indifference and hard-heartedness toward him despite his trying to befriend and help people in distress. He alternately pleads and demands Frankenstein to create a mate for him. With much misgiving, Frankenstein starts to work on a female humanoid in his lab. We once again find Frankenstein in his lab, trying to create a mate for the monster who now haunts the lab, anticipating a companion. On the verge of its completion when the monster's much awaited mate seems to be stirring to life, Frankenstein destroys it, dreading a probable "race of devils." Hurt and disappointed, the monster warns him that he will also destroy what is most precious to Frankenstein. Henceforth, Frankenstein dedicates himself single-mindedly to academics, and with time the monster becomes least of his concerns.

Eventually, on completion of his education he returns home to marry Elizabeth, his childhood sweetheart. The monster makes a sudden appearance and warns him of dire consequences. Frankenstein has reason enough to believe that the monster will kill him. However, he is shattered when his closest friend, Henry Clerval is found murdered. **Under scanner**, he escapes conviction because of lack of evidence. He now moves to Geneva where he solemnises his wedding. Elizabeth is soon found dead, and his father dies thereafter because of overwhelming grief and anxiety. The events prove too much for Frankenstein. He goes insane and has to be confined. Eventually, when he recovers, he tries to make the magistrate understand the threat the monster poses, only to be shocked and disappointed by human presumption and ignorance.

Nobody believes him. Frankenstein decides to take charge and seek vengeance on the monster for murdering his loved ones. He starts searching for the elusive monster who has now been living in hiding. Toward the novel's end we come across a dying Frankenstein imploring Robert Walton, an explorer, to continue his unfinished mission. The novel ends with the monster suddenly making an appearance out of nowhere and calling itself a fallen angel while grieving over Frankenstein's lifeless body, only to disappear into the mysterious vastness of the Arctic.

Check your progress:

1. Central to imperialism is the spread of an inferiority complex among the nations that are under subjugation. (True / False)
2. Three novels—*Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Frankenstein*—set in the nineteenth century, are analyzed by Spivak as case studies to demonstrate the tactics of imperialism. (True / False)

11.2.4 Revisiting 19th Century Imperialism

Nineteenth century in Europe is hailed as a Romantic Age on the threshold of a New World where possibilities appeared as infinitesimally immense. On the one hand industrialisation had come to England and on the other America seemed to have emerged as a continent which could be beneficially exploited. With its zealous colonising agenda, England started promoting European hegemony. Across England and its colonies, racism was deliberately cultivated and *White* was promoted as a marker of an inherently superior race. *Native* was used pejoratively to describe people who were non-White and had minimal or zero exposure to the Western way of life. It was Britain's imperialist strategy to manufacture a political, social and economic discourse where contexts were exaggerated and selectively reported to fabricate non-European cultures as hellish, ignorant, even cannibalistic.

A wave of unprecedented prosperity swept across the nineteenth century England which celebrated the individual as never before. The recent French Revolution (1789-1799) inspired philosophers and artists to resist institutionalised injustice. Women novelists came to the fore and began to assess and re-define the status of women in a male-centric society. These novelists are considered among the first progressive feminist individualists. Gayatri Spivak finds this problematic. She draws our attention to the occlusion of non-Whites from the pages of these much-

felicitated novelists where heroism is courage to defy set ways of thinking though resolution is reconciliation to patriarchal norms that accommodate and adapt, but remain largely unchanged.

The non-European turf, whether America, India or the Arctic fascinates nineteenth century Europe. It feeds into the presumption that the Orient is barbaric which the Whites as a morally superior race have the righteous prerogative to civilize. All of us know that this self-congratulatory missionary zeal dehumanized and objectified the non-White. The women novelists, their female protagonists and their men – all wear racial blinkers, have prejudices, and are unabashedly racist. The novels insidiously shake hands with "the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission." ***Cathected*** draws our attention to the twisted ways in which imperialists justified empire building and imperialist looting by manufacturing social contexts to misrepresent colonies as crude and justify imperialism as a blessed *mission* by naturally enlightened and civil Whites.

Spivak demonstrates how the British "worlded" their colonial subjects by making them internalise an inferiority complex toward their own land. By systematically surveying the colonised land, its resources and knowledge systems, the British positioned themselves as masters who began to not only re-interpret the but also to interrupt and disrupt – i.e. *interpolate* – the prevalent ethical, normative and ideological structures. The manifest intent of this imperialist strategy was to hegemonize England as an indisputable sovereign. The colonial masters now gradually and successfully trained their colonial subjects to idealise the British metropolitan culture. Metropolis with its elite capitalist and labour-intensive urban culture became *the* touchstone to universal progress and inclusivity. Across colonies, British lifestyle – its mannerisms, accents and ethics – became an enviable asset, the lack of which was internalized as barbarism. Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher of the Enlightenment period provided grounds for justifying eugenics or selective racial breeding and segregation. Kant's *Categorical Imperative* insisted that because human beings are naturally wise and rational, they should follow their conscience, heed their inner voice and implement it on others.

The British brainwashed *natives* into internalising the colonial point of view and doubting their own culture and belief systems. In a brilliant imperialist manoeuvre, the natives were employed to retrieve experiential/empirical facts and artefacts which were then re-interpreted and "worlded" by the colonialists. Spivak calls this an "ethnocentric and reverse-ethnocentric benevolent double bind" which reduces the native to nothing but a mere informant who is

completely excluded from validating/analysing the data that comes through him. The British were free to manipulate and distort the data while the native could no longer doubt or question the authenticity of the discourse thus generated. Imperialism virtually coerces the "colonial subject" to "immolate" his existence. The native is subsequently rendered unequal to the colonizer who now "consolidates his imperialist *self*" (italics mine). After decimating the native culture, the "imperialist *self*" enacts unequal laws and erects an "alien ideology." The native initially finds it difficult to relate to this ideology but soon accepts it as his lived reality and "as Truth." The native is *othered*: he becomes an absolute outsider to what the colonialists construct as acceptable or socially correct.

Spivak convincingly argues that nineteenth century European novelistic tradition, even if critical of imperialism, portrays a "domesticated Other" who internalises his abjection, to only negotiate, manage and live with it as an empirical truth. The native is inscribed as an imbecile who has to be limited and denied agency of selfhood. Nineteenth-century European novelists depict instances in their stories where the Middle East is portrayed as a restricted, undemocratic space, acknowledged only if it contributes to the imperialist agenda of "subject constitution." Invariably, characters who pose a challenge to the imperial stratagem, or cannot be contained within the system, disappear from the main narrative, like Frankenstein's monster, Rhys' Christophine and Bronte's Bertha.

11.2.5 A Short Introduction to Feminism in the 19th century

At the advent of the nineteenth century women found themselves undervalued in a patriarchal society where they had no employment and were considered secondary to men. Their social role was mainly as companions to men: whatever education they managed to get was geared to making them good wives. Feminism as we understand it today began in England with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) where she said that women should have access to equal education, self-determination and employment opportunities. The focus on women rights led to a number of women movements across Europe and America. This was the 'First Wave of Feminism.' Today feminism has moved beyond women issues vis a vis man.

The first wave of feminism came under much criticism since it was seen as largely a middle-class movement limited to the urban, "metropolitan" White woman. The movement took no cognisance of the non-Whites and women of colour. This was a movement where *feminists*

blatantly turned a blind eye to the inhumane and brutal racism practised under the pretext of missionary zeal to humanize *savage* colonial subjects. Women writers wrote on women issues which were welcomed, even accommodated by the forward thinking as long as they portrayed the White Man as a well-meaning philanthropic evangelist, and did not raise uncomfortable questions on White racist supremacy.

Check your progress:

1. The British brainwashed 'natives' into internalising the colonial point of view and doubting their own culture and belief systems. (True / False)
2. Nineteenth-century European novelists depict instances in their stories where the Middle East is portrayed as a restricted, undemocratic space, acknowledged only if it contributes to the imperialist agenda of "subject constitution." (True / False)

11.2.6 Critical Analysis of the Imperialist Strain in the Three Feminist Novels

Every novel is a narrative which is historically determined. *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Frankenstein* are beyond doubt works of imagination shaped by the social and ideological concerns of their times. Gayatri Spivak insists that we need to move beyond the fascination with women as the central issue in these feminist novels. This is necessary so that we understand how nineteenth century feminism was complicit with the Euro-centric hegemonic intent to destroy native cultures. She exposes how these writers made their women protagonists privileged and heard while removing the non-European and the natives from the story line.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is an alternative to women as traditional caregivers and creators of life. He is a critique of an imperialist who plays with lives, wilfully granting mercy and death. His experiments to create living beings evince "incidental imperialist sentiment." The Kantian assumption that human rationality and will should be imposed on others for the greatest good appears to justify Frankenstein's condescending attitude toward his creations: "My duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention." This "dark side of imperialism understood as social mission" does not value the life of a native. Frankenstein abhors the idea of a probable propagation of "a race of devils… who might make the very existence of… species of man… precarious and full of terror." The *species* – obviously the White race – feels sorry for the natives but still considers them naturally inferior and undeserving of equal treatment.

Spivak discusses American natives who were seen as non-human within the **Caliban-Ariel** polarity. Interestingly, though Shelley's creature weeps over the mistreatment of American natives, his own mistreatment is justified by the author: it is a foregone conclusion that this Caliban-like creature has "properties" adverse to civilized society. Spivak highlights the "selfed" nature of the European libertarian for whom Europe and its culture are distinctively superior, with ethical and moral standards that no other society has or can ever attain. The monster's persecution and extermination are justified as acceptable because "*properties*… not… contained by *proper* measures" are rightly subdued by force according to Frankenstein.

Frankenstein is written as an epistolary – a novel in the form of letters – where the letters are received, read and interpreted by a respectable White woman, Margaret Saville. Saville remains an entity outside the novel's active periphery presumably because she is White and therefore exemplary. A woman of colour like Safie, however has to perforce, even with misgiving, alter her norms and ways of thinking to be accepted by the hegemonic Whites. Safie and Frankenstein, both disappear from the novel's margins into existential obscurity. This replicates the feminist duplicity that Spivak exposes in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Jane is a privileged and educated orphan; her foster family gives her a hard time to which she responds by retreating into her privileged cocoon with its exclusive reading list and private space. Her emotional and social growth has its challenges but she exhibits exemplary patience and endurance that eventually has her marrying a partially blind and much chastised Rochester. Jane's remarkable graph of success in the face of overwhelming odds is counterbalanced by the trajectory of ignominy, shame and annihilation that her alter-id Bertha Mason undergoes. Bertha, like Frankenstein, is not your typical European White woman. She comes from the West Indies with European ancestry which makes her good marriage material but dispensable to the Euro-centric hermeneutics. Her emotional and social trauma are treated as delinquent as she is from a European settler's family. While Jane's intellectual and emotional trauma are *schooled* and sublimated, Bertha's trauma is criminalised and imprisoned.

Woman assertion as individuals was accepted and encouraged among the accepted White coterie but unforgivable among *others*. Spivak bares the shameless audacity of nineteenth century individual feminism which she argues was in collusion with imperialism. This much celebrated first wave of feminism overlooked, even accepted, self-immolation and culpable homicide of the colonial as long as it did not disturb the imperialist *status quo*. Spivak sees a parallel in Bertha's

immolation and *Sati* in colonial India. The British exploited *Sati* to further their territorial aggrandisement while making contrarian official statements: imperialism encouraged "good wives" who silently participated in pushing the nation to extreme despair. Bertha's death, accepted as a bittersweet fact by the other characters in the novel, is similar to our being "insufficiently knowledgeable about the history of the legal manipulation of widow-sacrifice in the entitlement of the British government in India."

Wide Sargasso Sea demonstrates the domino effects of imperialism in colonies that apparently were not under the direct command of England. Rhys' Antoinette – later re-christened Bertha by Rochester – is a Creole who is born and brought up in Jamaica. She comes from a privileged background since her ancestors were plantation owners who had come as settlers from Europe. When we meet Antoinette, the plantation is in despair and Antoinette in a no-man's land. The free men of Jamaica and their families resent the very presence of the Whites here. Antoinette's desperation fractures her sanity as the land which she calls home resents her presence. She finds affinity with the Black population that refuses to see her as an individual. Without any compunction, her closest childhood friend, Tia physically hurts her.

Spivak analyses Antoinette's extreme grief as the consequence of Whitism. The after effects of European supremist practices alienate young Whites in colonies wherein they find their reality unrelatable – baffled by the negativity they receive. As the haven of a European hegemonic *self* disintegrates, the symbolic imaginary steps in. Spivak says that the Narcissistic self now moves to the imaginary symbolic. Without an emotional anchor Antoinette is overwhelmed by Rochester's proposal of marriage. To her the marriage proposal becomes a symbolic Oedipal of ancestral home and acceptance. Her black nurse, Christophine correctly deciphers her situation and tells Rochester blatantly that it is Antoinette's estates and wealth, not her, that make Rochester propose.

The two women of colour in Antoinette's life – one a "close companion" (Tia) and the other "a commodified person" (Christophine) – remain "tangent" to the storyline. Spivak underscores the native as a *non-sequitur* who has to disappear for imperialism to stay unchallenged. The female individualist whose voice was heard, accoladed and emulated across Europe and America was typically an educated, middle-class metropolitan White woman who participated in the imperialist agenda. Spivak helps the readers understand that it is imperative that Antonitte as Bertha should also disappear since she is now a Creole who poses a threat to the

secure *status quo* of the accepted feminist. Spivak urges us to be aware of "the politics of reading." "Attempts to construct the 'Third World Woman' as a signifier" – a representative of her class – has to be done cautiously and conscientiously because literature itself is defined and delimited by "the history of imperialism."

11.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the concept of imperialism
- assess feminism in nineteenth century England
- identify ways in which creative imagination partners with imperialism in the three texts
- see the limitations of "discursive fields"
- conceptualise the strategies to exclude the native from mainstream feminist writings
- grasp the idea of "self" and "other"/ "othered" Caliban Ariel

11.4 Glossary

- **absolutist:** someone with authority that cannot be challenged
- **agency of selfhood:** right to take decisions concerning yourself
- **Caliban-Ariel:** Caliban and Ariel are created by Shakespeare. Both are from an island which was liberated by a French nobleman. Caliban is somewhere between a human and animal. Ariel is a sensitive sprite.
- **cathected:** interpreted according to context/situation
- **empirical:** based in experience and observation
- **hegemonic:** completely in control
- **imperative:** compulsory
- **interpolate:** interrupt a natural way of thinking and understanding
- **misadventure:** disastrous occurrence
- **narcissistic:** self-obsessed

- **non sequitur:** a fact that is a flaw
- **nuancing:** suggesting
- **occlusion:** blocking out
- **pejoratively:** insultingly
- **primogeniture:** law of inheritance
- **rider:** qualifier
- **sacrilegious:** unholy and immoral
- **signifier:** representation of a fact
- **tacit:** unwritten agreement
- **unabashed:** frank
- **under scanner:** suspect
- **worlded:** to be deliberately made to agree with an unnatural and imposed worldview

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions

1. The term 'categorical imperative' was coined by _____. (**Immanuel Kant**)

2. According to Spivak, 19th century women novelists did not oppose _____. (**imperialism**)

3. A "Selfed" Europe considers its culture _____ to other societies. (**superior**)

4. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, _____ is Antoinette's black nurse. (**Christophine**)

5. The term "Worlded" describes the colonialist process of making the native believe that his world is _____ .

a. inferior

b. beautiful

c. complete

d. strong

6. Safie, in *Frankenstein,* is from _____ .

a. France

b. Iran

c. Jamaica

d. Turkey

7. St. Rivers in *Jane Eyre* plans to go abroad to _____ .

a. Sri Lanka

b. Burma

c. India

d. Africa

8. Match the following:

1. Imperialism	a. Urban and Industrialized
2. Hegemonic	b. Napolean Bonaparte
3. Commodified Person	c. Henry Cavel
4. Metropolitan	d. Absolute Control
5. Knowledge of Asian Languages	e. Antoinette

Answer: 1-d, 2-b, 3-c, 4-a, 5-e

9. In the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea,* _____ is a victim of primogeniture. (**Antoinette Cosway**)

10. The term 'interpolate' means _____ .

a) To remove information from a text

b) To insert something into a text or conversation

c) To summarize a narrative

d) To analyze data for trends

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. What is imperialism?
2. Why is 19th century feminism considered as metropolitan?
3. Why is Bertha portrayed as somewhere between human and animal?
4. Why does Antoinette feel like an outsider in Jamaica?
5. What are Frankenstein's thoughts about a family of monsters?

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the imperialist sentiment in the assertion that Frankenstein's monster has "*properties*… not… contained by *proper* measures."
2. Critically evaluate Gayatri Spivak's essay prescribed for your study.

3. Charlotte Bronte's treatment of Bertha's self-immolation is like the British manipulation of indigenous Indian customs. Discuss

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Donna Landry, Gerald Maclean, eds. *The Spivak Reader*. Routledge, 1996.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Routledge Critical Thinkers essential guides for literary studies.* Routledge, 2003.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism.* Pantheon Books, 1978.

Spivak, Gayatri. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics.* Routledge, 1987.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Unit-12: Toni Morrison: ‘Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation’

Structure

12.0 Introduction

In this Unit, we will explore Toni Morrison's powerful essay “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation.” We will see how she connects ancestry to the African American experience, shaping stories and communities.

Here are the key areas we will explore:

- Ancestral Power: How remembering the past, even a stolen one, gives strength.
- Critical Thinking: How to analyse African American literature within its unique historical context.
- Art & Activism: How literature can be a tool for social change.
- Reader's Role: How you actively engage with the text and its meaning.

12.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand how ancestry and community shape storytelling in African American literature.
- identify key characteristics of African American writing, like focus on supernatural elements, participatory composition and oral traditions.
- explore the importance of appreciating Black literature on its own terms, using "Black paradigms."

12.2 Toni Morrison: 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation'

12.2.1 The Public and Private Life in African American Community

Toni Morrison begins her essay by discussing the difficult line between the public and private life in the African American community. Imagine your life as a stage. In the spotlight, you project a certain image for the world – your work persona, your social media persona, the way you interact with friends and family. But behind the curtain lies a hidden space: your private world of thoughts, dreams, and vulnerabilities.

Morrison does not see the public and private as separate compartments we jump between. Instead, she argues they are intertwined, a constant dance we perform throughout our lives. Our private space, like a hidden diary, holds our most personal thoughts and desires, free from judgment. This is where we explore our truest selves, away from the prying eyes of the world. But we can't stay hidden forever. We all have to step out into the public eye, where societal expectations and roles come into play. We might act differently at work compared to how we relax at home. We might curate a specific image on social media, highlighting certain aspects of ourselves. This tension between our inner world and the way we present ourselves in the outside world, Morrison argues, is a fundamental part of being human.

Think of everyday examples. Imagine putting on a professional face at a job interview, even if you're nervous inside. Or picture carefully crafting a social media post, wanting to present a certain image to others. These are all ways we navigate the public and private spheres.

Morrison might also show how certain spaces blur the lines between private and public. Churches, community gatherings, neighbourhood events – these places allow us to share our experiences within a supportive environment. We can express some of our personal truths, but

within the context of a shared identity and group norms. This interplay between our individual stories and the bigger picture of the community is another fascinating aspect of this concept.

By prompting us to reflect on our own experiences of navigating these two worlds, Morrison offers a unique perspective on human identity. She invites us to consider how we balance our inner thoughts with the expectations of others. In doing so, she sheds light on the complexity of who we are, the impact society has on our expression, and the constant dance between our hidden selves and the public faces we present to the world. She states that while keeping the private experience of her life aside, she would like to focus on the public or community aspect of it.

Roots of the African American Expressions

Morrison argues the autobiographical genre is more genetic to Black and Afro American community. The autobiographies, however, were not presented as a story of a person. Rather they were representative of the community. Let us try to understand the idea. Autobiography is typically a story about someone's life – their childhood memories, big events, and how they became the person they are today. But in Toni Morrison's view, African American autobiographies are a little different. They are not just about one person's journey; they are also about the journey of an entire community.

Imagine this: You're reading an autobiography by an African American who grew up during a time of great change. You learn about their family, their neighbourhood, the challenges they faced. But their story is also intertwined with the bigger picture – the fight for equality, the struggles against racism, the triumphs of the African American community. It is like reading your own family history woven into a larger tapestry.

That is the power of African American autobiographies. They act like windows into the history and experiences of a whole community. Authors share their personal stories, but in doing so, they shed light on the shared experiences of Black people in America. They talk about facing injustice, fighting for their rights, and celebrating their achievements. These stories become a powerful tool for understanding the past and celebrating the strength of the African American community.

There is another important reason why these autobiographies are so powerful. For many years, Black voices were often silenced or ignored. Through autobiographical writing, Black authors take control of their narratives. They get to tell their own stories, in their own words, and

challenge the idea that their experiences do not matter. It is a way of saying, "This is my life, my history, and it's important."

Think about it this way: By reading the story of someone who grew up during the Civil Rights Movement, we get a firsthand account of the struggle for equality. We see the courage and determination of people fighting for their rights. We learn about the challenges they faced and the victories they achieved. This isn't just one person's story; it is a piece of a much bigger movement for change.

Toni Morrison emphasizes the importance of autobiography as a way to preserve cultural memory and identity. These stories are passed down through generations, reminding us of who we are, where we come from, and the struggles we've overcome. They show us the power of resilience and the importance of fighting for a better future. Thus she argues that autobiographical expressions are a true genre of self expression in Black/ Afro American community.

Check your progress:

1. Toni Morrison begins her essay by discussing the difficult line between the public and private life in the African American community. (True / False)
2. Morrison argues the autobiographical genre is more genetic to Black and Afro American community. (True / False)

12.2.2 Novels as an Adopted Form in African American Writings

Toni Morrison says that novels were not always around for everyone to enjoy. Back in the days before factories and big cities, there were different classes of people – rich, poor, and those in the middle. The poor folks had their own ways of having fun. They would sing songs together, dance in celebrations, tell stories, and just chat with each other. They had a strong sense of community and shared experiences. The rich folks, on the other hand, already had plenty of ways to entertain themselves. They might go to fancy plays, listen to music, or read books that were already written. But there was a new group of people emerging – the middle class. They were not as poor as the working class, but not as wealthy as the upper class. And according to Morrison, this middle class was kind of missing out on the entertainment fun. They didn't have the strong traditions of the poor, nor the access to all the fancy things the rich enjoyed.

That is where novels come in! Morrison suggests that novels were a new kind of entertainment that fit perfectly with the lives of this middle class. Novels tell stories about individual people, and they can be read in private. This was a great fit for the middle class, who were starting to live more separate lives from their communities due to the changes brought about by factories and cities. So, in a way, novels were kind of invented to fill a gap in entertainment for this new social class. Before this, most stories were either written for the wealthy or were meant to teach moral lessons. But the novel, as Morrison explains, was different. It was a new kind of story, written for the average person. It offered relatable characters facing everyday challenges, like love, marriage, raising a family, or trying to get ahead in life. Just like we might watch a show about a family dealing with financial struggles, people back then could read novels about characters facing similar situations. These stories weren't just entertaining; they also helped middle-class readers understand themselves and their place in society. But novels did not just tell charming stories. They were also a way for authors to talk about important issues happening around them. Writers could address problems like poverty, the roles of men and women in society, or even race relations. By reading about these issues through the eyes of fictional characters, readers were encouraged to think critically about the world around them. As novels became more popular, something interesting happened. They weren't just for the middle class anymore. People from all walks of life – rich, poor, middle class, aristocratic and non-aristocratic – all started enjoying them. This led to a big mix-up in the world of entertainment.

Think of it like a big potluck. Before, everyone had their own favorite dishes: the poor folks with their songs and stories, the rich with their fancy plays and books, and the middle class with their newfangled novels. But as novels became a hit, everyone started wanting a taste. So, the potluck got more interesting. The rich folks might start enjoying some of the songs they heard from the poor, and the poor folks might pick up a novel here and there.

This mixing of entertainment styles had a big impact on African American literature. Songs and stories that were once unique to Black communities weren't so exclusive anymore. And novels, originally meant to teach moral lessons to the middle class, started being used by Black writers to tell their own stories in their own way.

Now, Toni Morrison argues that African American novels, though it is a borrowed form, should be more than just copies of middle-class novels. Here is why:

- While novels offered a new way to tell stories, Morrison felt African American novels needed their own special flavor. They should not simply mimic the themes and styles of middle-class literature. Black experiences are different, and their stories deserve to be told in a way that reflects those differences.
- African American novels, according to Morrison, should be a powerful tool for Black identity. They should help Black readers understand who they are and where they come from. The stories should celebrate Black culture and history, giving voice to the experiences and struggles of the African American community.
- Morrison believed African American novels should not forget the past. They should connect readers to their ancestors, those who came before them. This connection, "rooted in the ancestors," provides strength and understanding.
- African American novels, in Morrison's view, should not just be about individual characters. They should tell stories that reflect the experiences of the entire African American community. These stories can be about shared joys and sorrows, triumphs and hardships. By focusing on the community, African American novels can create a sense of unity and belonging for readers.

In short, Toni Morrison believed African American novels should be powerful, unique voices that celebrate Black identity, connect readers to their past, and tell stories that resonate with the African American community as a whole.

12.2.3 Expectations from African American Writers:

Morrison believed African American writing should be "beautiful and powerful and it should work." To unpack this statement, she identified six key qualities that distinguish it from other forms of writing:

a. Orality:

One of the key aspects that makes it work is something called "orality." But what exactly is orality, and why is it so important in African American literature? Imagine this: You are sitting on your porch on a warm summer night, listening to your grandma tell stories from her childhood. Her voice rises and falls with excitement, her hand gestures paint pictures in the air, and you can almost feel the heat of the sun she describes. that is orality in action! It is about capturing the feeling of listening to someone speak, rather than just reading words on a page. Now, how does

this translate into writing? African American writing often strives to recreate that feeling. Here are a few tricks authors use:

- Show, do not Tell: Instead of saying someone is "sad," the author might describe their slumped shoulders and the way they stare at the floor. This lets you experience the sadness directly, just like you would if you were seeing it happen in real life.
- Rhythm and Repetition: Just like music, African American writing can use rhythm and repetition to create a certain mood or feeling. Short, choppy sentences might build tension, while long, flowing sentences can create a sense of calm. Repeating certain words or phrases can emphasize their importance or create a song-like quality.
- Dialogue that Pops: African American writing often features vibrant dialogue that reflects the way people actually talk. Authors might use slang, dialects, and humor to make their characters feel real and relatable.

Why is orality so important in African American literature? There are a few reasons:

- A Rich Storytelling Tradition: For many African American communities, storytelling has been a way to pass down history, culture, and traditions. Stories were often told orally, from generation to generation, before they were written down. This oral tradition is an important part of African American heritage, and orality in writing helps keep that tradition alive.
- The Power of the Voice: The voice is a powerful tool for expression. By capturing the rhythm and energy of spoken language, African American writing can connect with readers on a deeper level, drawing them into the story and making them feel a part of it. It is more than just reading a story, it is like being there.
- Breaking Free from "Standard" English: The way Black people speak in America has often been looked down upon or seen as "incorrect." By using orality in their writing, African American authors challenge these ideas and celebrate the beauty and power of Black language.

Here is an example: Imagine a scene where a character is waiting anxiously for news. Instead of writing, "She felt nervous," the author might use orality to create a more vivid picture: “Her foot tapped a restless rhythm against the porch floorboards. Every creak of the screen door made her head snap up, then fall back in disappointment. Her throat felt tight, and her breath came out in short, shallow bursts.” This use of orality lets us feel the character's anxiety right along with

her. We hear the tapping foot, feel the tightness in her throat, and experience the disappointment with each creak of the door.

So, the next time you read a piece of African American writing, pay attention to its rhythm, its dialogue, and the way it shows you things instead of just telling you. This focus on orality is a key ingredient that makes African American writing so beautiful, powerful, and truly "working."

b. Participatory Composition:

Toni Morrison argued that African American writing should be "beautiful and powerful, and it should work." One of the ways it "works" is through a concept called "participation." This might sound fancy, but it is actually a pretty cool idea!

Imagine you're at a concert. The band is playing their hearts out, but the energy really comes alive when the crowd gets involved. The clapping, the singing along, the cheers – all of that participation creates a shared experience that makes the music even more powerful. That is the kind of participation Morrison talks about in African American writing. It is not about the author simply telling you a story. The author creates space for you, the reader, to become part of the story. Here is how it works:

- The Invitation: The author might use techniques like leaving out certain details or using open-ended questions. This invites you to use your imagination and fill in the gaps. For example, the author might describe a character walking down a dark hallway, but leave it up to you to imagine what they are feeling or what they might be afraid of.
- The Call and Response: African American writing can sometimes echo the structure of a call and response, like you might find in a church service. The author "calls out" with a question, statement, or image, and you, the reader, "respond" with your own thoughts and interpretations. This back-and-forth creates a sense of engagement and keeps you actively involved in the story.
- The Power of Silence: Silence can be just as powerful as words. The author might use punctuation like ellipses (...) or spaces to create pauses in the story. These pauses give you time to reflect on what you've just read, to connect the dots, and to form your own opinions about what is happening.

Why is participation so important in African American writing? There are a few reasons:

- A Legacy of Storytelling: Many Black storytelling traditions in America were participatory. Stories were often told in groups, with listeners interjecting questions, comments, or even adding their own pieces to the story. African American writing honors this tradition by inviting readers to become active participants.
- Multiple Voices: The African American experience is vast and complex. By allowing for participation, the writing acknowledges that there are many ways to see and understand the story. This creates a richer, more nuanced experience for the reader.
- Building Community: Participation helps break down the barrier between the reader and the story. It creates a sense of community, where you're not just a passive observer, but an active part of the world the author has created.

Imagine a scene where a character witnesses something shocking. Instead of telling you exactly what the character is thinking, the author might write: “Her eyes widened. The blood drained from her face. What in the world...?” This leaves space for you, the reader, to imagine the character's thoughts and feelings. Maybe they are scared, maybe they are angry, maybe they are confused. The author invites you to participate by filling in the blanks and creating your own interpretation of the scene.

Toni Morrison dives deep into the strategies Black writers use to tell their stories. One tool Black writers use is stories passed down through generations, like campfire tales. These stories add rich details, catchy rhythms, and a feeling of being part of something bigger. It is like the writer is inviting you to sit by a crackling fire and listen in.

Another tool is how the story is put together. Usually, stories have a clear beginning, middle, and end. But Black writers sometimes like to shake things up! They might jump around in time, tell the story from different viewpoints, or even leave out some pieces. This keeps you guessing and makes you think more deeply about the characters and what is happening.

Every character in a story needs a voice, a way of speaking that makes them unique. Black writers pay close attention to this. They capture the way people from different Black communities might speak, with their own words, sayings, and inside jokes. This makes the characters feel real and relatable, like people you might know.

Finally, there is dialogue – the conversations between characters. These conversations aren't just chit-chat; they are a way to show who the characters are, what they want, and how they deal with problems. Through these talks, you learn about their relationships, their dreams, and the challenges they face.

By looking at all these tools – traditions, structure, voice, and dialogue – Morrison shows how Black literature is rich, creative, and full of surprises. It is a way of understanding the world, the struggles and triumphs of Black people, and what it means to be human.

c. Blending of Supernatural with Real World:

One of the unique features that makes African American writings unique is the way it seamlessly blends the supernatural with the real world. Now, you might be thinking, "Supernatural? Like ghosts and monsters?" Yes, those elements can be present, but it is more than just scary stories. In African American writing, the supernatural is a way of reflecting the realities and complexities of Black life. Here is why the supernatural is so important:

- A Legacy of Belief: Many African cultures, the ancestors of African American s, have rich traditions of spirituality and belief in the unseen. These traditions were carried over to America, where they intertwined with elements of Christianity and the harsh realities of slavery and racism. The supernatural became a way for Black people to explain the unexplainable and to find strength and hope in a world filled with injustice.
- Beyond the Physical: African American writing often explores themes of resilience, community, and finding meaning in suffering. The supernatural can be a powerful tool for representing these themes. For example, a character might have a dream that guides them through a difficult decision, or an ancestor might appear to offer comfort and support.
- Blurring the Lines: The line between the real and the supernatural can be blurry in African American writing. This reflects the way many Black people view the world. Events that seem unexplainable or coincidental might be interpreted as having a deeper spiritual meaning.

  Here are some ways the supernatural shows up in African American writing:

- Ghosts and Spirits: These can represent the legacy of slavery, unresolved trauma, or ancestors who continue to watch over their living descendants.

- Dreams and Visions: These can be seen as messages from the spirit world, offering guidance or warnings.
- Magic and Folk Belief: Folk traditions like hoodoo or conjure (African-American folk magic) can be used to explore themes of power, resistance, and healing.

Now, some people might find the inclusion of the supernatural strange or unbelievable. But it is important to remember that the point isn't to be a literal representation of the spirit world. It is a way for African American writers to explore their unique worldview and create stories that resonate with their audience.

Here is an example: Imagine a scene where a character is struggling with a difficult decision. They might have a dream in which they see an ancestor who offers them advice and encouragement. This doesn't mean the character literally met a ghost. The dream is a way for them to tap into their inner strength and find the courage to move forward.

d. Remembering the Roots – The Power of Ancestors:

One of the unique aspects that makes African American work beautiful is the prominent presence of ancestors. These aren't just your grandparents or great-grandparents, but figures from the past who connect Black people to their rich history and offer guidance for the present. Now, you might be wondering why ancestors are such a big deal in African American writing. Here's why:

- A Stolen Past: Slavery ripped Black families apart and stripped them of their history. Ancestral figures became a way to reconnect with that lost past, to keep traditions alive, and to honor those who came before.
- Strength and Wisdom: Ancestors are seen as a source of strength and wisdom. They faced unimaginable hardships and persevered. African American writing often portrays them as offering guidance, support, and a sense of identity to the living characters.
- A Bridge Across Time: Ancestors bridge the gap between the past, present, and future. They remind readers that they are not alone, that they are part of a long and continuous lineage. Their presence helps characters understand their place in the world.

There are a few ways ancestors appear in African American writing:

- Characters: Ancestral characters might appear as vital players in the story.

- Memories and Stories: Characters might talk about stories passed down through generations, keeping the memory of ancestors alive.
- Dreams and Visions: Ancestors might appear in dreams or visions, offering advice or warnings to the characters.
- Symbols and Representations: Objects or places might be imbued with ancestral significance, acting as a constant reminder of the past.

Some people might find the presence of ancestors strange or unbelievable. But it is important to remember that it is not meant to be a literal portrayal of ghosts. It is a way for African American writers to explore themes of:

- Identity: By connecting to their ancestors, characters discover who they are and where they come from.
- Legacy: The stories and struggles of ancestors inspire characters to carry on their legacy and make a difference in their own time.
- Healing: The presence of ancestors can offer comfort and closure, helping characters deal with the pain of the past.

f. Community Focus:

One of the key ways it becomes "political" is by focusing on the community, rather than just individual experiences. This might seem like a small difference, but it has a big impact on the stories that are told.

Think of it like this: Imagine a family photo album. Sure, there might be pictures of individual people, but the most powerful ones are probably the ones that capture the whole family together. These photos tell a story about their relationships, their history, and their shared experiences. That is kind of how community focus works in African American writing.

Here is why focusing on the community is so important:

- A Shared History: African Americans have a long and complex history, marked by struggle, resilience, and cultural richness. This history is best understood not by focusing on individual heroes or villains, but by looking at the experiences of the African American community as a whole. African American writing tells the story of how individuals are shaped by, and contribute to, this larger story.
- Strength in Numbers: The African American community has always found strength and support in coming together. African American writing celebrates this collective

spirit by showing how characters rely on each other, learn from each other, and overcome challenges together. It is not just about "me," it is about "us."

- Giving Voice to the Many: Black voices have been historically marginalized and silenced. By focusing on the community, African American writing gives voice to a wider range of experiences and perspectives. It shows the rich tapestry of Black life, from elders to children, from the wealthy to the working class.

Here are some ways community focus is reflected in African American writing:

- Multiple Characters: African American writing often features a large cast of characters, each with their own story to tell. But these stories are interconnected, showing how the lives of individuals are woven together within the fabric of the community.
- Focus on Shared Experiences: The writing might explore themes like racism, poverty, or discrimination, but it does so by showing how these issues affect the community as a whole, rather than just one person.
- Celebration of Culture: African American writing often celebrates the cultural traditions, music, language, and storytelling practices that bind the community together.

Here is an example: Imagine a story about a neighborhood threatened by gentrification. The story might follow several characters – a young activist, a business owner, and an elderly resident – but all their stories are connected by their love for their community and their desire to fight for its survival.

g. Black Paradigms to Judge the Works:

How do we know whether African American works are "beautiful and powerful, and it should work.”? She demands that African American writing should be appreciated on its own terms, using its own set of standards – what she calls "Black paradigms." Imagine judging a gymnastics competition. You wouldn't use the same criteria for a figure skater, right? African American writing is similar. It has its own unique qualities and goals, and we need to understand those to appreciate it fully. Here is why using Black paradigms is important:

- A Different Voice: African American writing tells stories from a unique perspective, shaped by Black history, culture, and experiences. These experiences

might be different from those of white, middle-class, or aristocratic writers. So, judging it by standards meant for those groups wouldn't be fair or accurate.

- Celebrating Black Beauty: African American writing has its own definition of beauty. It might focus on the beauty of everyday life, the strength of Black communities, or the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. These are all important aspects of Black aesthetics that might not be fully appreciated through traditional paradigms.
- Power in Different Forms: African American writing might use different techniques to achieve power. It might focus on oral traditions, the power of the community, or the inclusion of the supernatural. These elements, which might seem strange through a different lens, contribute to the overall power and effectiveness of the writing for Black audiences.

Here are some aspects of Black paradigms to keep in mind:

- Focus on Community: As discussed earlier, African American writing often prioritizes the collective experience of the African American community over individual stories. This is a key part of Black aesthetics and a way to celebrate the strength found in unity.
- The Power of Language: African American writing often uses Black vernacular, dialects, and slang in creative ways. This is not "bad grammar" – it is a vibrant and expressive form of language that reflects the richness of Black culture.
- The Legacy of Storytelling: Black storytelling traditions have always played a vital role in Black communities. African American writing honors this legacy by using techniques like call and response, participation from the reader, and a focus on the spoken word.

So, how do we approach African American writing with Black paradigms in mind? Here are some tips:

- Learn about African American Culture: The more you understand African American history, traditions, and experiences, the better equipped you'll be to appreciate the writing on its own terms.

- Listen to the Voices: Pay attention to how African American authors use language, structure their stories, and develop their characters. What makes their writing unique and powerful?
- Open Your Mind: Be willing to step outside of your own cultural assumptions and embrace the different ways African American writing tells stories and creates meaning.

By using Black paradigms, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the beauty, power, and unique qualities of African American writing. It is not about judging it against something else, but celebrating it for what it is: a powerful voice that tells stories that resonate with Black communities and the world at large.

12.2.4 Politics of African American Writings

Toni Morrison dives into a powerful idea: art and literature aren't just for fun. They can be tools to make the world a better place! Morrison believes artists and writers have a special responsibility. They can use their creativity to talk about important issues like racism, poverty, or unfairness. By telling stories or creating art about these problems, they can bring them to light and make people think.

Think about history. Powerful songs and books have often sparked change. Maybe a protest song made people realize something wasn't fair, or a story inspired folks to fight for their rights. Art can stir emotions, make us think differently, and even push us to take action. Morrison rejects the idea that art should be separate from politics, arguing instead for a more inclusive understanding of art's role in society. Art will help us understand problems and maybe even solve them. By using their talents to talk about these issues, artists and writers can be a force for good.

Toni Morrison wraps things up by thinking about how her ideas can change the way we study books. Imagine you're reading a story in class, but the teacher only talks about it one way. Morrison argues there should be more ways to look at stories, especially those written by Black people and women.

Normally, when we study literature, we try to find the hidden meanings and messages in books. But Morrison says there is more to it. We should also consider the background of the writer and the experiences of the characters. After all, a story written by an African American person will likely have a different perspective than one written by a white person. The text which includes

more voices and stories from different cultures, we get a richer understanding of the world. It is like looking at a picture from different angles – you see new things each time. Stories by Black authors, women, and others who haven't always been heard can teach us a lot about different experiences and social issues.

Morrison also believes her ideas can make learning about literature more interesting. Instead of just memorizing facts, we can think critically about the stories we read. How does the author's background influence the story? How might someone from a different culture see the story differently? By asking these questions, we can learn more about the world and ourselves.

Overall, Toni Morrison wants us to explore literature with open minds. By considering different perspectives and cultural contexts, we can unlock a deeper understanding of stories and their impact on the world. It is like having a whole new set of tools to analyse books, making them even more meaningful and enjoyable.

Check your progress:

1. Morrison demands that African American writing should be appreciated on its own terms, using its own set of standards – what she calls "Black paradigms." (True / False)
2. Morrison believes artists and writers can use their creativity to talk about important issues like racism, poverty, or unfairness. (True / False)

12.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

In this lesson, we have explored Toni Morrison's influential essay "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," examining how she connects ancestry to the African American experience, shaping stories and communities. Here are the key takeaways:

- Morrison argues that the public and private spheres are intertwined, not separate compartments.
- We present different versions of ourselves depending on the social setting.
- Black communities often share experiences within supportive environments, blurring the public and private.
- Traditional African American autobiographies differ from the typical genre.
- They represent the collective journey of a community, not just one person's life.

- They preserve cultural memory, identity, and celebrate resilience in the face of struggle.
- Novels emerged to entertain the growing middle class.
- African American novels became a way to tell their own stories, distinct from middle-class narratives.
- These novels should celebrate Black identity, connect readers to their ancestors, and reflect the experiences of the entire African American community.

Toni Morrison believed African American writing should be "beautiful and powerful, and it should work." Key qualities include:

- Orality: Captures the feeling of listening to someone speak, using rhythm, repetition, and dialogue that reflects real speech.
- Participatory Composition: Invites the reader to become part of the story through techniques like leaving out details or using open-ended questions.
- Storytelling Strategies: Utilizes traditions, unique structure, voice, and dialogue to create rich and surprising narratives.
- Blending of Supernatural with Real World: Reflects Black realities and complexities by incorporating elements like ghosts, dreams, and folk beliefs.
- Integrating the Roots into writings: Ancestors represent a connection to history, offering guidance and a sense of identity.
- Community Focus: Stories explore shared experiences, celebrating the collective spirit and resilience of Black communities.
- Black Paradigms to Judge the Works: African American writing should be appreciated on its own terms, using its own set of standards ("Black paradigms") that value its unique voice, aesthetics, and sources of power.

In conclusion, Morrison emphasizes the importance of African American writing as a powerful tool for self-expression, cultural preservation, and celebrating the African American experience.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- recognize the connection between ancestry and storytelling in African American communities.
- distinguish between traditional African American autobiographies and the typical genre.
- identify key qualities that define African American literature according to Toni Morrison.
- explain the significance of "Black paradigms" in appreciating African American writing.

12.4 Glossary

- **Collective Journey:** The shared experiences and history of a group of people.
- **Intertwined:** Connected closely and having a mutual influence.
- **Orality:** The emphasis on spoken word traditions in a culture.
- **Paradigms:** A set of beliefs or assumptions that guide how something is understood.
- **Paradigms (Black):** A way of understanding and evaluating Black literature on its own terms, considering its unique voice and cultural references.
- **Participatory Composition:** A writing style that invites the reader to be actively involved in interpreting the story.
- **Resilience:** The ability to recover from difficulties.
- **Rootedness:** A deep connection to one's ancestors and heritage.
- **Self-Expression:** The act of communicating one's thoughts and feelings freely.
- **Supernatural:** Relating to forces beyond the natural world.

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions

1. How does Toni Morrison describe the relationship between public and private life in African American communities?

a) They are completely separate and distinct

b) The public life heavily overshadows the private life

c) They are interconnected and influence each other

d) Private life is considered more important than public life

Answer: c) They are interconnected and influence each other

2. How do traditional African American autobiographies differ from the typical autobiography?

a) They focus more on individual achievements

b) They emphasize the collective and communal aspects of life

c) They avoid discussing struggles and hardships

d) They are always chronological in structure

Answer: b) They emphasize the collective and communal aspects of life

3. What is the significance of the middle class in the development of African American novels, according to the text?

a) It had no impact on the development of the genre

b) It promoted escapism through literature

c) It provided a new perspective on identity and self-expression

d) It restricted writers to specific themes and topics

Answer: c) It provided a new perspective on identity and self-expression

4. How does African American writing incorporate orality, according to the lesson?

a) By using complex metaphors only

b) Through the use of traditional songs and speech patterns

c) By excluding dialogue entirely

d) Through strict adherence to written conventions

Answer: b) Through the use of traditional songs and speech patterns

5. What is the purpose of "participatory composition" in African American writing?

a) To encourage individual reflection

b) To foster communal engagement and collective storytelling

c) To restrict reader participation

d) To promote competition among writers

Answer: b) To foster communal engagement and collective storytelling

6. How does the concept of "supernatural" function in African American literature?

a) As a tool to promote fear

b) As a symbolic way to explore cultural memory and history

c) As a rejection of religious beliefs

d) As a strict adherence to realism

Answer: b) As a symbolic way to explore cultural memory and history

7. Why are ancestors important figures in African American writing?

a) They are always the protagonists of stories

b) They represent continuity and cultural roots

c) They are used to discourage rebellion

d) They symbolize obstacles to progress

Answer: b) They represent continuity and cultural roots

8. What does the concept of "community focus" refer to in African American literature?

a) A narrative that revolves solely around individual success

b) The emphasis on interconnectedness and shared experiences within a group

c) Avoidance of community settings in literature

d) Focus on global issues rather than local communities

Answer: b) The emphasis on interconnectedness and shared experiences within a group

9. What does the term "Black paradigms" refer to in the context of the lesson?

a) A rejection of all traditions

b) Dominant societal narratives imposed on Black culture

c) Cultural frameworks and perspectives unique to the African American experience

d) Strict literary structures used in African American novels

Answer: c) Cultural frameworks and perspectives unique to the African American experience

10. According to Toni Morrison, what is the role of art and literature, particularly African American writing?

a) To entertain without deeper meaning

b) To document history and provide a voice to marginalized experiences

c) To promote political ideologies

d) To compete with mainstream literary traditions

Answer: b) To document history and provide a voice to marginalized experiences

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Toni Morrison argues that public and private life are intertwined within African American communities. Explain how this concept shapes storytelling and the role of the writer.
2. Compare and contrast the typical autobiography with the traditional African American autobiography as described in the lesson.
3. Discuss two qualities that define African American literature according to Toni Morrison, and provide examples of how these qualities might be used in a novel.
4. How does the concept of "integrating the roots" contribute to the development of identity in African American writing?
5. Briefly explain the importance of "Black paradigms" and why they are necessary for appreciating African American literature.

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. How do storytelling traditions, "participatory composition," and the use of the supernatural in Toni Morrison's work help create a shared history and identity in Black communities?
2. What are the limitations of judging Black literature only by traditional literary standards? How do "Black paradigms", as suggested by Toni Morrison, provide a better way to appreciate its unique voice and themes?
3. Compare and contrast the role of the writer in traditional autobiography and African American writing as described by Toni Morrison. How does the focus on "collective journey" and "community focus" in Black literature shape the writer's responsibility towards their audience and their portrayal of characters and events.

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time.* Dial Press, 1963.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Trouble with Paradise: The New American Novel.* Knopf, 1996.

Morrison, Toni. "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." In *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, 102-103. New York: Norton, 1997.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* Vintage, 1992.

Smith, Hazel. *Not Just Race: Identity, Inclusion, and the American Dream.* University of Georgia Press, 2010.

Unit-13: New Historicism

Unit-14: Translation Theory

Structure

14.0 Introduction

Translation refers to the process of converting text or spoken content from one language into another while maintaining the original meaning, context and intent. It involves understanding the source language and effectively conveying the message in the target language. Translation can be literal (word-for-word) or interpretative (focused on meaning and context). For effective communication between people who speak different languages, translation plays a crucial role. In a world where over 7,000 languages are spoken, translation enables cross-cultural dialogue, helps share knowledge and fosters mutual understanding. It is crucial to fields like literature, business,

diplomacy, and technology because it enables the global dissemination of concepts and advancements.

The translation of classical literary texts plays a crucial role in making timeless works accessible to a global audience. For instance, texts like Homer's *Iliad* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* allow readers from various linguistic backgrounds to engage with stories originally crafted in Greek and Russian. This not only broadens appreciation for these masterpieces but also fosters a deeper understanding of the cultures from which they originate.

Multinational companies and other businesses recognize the importance of effective communication across diverse markets where various languages are spoken. By translating their websites, marketing materials and product instructions, these companies ensure that their messages resonate clearly with customers from different linguistic backgrounds. This commitment to clarity not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens brand loyalty in a competitive global marketplace.

Translation services are also essential during international conferences and major sporting events. They facilitate communication among participants and audiences who speak different languages. This allows everyone to engage fully with the proceedings. By bridging language barriers, the translation services promote inclusivity and understanding.

Historical Context:

Translation has a long and rich history dating back thousands of years. Cicero and Horace are considered among pioneers of translation theory. The Greco-Roman philosophers discussed translation during the years before Christ. Early examples of translation include the translation of religious texts such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Bible. The translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (known as the Septuagint) around the 3rd century BCE is considered a landmark event. It made religious teachings accessible to a broader audience.

During the medieval period, translation activities were centered in the Islamic world, where scholars translated ancient Greek and Roman works into Arabic. This period, known as the Islamic Golden Age, preserved and expanded on classical knowledge. Consequently, these translated works later influenced the Renaissance in Europe when they were again translated into Latin and other European languages.

In the early stages, translation focused on the literal word-for-word transfer, aiming for complete fidelity to the source text. In the 18^{th} and 19^{th} centuries, translators like Friedrich

Schleiermacher argued that translation should bring the reader to the source text's world, preserving its foreignness. The 20th century witnessed a shift towards more nuanced theories. For instance, Eugene Nida introduced the concept of dynamic equivalence, suggesting that translations should aim to evoke the same response in the target audience as the original text did in its original context.

Skopos Theory, proposed by Hans Vermeer in the late 20th century, emphasized the purpose or function (skopos) of the translation. This theory suggests that translation strategies should vary based on the intended purpose of the translated text.

More recent theories focus on the cultural and social aspects of translation, highlighting how power dynamics, cultural identities, and ideologies influence translation practices.

Check your progress:

1. Cicero and Horace are considered among pioneers of translation theory. (True / False)
2. The Islamic Golden Age preserved and expanded on classical knowledge through its translation from Greek and Roman into Arabic. (True / False)

14.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as to:

- provide an overview of major translation theories.
- understand the historical evolution of translation practices.
- analyze the contributions of key figures in translation theory.
- examine the role of cultural contexts in translation.
- understand the practical applications of translation theories.
- explore cognitive processes involved in translation.

14.2 Translation Theory

After the brief introduction in the introductory section, let us now understand translation theories based on major fields or areas.

14.2.1 Linguistic Theories

Linguistic theories in translation focus on how language structures (words, phrases, sentences) can be transformed from one language into another. These theories consider grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and meaning when translating text. Two of the primary approaches within linguistic theories are Word-for-Word Translation and Sense-for-Sense Translation.

a. Word-for-Word Translation

Word-for-word translation, also known as literal translation, is a method where each word in the source language is directly translated into the target language without considering the context or overall meaning of the sentence. This approach tries to preserve the exact words and order of the original text. For eg., translating the Urdu phrase "بارش ہو رہی ہے" (barish ho rahi hai) into English as "Rain is happening" would be a literal word-for-word translation. The phrase actually means "It's raining," but this direct translation does not capture the natural expression used in English, which can lead to a loss of meaning and nuance.

Advantages:

- Preservation of Original Structure: Maintains the grammatical structure and vocabulary of the source language, making it useful for understanding the literal meaning.
- Useful for Language Learning: Helps language learners or translators who are studying the source language to grasp the direct relationship between the languages.
- Effective for Technical and Legal Texts: In fields like legal translation or scientific terminology, where precise terms are crucial, word-for-word translation can be valuable.

Limitations:

- Loss of Context and Meaning: Often fails to capture the intended meaning, cultural nuances, or stylistic elements of the source text.
- Awkward or Unnatural Translation: The translated text may sound unnatural or awkward in the target language, especially if the languages have different syntactic structures.
- Difficulty with Idioms and Metaphors: Literal translation struggles with idiomatic expressions, proverbs, or culturally specific metaphors.

b. Sense-for-Sense Translation

Sense-for-sense translation, also known as free translation or dynamic equivalence, focuses on conveying the meaning or sense of the original text rather than a literal word-by-word correspondence. This method prioritizes understanding and communication over preserving the exact words and structure of the source text.

For example, translating the Urdu phrase "موسلادھار بارش ہو رہی ہے" (musladhar barish ho rahi hai) into English as "It's raining cats and dogs" conveys the sense of heavy rain in a way that makes sense to an English speaker. This translation captures the meaning effectively while using familiar English expressions.

Advantages:

- Preserves Meaning and Context: Conveys the intended message, context, and emotional tone of the original text.
- More Readable and Understandable: The translation is more natural and easier to understand for the target audience.
- Better Handling of Culture-Specific Terms: Deals effectively with metaphors, idioms, and expressions that have no direct translation.

Limitations:

- Potential Loss of Original Text's Style: The original text's structure or stylistic elements may be altered or lost.
- Risk of Over-interpretation: The translator's interpretation might influence the text, potentially deviating from the author's intent.
- Subjectivity in Translation Choices: Determining the "sense" of the text can be subjective, making translations vary between different translators.

14.2.2 Literary Theories

Literary theories in translation studies focus on how to interpret and transfer literary texts from one language to another while considering their artistic, cultural, and social contexts. These theories emphasize not just translating the words but also capturing the deeper meaning, style, and impact of the original text. Below are two prominent theories: Skopos Theory and Polysystem Theory.

i. Skopos Theory

The Skopos Theory, introduced by Hans J. Vermeer in the late 1970s, is centered around the idea that the primary focus of translation should be the purpose (or "skopos") of the target text. According to this theory, a translation should not merely replicate the original text's structure or words but should fulfill the purpose for which the translation is intended. This theory shifts the emphasis from being faithful to the source text to achieving the desired function in the target context. Some of the key points of this theory are:

- Purpose Over Equivalence: Instead of word-for-word equivalence, the translation should be guided by the intended use of the translated text, whether it is to inform, entertain, persuade, or fulfill another function.
- Context Matters: The translator needs to consider the cultural, social, and linguistic contexts of both the source and the target audience to produce a text that serves its intended purpose effectively.

ii. Polysystem Theory

The Polysystem Theory, developed by Itamar Even-Zohar, views literature as a complex system made up of various interconnected sub-systems, such as genres, styles, and cultural traditions. In this theory, translation is seen as part of a larger literary system within a specific cultural context. It suggests that translated literature is not isolated but interacts with other forms of literature, influencing and being influenced by the norms, values, and preferences of the target culture. Some of the key points of this theory are:

- Dynamic Positioning: In a given cultural context, translated literature can occupy either a central or peripheral position within the literary system. When it is central, translated works can shape literary norms and introduce new genres or styles. When peripheral, they are more constrained by existing norms and are often seen as less prestigious.
- Cultural and Social Influence: The position of translated literature within the polysystem affects how translators approach their work. For instance, when translated literature is central, translators might experiment more and innovate in their translations.

14.2.3 Cultural Theories

Cultural theories in translation studies focus on how translation is not merely about finding linguistic equivalents between languages, but also about understanding and conveying the cultural nuances and context of the source text. These theories emerged to highlight the importance of the cultural environment in shaping both the meaning of the original text and the decisions translators make during the translation process.

a. Cultural Turn in Translation Studies

The "Cultural Turn" refers to a shift in translation studies that began in the late 20th century, where scholars started viewing translation not just as a linguistic process but as a cultural one. This shift brought new perspectives on how translations reflect and influence cultural identities, ideologies and power relations. Some of the key points related 'cultural turn' in translation are:

- Emphasis on Cultural Context and Meaning: Translations should respect the cultural meaning and context of the source text rather than merely focusing on literal language equivalence. The goal is to create a translation that feels culturally authentic and relevant to the target audience. For example, metaphors, idioms, and humor often carry specific cultural connotations that need to be adapted appropriately.

b. Postcolonial Translation Theory

Postcolonial translation theory examines how translation has been used as a tool of power, often reflecting colonial relationships and power dynamics. It focuses on how translations can either reinforce or resist colonial ideologies, emphasizing the role of translation in shaping cultural identities during and after colonial periods. A few key points related to this concept are:

- Focus on Power Dynamics and Colonial Histories: Translating texts from colonized cultures into languages of the colonizers often involved changes that misrepresented or marginalized the original cultural meanings. Postcolonial theory questions these practices and advocates for translations that respect the voices and perspectives of colonized or minority communities.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o initially wrote his novels in English, the language of Kenya's colonizers, but later switched to his native language, Gikuyu, to challenge colonial dominance and reclaim his cultural identity. His work has been translated into English with an emphasis on maintaining the African narrative style and themes.

Similarly, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* portrays the collision of African and European cultures. The translations of this novel into Western languages were often reviewed to ensure they preserved the novel's critique of colonialism and retained its African cultural essence, avoiding Eurocentric biases.

14.2.4 Functional Theories

Functional theories in translation emphasize the purpose (function) of the translation in the target language and culture. These theories suggest that the way a text should be translated depends on its intended function in the new context. This perspective contrasts with theories that prioritize a strict word-for-word equivalence to the original text.

Two important concepts under functional theories are Dynamic Equivalence and Formal Equivalence. These approaches, developed by Eugene Nida, present different ways to think about translating texts.

i. Dynamic Equivalence:

Dynamic Equivalence, also known as functional equivalence, aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original text did on its audience. The focus is on conveying the message and meaning in a natural and clear manner, even if it means changing some words or phrases to make sense in the target language. For example, a greeting like "How are you?" in English might be translated as "تم کیسے ہو؟" (Tum kaise ho?) in Urdu, but if the text is directed at a more formal audience, the equivalent could be "آپ کیسے ہیں؟" (Aap kaise hain?) using a respectful tone to match the social context.

ii. Formal Equivalence

Formal Equivalence focuses on literal fidelity, meaning the translation stays as close as possible to the wording, sentence structure, and grammar of the source language. It aims to preserve the form and content of the original text, making it ideal for texts where maintaining the exact meaning is critical, like legal documents or technical manuals. For instance, a phrase like "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" would be translated in a way that each word is preserved, even if the sentence structure seems awkward in the target language.

In the Bible, the phrase "Give us this day our daily bread" is often translated literally to preserve its original meaning. However, in languages where this direct translation does not make sense, a dynamic equivalent like "Provide us today what we need" might be used to better communicate the message.

Both Dynamic and Formal Equivalence have their strengths and weaknesses. The choice between them depends on the text type, the purpose of the translation, and the audience's needs. While dynamic equivalence ensures that the target text reads naturally, formal equivalence maintains closeness to the original structure and wording.

14.2.5 Cognitive Theories

Cognitive theories in translation focus on understanding what happens in a translator's mind while they are translating. It involves studying how translators think, make decisions, and solve problems during the translation process. This field combines insights from psychology and linguistics to explain the mental activities of a translator, such as memory use, attention, and comprehension.

a. Translation Process Models

Translation process models aim to break down the mental steps or phases a translator goes through while translating. They help researchers and practitioners understand the cognitive demands of translation, making it easier to identify areas for improvement in translator training or software tools.

Cognitive processes in translation include the ways translators comprehend the source text, search for equivalents in the target language, and revise their output to ensure it's accurate and clear. These processes are not linear; translators often jump back and forth between different stages as they work.

Key cognitive processes include:

- Comprehension: Understanding the meaning of the source text, including cultural nuances and context.
- Transfer: Finding equivalent meanings, words, or expressions in the target language.
- Revision: Checking for errors, improving style, and ensuring that the translated text is coherent and flows naturally.

Models and Frameworks (e.g., Gile's Effort Model):

One of the well-known cognitive models in translation studies is Daniel Gile's Effort Model. It is often used to describe the simultaneous interpreting process, but is also applicable to written translation. Gile's Effort Model outlines four types of cognitive efforts that a translator must manage:

1. Comprehension Effort: The mental effort required to understand the source text.
2. Production Effort: The effort needed to produce the target language text.
3. Memory Effort: Managing the information in the short-term memory.
4. Coordination Effort: Coordinating all the above efforts simultaneously, which can be mentally exhausting.

An example of Gile's model in action could be a translator working on a legal document. They must understand complex legal terms (Comprehension Effort), find equivalent terms in the target language (Production Effort), remember the context and information as they translate sentence by sentence (Memory Effort), and ensure all these efforts are harmonized (Coordination Effort).

b. Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is based on the idea that communication is a process of making information as relevant as possible to the listener or reader. In translation, relevance theory helps explain how translators choose to include or exclude certain information to make the text more meaningful to the target audience.

Relevance theory suggests that translators must strike a balance between making the text easy to understand and retaining the original meaning. The theory helps translators decide how much contextual information to provide, how to handle ambiguities, and when to make adjustments based on cultural differences.

For example, when translating a joke from English to Chinese, a translator might replace the original punchline with a culturally appropriate joke that conveys the same humor and impact. The aim is to keep the reader's attention and ensure they grasp the intended message, even if it means modifying the text.

Check your progress:

1. The "Cultural Turn" refers to a shift in translation studies that began in the late 20th century. (True / False)
2. Postcolonial translation theory focuses on how translations can either reinforce or resist colonial ideologies. (True / False)

14.2.6 Key Figures in Translation Theory

i. Eugene Nida (1914–2011)

Eugene Nida was an American linguist and one of the most influential figures in the field of translation studies. His work primarily focused on making translations more meaningful and accessible for a broader audience, particularly in the context of biblical translations. Nida's most notable contributions are his theories of dynamic and formal equivalence, which he developed in the mid-20th century.

Nida's theory of Dynamic Equivalence aimed to convey the same emotional and intellectual impact on target language readers as the original text did on its audience. This approach advocates for translating meanings, concepts, and effects rather than adhering strictly to the form and structure of the source text. Dynamic equivalence is best used for texts where conveying the message and intent of the author is more important than preserving exact linguistic patterns. In contrast, his Formal Equivalence approach emphasizes a closer adherence to the linguistic structure and word choices of the original text, often producing a more literal translation. This method is typically applied to legal, academic, or technical texts where precision is paramount.

Nida's theories were groundbreaking for their time, introducing a more flexible and reader-centered approach to translation. His work significantly impacted Bible translation projects worldwide, ensuring that biblical texts could be understood by people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds without losing their spiritual essence.

ii. Hans Vermeer (1930–2010)

Hans Vermeer was a German translation theorist renowned for developing the Skopos Theory, which he introduced in the late 1970s. Skopos, a Greek word meaning "purpose," is at the core of Vermeer's theory. He believed that the main function of a translation should be defined by its intended purpose, which might vary depending on the context, audience, and situation. This marked a departure from traditional translation theories that focused solely on equivalence between source and target texts.

Vermeer's Skopos Theory places the translator in a more active role, allowing them to modify the text to meet the translation's goals effectively. This approach grants translators greater freedom to adapt, omit, or restructure the source text to achieve the desired impact in the target culture. For example, when translating a technical manual for a non-specialist audience, the

translator might simplify complex terminologies to ensure clarity, even if it means diverging from the original text's structure.

Vermeer's work opened new perspectives in translation studies, highlighting that translations should be judged by their functionality and effectiveness in achieving their purpose rather than strict adherence to the source text.

iii. Itamar Even-Zohar (b. 1939)

Itamar Even-Zohar is an Israeli scholar who pioneered the Polysystem Theory, which revolutionized the understanding of translated literature within the broader literary and cultural contexts. Introduced in the 1970s, Even-Zohar's theory positions translated literature as part of a complex literary system that interacts with, influences, and is influenced by the dominant literary system of the target culture.

According to Even-Zohar, translated works are not peripheral but can occupy a central position within a culture's literary system, depending on historical, social, and cultural factors. For instance, in periods of cultural change or when a nation's own literary system is underdeveloped, translations often play a key role in introducing new genres, themes, and styles. Even-Zohar's theory explains why certain translations gain prominence and shape national literature, such as the influence of Russian literature on early 20th-century Hebrew literature. His work underscores the dynamic nature of translation and how it contributes to the evolution of a culture's literary identity, thus offering valuable insights into the role of translations in literary and cultural development.

iv. Lawrence Venuti (b. 1953)

Lawrence Venuti is an American translation theorist known for his critical work on the role and perception of translators in contemporary literature. His advocacy for what he calls the "visibility" of the translator has challenged conventional translation practices and reshaped the discourse around translation ethics and strategies.

Venuti argues that translation often renders the translator "invisible," making the text appear as if it were originally written in the target language. He opposes this tendency and instead promotes two contrasting strategies: Domestication and Foreignization. Domestication involves making the translated text smooth and familiar to target readers by minimizing cultural differences. Foreignization, on the other hand, retains elements of the source language and culture, thereby reminding readers that the text is a translation and preserving the "foreignness" of the original.

Venuti's emphasis on foreignization aims to give translators more visibility and recognize their contributions to the text. He believes that a translator's presence should not be concealed but acknowledged as an essential part of the translation process. His work has sparked discussions on ethical considerations in translation, the balance between fluency and fidelity, and the power dynamics between source and target cultures. Through his writings, Venuti has raised awareness about the often overlooked role of translators and the influence they wield in shaping literary and cultural discourses.

Check your progress:

1. Itamar Even-Zohar has pioneered the Polysystem Theory. (True / False)
2. Eugene Nida has given the concept of Dynamic Equivalence. (True / False)

14.2.7 Let Us Sum Up

In this Unit, we have explored the various approaches, strategies and theories developed to understand the complexities involved in translating texts between different languages and cultural contexts. We have delved into major translation theories: linguistic theories such as word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation; literary theories like Skopos and Polysystem Theory, highlighting how translations interact with larger cultural and literary systems; cultural theories, including the Cultural Turn and Postcolonial Translation Theory; functional theories, primarily represented by Eugene Nida's concepts of dynamic and formal equivalence; and cognitive theories that focus on the mental processes involved in translation. We have also introduced key figures in translation theory, such as Eugene Nida, Hans Vermeer, Itamar Even-Zohar, and Lawrence Venuti, providing an overview of their contributions and the impact of their theories on the field of translation studies.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Unit, you should have learned to:

- identify and explain major translation theories.
- analyze and evaluate translation strategies using theoretical frameworks.
- understand the contributions of key theorists in translation studies.
- apply theoretical knowledge to real-world translation tasks.

- analyze the influence of cultural and historical contexts on translation practices.
- understand the cognitive aspects of translation.
- critically engage with contemporary debates in translation studies.

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Who introduced the concept of dynamic and formal equivalence in translation theory?

    a) Hans Vermeer

    b) Lawrence Venuti

    c) Eugene Nida

    d) Itamar Even-Zohar

    Answer: c) Eugene Nida

2. Which translation theory focuses on the intended purpose of the translation?

    a) Polysystem Theory

    b) Skopos Theory

    c) Cultural Turn Theory

    d) Relevance Theory

    Answer: b) Skopos Theory

3. What is the main focus of Lawrence Venuti's advocacy in translation?

    a) The invisibility of the translator

    b) The visibility of the translator

    c) Cultural equivalence

    d) Cognitive processes in translation

    Answer: b) The visibility of the translator

4. Which theory views translated literature as part of a larger cultural and literary system?

    a) Dynamic Equivalence

    b) Skopos Theory

    c) Polysystem Theory

    d) Domestication Theory

    Answer: c) Polysystem Theory

5. In Skopos Theory, what determines the translation strategy?

a) The number of words

b) The linguistic structure

c) The purpose of the translation

d) The historical context

Answer: c) The purpose of the translation

6. Which translation theory emphasizes preserving the original structure and words?

a) Formal Equivalence

b) Dynamic Equivalence

c) Postcolonial Theory

d) Cultural Turn

Answer: a) Formal Equivalence

7. Who is known for developing the Polysystem Theory?

a) Eugene Nida

b) Hans Vermeer

c) Itamar Even-Zohar

d) Lawrence Venuti

Answer: c) Itamar Even-Zohar

8. Which theory in translation studies is associated with the "Cultural Turn"?

a) Cognitive Theory

b) Literary Theory

c) Functional Theory

d) Postcolonial Theory

Answer: d) Postcolonial Theory

9. What is an example of dynamic equivalence in translation?

a) Translating "It rains ropes" for "Il pleut des cordes"

b) Translating "It's raining cats and dogs" for "Il pleut des cordes"

c) Translating "He gave a kick to the bucket" for "He kicked the bucket"

d) Translating "To be in the clouds" for "Estar en las nubes"

Answer: b) Translating "It's raining cats and dogs" for "Il pleut des cordes"

10. Which translation theory considers the translator's decision-making process and mental activities?

a) Polysystem Theory

b) Cognitive Theory

c) Postcolonial Theory

d) Skopos Theory

Answer: b) Cognitive Theory

14.5.2 Short Answer Type

1. Discuss Eugene Nida's contributions to translation theory. Provide examples to illustrate your points.
2. Briefly explain your understanding of Skopos Theory.
3. Critically evaluate Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization.
4. Discuss the significance of the Cultural Turn in translation studies.
5. Analyze the role of postcolonial theory in translation studies.

14.5.3 Long Answer Type

1. Discuss any two key figures in Translation Theory and shed light on their contribution.
2. Explain the differences between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation approaches. What are the advantages and limitations of each method?
3. Describe cognitive theories in translation, focusing on the translation process models and relevance theory.

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Baker, Mona. *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation.*Routledge, 2018.

Das, Bijay Kumar. *A Handbook of Translation Studies.* Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd, 2005.

Munday, Jeremy. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, Routledge, 2016.

Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation.* Prentice-Hall International, 1988.

Venuti, Lawrence, Ed. *The Translation Studies Reader.* Routledge, 2021.

Unit-15: Hayden White: Introduction to Metahistory

Structure

15.0 Introduction

History is often seen as a means of uncovering the "truth" about the past. However, Hayden White, a transformative figure in twentieth-century historiography, challenged this notion by revealing the deep similarities between historical writing and literary composition. He argued that historical narratives, like literature, rely on specific narrative structures and rhetorical techniques, making it difficult for historians to present an unmediated account of "what really happened." This perspective has made White a controversial and polarizing figure among historians, as it calls into question the possibility of objective historical representation.

In this Unit, we will explore the ideas of Hyden White related to metahistory as he envisaged in the essay “Introduction to Metahistory.” We will also learn about his philosophical contribution, with special focus on his groundbreaking work Metahistory.

15.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as follows:

- understand the concept of metahistory.
- analyse the narrative techniques in history.
- evaluate the role of ideology in historical interpretation.
- critically assess the objectivity of history.
- compare and contrast different historical narratives.

15.2 Hayden White: Introduction to Metahistory

15.2.1 Introduction of the author

Hayden White (1928–2018) was an influential American historian, literary theorist, and philosopher of history, best known for his groundbreaking contributions to the study of historiography and narrative theory. His seminal work, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973), revolutionized the way scholars understand the nature of historical writing by demonstrating that historical narratives are fundamentally shaped by literary and rhetorical strategies. White argued that history, far from being a purely objective and empirical discipline, is inherently interpretive and artistic, employing tropes, emplotments, and linguistic constructs similar to those found in literature.

Throughout his career, White held various academic positions at prestigious institutions, including Stanford University and the University of California, Santa Cruz. His wide-ranging body of work, which includes *Tropics of Discourse* (1978) and *The Content of the Form* (1987), explores themes such as the narrative structure of historical discourse, the role of ideology in shaping historical representation, and the intersections between history and literature.

White's theories sparked considerable debate and controversy, challenging traditional notions of historical objectivity and provoking historians to reconsider the boundaries between fact and fiction. His innovative approach continues to influence fields as diverse as literary theory, philosophy, cultural studies, and history, making him one of the most prominent figures in the study of historical theory and narrative.

15.2.2 Metahistory: An overview

Hayden White's seminal work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) has profoundly influenced the study of historical writing. This seminal work challenges conventional views of historiography by asserting that historical narratives are not merely objective records of facts but sophisticated literary constructions shaped by underlying poetic and linguistic structures. White posits that historical texts possess a "metahistorical element," a latent content that defines what constitutes an acceptable historical explanation, thus exposing how historians employ literary techniques to craft compelling historical narratives.

White supports his argument through an incisive analysis of eight pivotal nineteenth-century thinkers: historians such as Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville, and Burckhardt, and philosophers of history like Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Croce. He looks at the different ways historians write and tell stories. He argues that writing history is more like art, with moral and creative elements, instead of just a scientific study of facts. *Metahistory* was the first book to show that historical writing is a form of storytelling, challenging the idea that history is completely objective and highlighting the importance of narrative in understanding history.

The fortieth-anniversary edition of *Metahistory* includes a new preface by White, where he reflects on his motivation for the book and addresses the various responses it has elicited over the years. A foreword by Michael S. Roth further situates White's arguments within contemporary debates across disciplines such as history, literary theory, and philosophy. Roth, a former student of White and the president of Wesleyan University, highlights the enduring impact of Metahistory on a wide array of scholarly fields.

Metahistory dismantled the notion of history as an objective science. It also repositioned history as a narrative art form, urging historians to confront the ways in which their writing shapes, and sometimes creates, historical reality. Most mainstream historians initially opposed White's audacious ideas, but a large number of literary theorists and intellectual historians embraced them. They ignored his point about their unwillingness to interact with theories and chastised him for confusing language and reality. White's book altered the way history is taught and revealed the resistance of historians to critically analyse their own modes of narrative.

Ultimately, *Metahistory* remains a landmark in the study of history, encouraging scholars across all disciplines to critically engage with how the past is not just recorded but actively written and imagined.

Check your progress:

1. *Tropics of Discourse* (1978) and *The Content of the Form* (1987) are written by Hayden White. (True / False)
2. Hayden White's seminal work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* is published in the year _____.

15.2.3 Summary of the Essay

Hayden White's essay explores how historical narratives are constructed. He argues that historians transform raw historical records into comprehensible stories through a process of selection and arrangement. This involves organizing events into a chronological sequence (chronicle) and then structuring these events into a story with a beginning, middle, and end. White introduces the concept of "emplotment," where historians give meaning to events by casting them into different narrative modes like tragedy, comedy, romance, or satire. He also discusses how historians use formal arguments to explain why events happened, often invoking general laws or theories like Marx's idea of the relationship between the economic base and cultural superstructure. White suggests that history, unlike science, lacks consensus on its explanatory methods, leading to ongoing debates about the nature of historical explanation and the role of the historian. Thus, historical interpretation is shaped by both narrative form and theoretical frameworks.

15.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Essay

Hayden White's essay explores the idea that history is not just a factual recount of events but a crafted narrative influenced by the historian's choices and viewpoints. He argues that history, much like literature, is subject to interpretation and storytelling techniques. This perspective challenges the conventional understanding of history as a purely objective discipline and introduces the concept of metahistory, which is the study of how history is written and shaped. Let us break down his ideas into different sections.

a. Chronicles to Stories

White's first distinction between a chronicle and a story highlights a fundamental aspect of historical writing: the transformation of raw data into a coherent narrative. This transformation is not a neutral process. By selecting certain events and ignoring others, historians impose their own perspective on what is significant. This idea challenges the assumption that history can be purely objective. The historian's choices inherently introduce bias, whether intentional or not. This

raises important questions about what is considered "truth" in history and how different narratives can emerge from the same set of events. For example, a chronicle of the Partition could be transformed into vastly different stories depending on whether the historian emphasizes the economic causes, political conflicts, or social implications.

b. Turning Events into a Narrative

White's concept of using motifs (inaugural, transitional, and terminating) to shape a story reveals how history can be made more engaging and comprehensible, but also how it can be manipulated to support a specific interpretation. Adding motifs is a way to direct the reader's focus and emotions, guiding them to see the events in a particular light. While this makes history more accessible and interesting, it can also lead to oversimplification or distortion. By turning complex events into a narrative with clear beginnings and endings, historians might neglect the chaotic and often unresolved nature of real historical processes. This approach can result in the reader having a skewed understanding of history, where conflicts are neatly resolved, and causes and effects are straightforward, which rarely reflects the messiness of actual historical events.

c. How Historians Explain Stories (Emplotment)

As we already read a little while ago, White introduces the idea of emplotment, where historians choose a certain type of plot such as romance, tragedy, comedy, or satire, to frame their narrative. This selection is not random; it deeply influences how the reader interprets the events. For example, casting a historical event as a tragedy will elicit empathy and sadness, while framing it as a comedy might emphasize the absurdities and contradictions within the same event.

As White propounds, emplotment entails that history is not just about finding "the truth" but also about how that truth is presented. This concept questions the idea of history as a factual recounting of what happened, proposing instead that it is more like a form of storytelling. However, critics might argue that this perspective can diminish the credibility of history as a discipline. If every historical narrative is just a "story," then how do we distinguish between reliable accounts and misleading ones? White's approach can potentially undermine the authority of historical scholarship by equating it too closely with fiction.

d. Argument and Ideology in History

White's analysis of formal arguments and ideological influences in history reveals that historical explanations are often based on broader theories or ideologies. For instance, a Marxist historian might interpret events through the lens of class struggle, while a nationalist historian

might focus on themes of patriotism and unity. These ideological standpoints shape the interpretation and explanation of historical events.

The above perspective is crucial because it highlights that history is never free from ideology. However, this also raises concerns about relativism in historical interpretation. If every historian's narrative is shaped by their ideology, does this mean that all historical accounts are equally valid or biased? White's argument opens up the possibility that history is not just interpreted through different lenses, but also that these interpretations can conflict and lead to contradictory "truths." This complicates the role of the historian: should they aim to be neutral, or is it impossible to escape bias?

e. The Nature of Historical Disputes

White concludes by pointing out that historians often disagree not just about facts but also about how those facts should be interpreted and explained. He compares the state of history to science before it reached a consensus on what constituted "scientific" explanations. Historians lack a unified method for explaining social and cultural phenomena, leading to a constant state of debate and re-evaluation.

While White's comparison to early science is compelling, it might not fully account for the unique nature of historical study. History deals with human experiences, cultural contexts, and subjective interpretations, which are inherently less predictable and less governed by "laws" than natural phenomena. This lack of consensus might not be a flaw but rather an essential aspect of historical inquiry. History's openness to interpretation can be seen as a strength that allows it to adapt and incorporate diverse perspectives, rather than a weakness that indicates its inability to reach definitive conclusions.

Check your progress:

1. White introduces the concept of "emplotment," where historians give meaning to events by casting them into different narrative modes like tragedy, comedy, romance, or satire. (True / False)
2. White suggests that history, unlike science, lacks consensus on its explanatory methods. (True / False)

15.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

Hayden White's essay ultimately presents a radical rethinking of how history is written and understood. By treating history as a form of narrative shaped by choices in emplotment, argument and ideology, he emphasizes the subjectivity of historical accounts. This approach encourages critical thinking about the nature of history and its narratives, pushing readers to question what they read and to consider how stories about the past are constructed.

It may be concluded that White's ideas are thought-provoking but controversial. They blur the line between history and fiction, which can be seen as undermining the authority of historical research. However, his perspective also enriches our understanding by showing that history is not just about facts, rather it is about how those facts are arranged and interpreted. While his approach may be unsettling for those who view history as an objective science, it offers valuable insights for those who see history as a complex interplay of stories, perspectives, and interpretations.

15.3 Learning Outcomes

After completion of this Unit, you should have gained a clear comprehension of metahistorical frameworks. You should have learned to identify narrative structures, apply theoretical concepts to historical texts and develop analytical and interpretative skills.

15.4 Glossary

- **Anarchy:** A state of disorder or lack of established rules or structures, often used metaphorically to describe confusion or lack of consensus in a field of study.
- **Archetypal:** Representing a perfect or typical example of something; often used to describe universal symbols or themes that recur across different narratives.
- **Causality:** The relationship between cause and effect, explaining how one event or phenomenon leads to another.
- **Chronicle:** A detailed and continuous account of events in the order they happened, without interpretation or analysis.
- **Diachronic:** Pertaining to the analysis of phenomena over a period of time, showing how they develop and evolve.

- **Dialectic:** A method of argument or reasoning that involves contrasting two opposing viewpoints to arrive at a higher understanding or synthesis.
- **Discourse:** A formal and structured way of speaking or writing about a subject, often used to communicate specific ideas or ideologies.
- **Emplotment:** The process of turning a series of historical events into a coherent story by choosing a particular plot structure, such as Tragedy, Comedy, Romance, or Satire.
- **Epistemology:** The study of knowledge—how it is acquired, what justifies beliefs, and the nature and scope of understanding.
- **Historiography:** The study of how history is written, including the various methods, perspectives, and approaches historians use to interpret and narrate historical events.
- **Ideological Implication:** The influence of a historian's beliefs, values, or ideology on how they interpret and present historical events.
- **Inaugural:** Relating to the beginning or introduction of something, especially marking the start of a new period or event.
- **Metahistory:** The study of how history is written and the ways in which historians' interpretations and narrative structures influence our understanding of historical events.
- **Motif:** A recurring element or theme within a narrative that helps to structure the story, such as a symbol, image, or phrase that represents an idea or concept.
- **Nomological-Deductive:** A form of logical reasoning that uses general laws or principles to explain specific events or phenomena.
- **Protoscientific:** Relating to a period or stage before a field of study develops into a fully established scientific discipline.
- **Synchronic Structure:** An approach that views events as part of a static system, focusing on the relationships and interactions at a particular moment, without considering historical development.
- **Synchronic:** Concerned with events or conditions at a specific point in time, as opposed to diachronic, which examines developments and changes over time.
- **Synoptic Judgment:** A comprehensive evaluation or assessment that brings together different perspectives to form a complete understanding.
- **Transitional:** Serving as a link or bridge between two states, phases, or concepts, showing a shift or transformation.

15.5 Sample Questions

15.2.1 Objective Questions

1. What is the primary concept introduced by Hayden White in his essay?

    a) Metahistory

    b) Emplotment

    c) Formal Argument

    d) Ideological Bias

    Answer: a) Metahistory

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the narrative structures mentioned by White?

    a) Tragedy

    b) Romance

    c) Satire

    d) Epic

    Answer: d) Epic

3. What does the term ‘chronicle’ refer to in White’s essay?

    a) A fictional narrative

    b) A list of events in temporal order

    c) A critique of historical writing

    d) An analysis of historical arguments

    Answer: b) A list of events in temporal order

4. According to White, what distinguishes a story from a chronicle?

    a) The use of dialogue

    b) The use of motifs and structured narrative

    c) The presence of fictional elements

    d) The analysis of historical causes

    Answer: b) The use of motifs and structured narrative

5. What is the process of turning a sequence of events into a coherent story called?

    a) Formal Argument

    b) Ideological Implication

    c) Emplotment

d) Causal Analysis

Answer: c) Emplotment

6. Which narrative structure did Michelet use according to White?

a) Satirical

b) Tragic

c) Romantic

d) Comic

Answer: c) Romantic

7. What does the term ‘synoptic judgment’ mean in the context of White’s essay?

a) A list of events arranged chronologically

b) A narrative style that relies on humour

c) A comprehensive evaluation of a historical story

d) A scientific approach to historical interpretation

Answer: c) A comprehensive evaluation of a historical story

8. Which of the following is NOT a mode of explanation described by White?

a) Explanation by Emplotment

b) Explanation by Causal Determination

c) Explanation by Formal Argument

d) Explanation by Ideological Implication

Answer: b) Explanation by Causal Determination

9. What does White mean by the term 'protoscientific'?

a) The fully developed scientific nature of history

b) A preliminary stage before the establishment of scientific laws

c) An explanation using universal laws of science

d) The connection between science and fiction

Answer: b) A preliminary stage before the establishment of scientific laws

10. According to White, why is history often in a state of 'conceptual anarchy'?

a) Lack of data and historical records

b) Disagreement among historians over the nature of explanations

c) Confusion between science and art

d) The subjective nature of historical events

Answer: b) Disagreement among historians over the nature of explanations

15.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss the difference between a chronicle and a story as described by Hayden White.
2. According to Hayden White, what role does ideology play in the construction of historical narratives?
3. Discuss the notion of 'objective history' in light of White's essay.
4. Explain White's view on the relationship between history and science.
5. Briefly compare and contrast the different modes of emplotment.

15.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Analyse Hyden White's concept of emplotment. How does choosing a particular narrative structure affect the interpretation of historical events?
2. Critically evaluate White's argument that history and fiction share similarities in narrative construction. What are the implications of this claim for the study of history?
3. White mentions that historians must deal with both 'art' and 'science' when constructing narratives. Discuss this dual nature of historical writing and how it impacts the historian's work.

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

White, Hayden. "Introduction to Metahistory." *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, edited by Dennis Walder, 2nd rev. ed, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 444–49.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Web:

1. *Hayden White, the story of history* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT-OgRCkuUY
2. *What is Historiography?* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB3xb1_gp4Y
3. *Understanding Narrative Structure in Storytelling* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAuwGZAWEfs

Unit-16: Talal Asad: 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology'

Structure

16.0 Introduction

Anthropologist Roger Keesing used the phrase "cultural translation" in 1985 to describe a developing area of research for anthropologists and other social scientists. It is widely acknowledged that cultural translation encompasses much more than just the interlingual translation work done by qualified translators. In the widest sense of the word, cultural translation is the study of what individuals do, or should do, in order to comprehend and accept other individuals and other cultures. In today's world, where diverse ideologies, modes of being, and ways of living and acting are becoming more and more visible and frequently cause division and conflict, Sarah Maitland contends that cultural translation of the customs, inscriptions, and institutions of culture and society is desperately needed.

In this Unit, we shall discuss in detail Talal Asad's essay "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology." This essay appears as a chapter in *Writing Culture* (1986), which is edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus.

16.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Unit are as follows:

- to know about Talal Asad and his critical works
- to get an overview of the work *Writing Culture*
- to explore various arguments of Asad's essay
- to understand the message of Asad's essay

16.2 Talal Asad: 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology'

16.2.1 About the Author

Talal Asad is a well-known personality in modern anthropology. He has made significant contributions to the study of modernity, secularism, and religion. He was born into a well-known religious family in Medina, Saudi Arabia, in 1932. Through his scholarship, he left a significant impact on the study of religion and secularism by questioning and reevaluating Western-centric frameworks and presumptions.

Asad received his education in the Middle East and the West. He finished his M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Oxford after earning his B.A. in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. His interdisciplinary approach, which integrates anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, and religious studies, is a result of his varied educational background.

Asad's critique of the idea of religion as a universal category, which contends that it is a construct firmly ingrained in the history and power structures of Western colonialism and secularism, is one of his most important contributions. He makes the argument that the secular liberal order and Christian theological categories, which are not applicable to all cultures and traditions, have a significant impact on modern conceptions of religion.

In his seminal work *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (1993), the author expands on this critique by analyzing the ways in which religious practices and beliefs are established, governed, and contested in particular historical and social contexts. He investigates the development of 'religion' as a concept originating in the West

and its application as a universal category. He scrutinizes the narrative that religion has transformed since the Christian Reformation from being authoritarian and suppressive to becoming private and comparatively harmless, a narrative often cited to support the liberal politics and mindset of the modern era. This narrative also perpetuates the belief that "politicized religions" pose a risk to both reason and freedom. Through his essays, Asad challenges these prevalent assumptions, arguing that 'religion' itself is a product of European modernity. This construct, he suggests, legitimizes certain practices of 'history making' for both Westerners and non-Westerners.

In his critical analysis of secularism, Asad also casts doubt on the idea that it denotes a universal or neutral arena free from religious influence. He contends in books like *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003) that secularism is a cultural formation in and of itself, with its own set of moral principles and practices that are intricately entwined with the origins and evolution of Western Christianity.

Talal Asad has been interested in how tradition, authority, and power influence human customs and beliefs throughout his career. In order to understand religion and secularism as deeply ingrained in particular cultural, historical, and political contexts, his work advocates for a more nuanced and contextually grounded approach to the study of these concepts.

16.2.2 *Writing Culture*: A brief overview

The book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986) is a collection of essays. A group of seasoned ethnographers, a literary critic and an anthropological historian, who are known for their advanced analytical work on ethnographic writing, place ethnography at the center of a new intersection of textual criticism, social history, interpretive anthropology, travel writing and discourse theory in th essays. The authors demonstrate the enduring use of allegorial patterns and rhetorical devices by analyzing well-known examples of cultural description, ranging from Goethe and Catlin to Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and Le Roy Ladurie. They evaluate current experimental tendencies and investigate the roles that orality, ethnicity, and power play in the composition of ethnographies.

Writing Culture makes the case that ethnography is currently experiencing a political and epistemological crisis, contending that non-Western peoples are no longer authoritatively portrayed by Western writers, and that cultural representation is now inextricably linked to history and contestability. The volume's essays assist readers in envisioning a fully dialectical ethnography operating forcefully within the framework of the postmodern world. They issue a challenge to all

writers working in the social sciences and humanities to reconsider the politics and poetics of cultural invention.

Check your progress:

1. Talal Asad was a well-known anthropologist who was born in Saudi Arabia. (True / False)
2. The book *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003) is written by _____.
3. The writers of *Writing Culture* argue that ethnography is currently experiencing a political and epistemological crisis. (True / False)

16.2.3 Understanding Cultural Translation

Cultural translation is a multifaceted and intricate idea that operates within the disciplines of anthropology, cultural studies and translation studies. There are conflicting definitions of the term "cultural translation" that originate from the two major disciplines of cultural/postcolonial studies and anthropology/ethnography. The act of explaining to members of one cultural community how members of another understand the world and their place in it is commonly referred to as "cultural anthropology." Within the field of cultural studies, the term is typically used to describe the various ways in which individuals negotiate their displacement from one cultural community to another, or to describe the act of displacement itself.

In each instance, academics have usually elucidated the meaning of the term by stating that "translation" is derived from the Latin translātus, which is the past participle of transferre, which means "to carry across." It is extremely uncommon for academics to cite etymologies other than Latin. But what is "carried across" differs depending on the field. Cultural studies scholars believe that people who leave their place of origin and enter a new location, carry their culture with them. On the other hand, anthropologists believe that foreign cultures are "carried across" to domestic readers through textual form, as described in articles and books. Interestingly, Harish Trivedi, in a lecture delivered at *The University of Iowa*, brings a different perspective on cultural translation. He says:

> This [Cultural Translation] is a new collocation and in its specific new connotation is not to be confused with a stray earlier use of it in the old-fashioned sense of

translation oriented towards the target culture, what may be called a reader-oriented or “domesticating” translation.

As the concept of cultural translation pertains to multiple disciplines, more shades of its meanings emerge. At the same time, cultural translation must not be seen as equivalent to translating culture. There exists a fine distinction between the two. Let us consider it.

Cultural translation is a complex concept that operates on multiple levels in the fields of translation studies, anthropology, and cultural studies. It encompasses the process of translating across languages while deeply considering the cultural nuances, values, beliefs, and contexts that are embedded within the source text. This process goes beyond the mere conversion of words from one language to another; it involves an interpretative act of understanding and transferring meanings across cultural boundaries. Cultural translation aims to make the source culture comprehensible to the target culture, often requiring the translator to mediate cultural differences and to negotiate between cultural specificities.

Translating culture, on the other hand, can be understood in a more literal sense as the act of translating cultural content, artifacts, practices, or concepts from one language to another. This could involve translating literature, film, art, and other cultural products that carry with them the particularities of the source culture. While this process also requires sensitivity to cultural nuances, the focus is more on the specific task of translating cultural content rather than engaging in the broader, more abstract process of mediating between cultures.

The difference between cultural translation and translating culture, therefore, lies in their **scope and objectives**:

Cultural Translation:

- is a more comprehensive and theoretical method that addresses the exchange of ideas, values, and meanings across cultural boundaries.
- focuses on the difficulties and complexities of bridging cultural gaps through innovative and interpretive solutions that frequently call for bringing different cultural contexts and understandings together.
- focuses on the negotiation and representation of cultural differences and identities through translation.
- frequently entails a critical analysis of the power dynamics at work in the translation process as well as the translator's own positionality.

Translating Culture:

- is more narrowly focused, emphasizing the translation of cultural expressions, objects, or ideas between different languages.
- demands cultural awareness and understanding, but the main objective is to accurately and successfully communicate the original cultural content to the intended audience.
- One of the challenges here is to find equivalent practices or expressions in the target culture that accurately capture the essence of the source culture.

Cultural translation is essentially a meta-level process that includes reflection on the implications of cultural translations for identity, understanding, and representation in addition to the actual act of translating culture. It recognizes that meanings are continually negotiated and reshaped in the interaction between cultures, making translation more than just a linguistic act.

Check your progress:

1. The word "translation" is derived from the Latin translātus, which means _____.
2. Cultural translation aims to make the source culture comprehensible to the target culture. (True/False)
3. Translating culture can be understood as the act of translating cultural content, artifacts, practices, or concepts from one language to another. (True/False)

16.2.4 Talal Asad's Notion of Cultural Translation

In his essay 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology', Talal Asad discusses nuances of translating culture. He interrogates Ernest Gellner's *Concepts and Society*, a text popularly anthologized in British institutions. He argues that textualization of culture leads to sidelining of intricacies of source culture. It focuses more on understandability of readers, rather than intricacies or specifications of the source culture. He counters Gellner's arguments that English can accommodate any culture, and translators must focus on target culture rather than source culture. He argues that institutionalization of cultural translation makes it easy to teach, learn, and reproduce. But it kills the very spirit of understanding the culture. Therefore, Asad proposes a separate framework for cultural translation.

16.2.4.1 Key arguments of the essay:

Let us understand the major arguments of the essay. Asad's essay critically explores the use of translation as both a metaphor and a methodological tool within the field of British social anthropology. Asad delves into the complexities of translating cultural concepts, practices, and values from one society to another, highlighting the challenges and implications of such endeavors. Asad's exploration is not just linguistic but deeply entwined with questions of power, culture, and colonialism.

- *Translation as a Metaphor for Anthropological Understanding*: Asad contends that the idea of translation in anthropology goes beyond the simple linguistic translation of words from one language to another. It entails transferring cultural norms, values, and meanings from one social setting to another. The anthropological endeavor is centered on the metaphorical use of translation, which aims to make the unfamiliar understandable to others.
- *The Problem of Equivalence*: Asad's main point of contention is the issue of translation equivalency. He challenges the notion that cultural practices and concepts have exact counterparts in other cultures. This suggests that something is always lost or changed during the translation process, casting doubt on the possibility of accurately translating intricate cultural phenomena.
- *Power Dynamics*: Asad has a critical understanding of the power relationships that underlie cultural translation. He makes the point that the process is not neutral and is instead shaped by the political and historical contexts in which it takes place, especially when it comes to relationships between colonial and post-colonial societies. It begs the questions of who has the authority to translate and whose interpretations and representations become dominant because the capacity to translate and be understood implies a certain level of power and authority.
- *The Construction of Anthropological Knowledge*: Asad also talks about the connection between the idea of cultural translation and the process of creating anthropological knowledge. He contends that the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of anthropology are intrinsically linked to the field's mission of translating cultures. Anthropologists' approach to translation has an impact on how cultures are portrayed and comprehended, underscoring the discipline's need for reflexivity.

- *Ethics of Translation*: The ethics of cultural translation are a concern that Asad leaves out of his discussion. This entails taking into account the representations of cultures, the possibility of misunderstandings, and the effects these representations have on the communities under study. Asad advocates for a moral method of cultural translation that honors the richness and authenticity of cultural customs and beliefs.

16.2.4.2 Critical analysis of the essay

It can be said that Talal's work addresses the tendency in social anthropology to describe other cultures using language that the researcher is already familiar with. For example, social anthropologists tended to look for a "hidden pattern" that revealed information about a tribe's broader religious beliefs, such as their belief in a system of gods or God, rather than focusing on the very specific nuances in the attitudes an indigenous tribe might hold towards holy days or religious festivals. If the tribe's conception of God aligns with the theories put forth by the anthropologists, or if a secret network of meaning connects a concept of God to a festival or holy day, then this might not be a problem, or whether, as an anthropologist understands it, a religion unites them and guides their actions. However, Asad believes that this is not always the case. Through the process of "detecting," the anthropologist has imposed their own frame of reference by finding a pattern of meaning or relationship between otherwise discrete elements. This kind of cultural translation, which is also sometimes referred to as cultural appropriation, should be instantly identifiable to individuals who are familiar with post-structuralist/postmodernist theory.

Further, Asad goes on to imply that this essentially reductionist process of cultural translation is actually institutional. According to him, academics frequently take knowledge they have gained from the field and translate it, whether intentionally or inadvertently, into a language they can understand. This language may be that of their own society and culture, but it can also occasionally be terms from the academy, academic discourse, discipline-specific norms, and vocabulary. This entails the presumption of a meaning network that can be dissected and made available to academics in the West in our fictitious example. By doing this, the anthropologists also eliminate the peculiarities they come across in their search for interesting study subjects in foreign cultures that are prepared for exportation as academic articles, monographs, etc. This he refers to as "cultural translation."

Ernest Gellner wrote a seminal paper that Asad cites as representative of cultural translation: "Although it is now many years since Gellner's paper was first published, it represents

a doctrinal position that is still popular today." Asad argues that he had in mind the sociologism which posits that religious ideologies are considered to derive their true meaning from the political or economic structure. He also mentions a self-confirming methodology, according to which this reductive semantic principle appears evident to the authoritative anthropologist rather than to the subjects being described. Asad argues that it is this position that assumes that it is both possible and necessary for the anthropologist to serve simultaneously as translator and critic. He regards this position as "untenable", believing instead that it is the relations and practices of power that lend it some degree of viability.

He also explains about "a style" that is not only easy to teach, learn, and reproduce but also facilitates the categorization of other cultures. It thus simplifies complex cultural queries into digestible formats. According to Asad, this approach not only simplifies teaching and learning but also yields easily evaluable outcomes, making it highly valued in academic fields aiming for scientific objectivity. The style's popularity may reflect the nature of our educational institutions.

All things considered, Talal Asad's essay succinctly and precisely explains a widespread phenomenon that is sensitive to power dynamics, occurs at the institutional level, and influences the way we communicate. It is simple to understand how cultural translation is an expression of a broader imperialist tendency in Western culture in particular.

Check your progress:

1. Talal Asad interrogates Ernest Gellner's _____, a text popularly anthologized in British institutions.
2. Asad's essay critically explores the use of translation as both a metaphor and a methodological tool within the field of British social anthropology. (True/False)

16.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

Talal Asad addresses the subtleties of cultural translation in his 1986 essay, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology." Ernest Gellner's *Concepts and Society*, which is widely anthologized in British institutions, is examined by him. He contends that the subtleties of the original culture are marginalized when culture is textually rendered. It places less emphasis on the nuances or requirements of the original culture and more emphasis on the readers'

comprehension. He refutes Gellner's claims that translators should concentrate on the target culture rather than the source culture and that English can accommodate any culture.

In his essay, he critically examines the idea of cultural translation to emphasize its crucial role in anthropology while simultaneously highlighting its shortcomings and the difficulties it presents. Asad's arguments highlight the necessity of approaching cultural translation critically and reflexively, keeping in mind issues of power, representation, and ethics. Asad discusses the systematic interdependence of the societies. But he also finds that long-lasting, glacial differences impose all-too-coherent shapes upon diversity around the world and firmly anchor any ethnographic project. He argues that “translations” of culture take place within the relationships between “strong” and “weak” languages, which govern the global flow of knowledge, regardless of how intricate or imaginative the textual translation may be.

16.3 Learning Outcomes

After completing this Unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate Talal Asad and his critical works
- comment on the key message of *Writing Culture*
- clearly present various arguments from the essay

16.4 Glossary

- **Anthropology** – the study of the origin and development of human societies and cultures; the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture
- **Displacement** – the act
- or process of displacing; the situation in which people are forced to leave the
- place where they normally live
- **Ethnography** – a branch of anthropology and the systematic study of individual cultures.
- **Equivalence** – the condition of being equal or equivalent in value, worth, function, etc.
- **Sociologism** – a pejorative term for the reduction of phenomena to purely sociological explanations; the attribution of a sociological basis to another discipline.

16.5 Sample Questions

16.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Talal Asad was born in _____. (1932 in Saudi Arabia)
2. The book titled *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003) is written by
    a. Mohammed Asad
    b. **Talal Asad**
    c. Mehdi Hasan
    d. George Galloway
3. Talal Asad's seminal work *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* appeared in the year
    a. 1993
    b. 1892
    c. 1791
    d. 2009
4. *Writing Culture* (1986) propounds that ethnography is currently experiencing a _____ crisis.
    a. political
    b. epistemological
    c. both A & B
    d. None of the above
5. The word "translation" is derived from _____ word translātus, which means "to carry across."
    a. Greek
    b. **Latin**
    c. French
    d. Italian
6. Cultural translation is essentially a meta-level process. (**True** / False)
7. Asad's essay critically explores the use of translation as both a metaphor and a methodological tool within the field of _____ social anthropology.

a. American

b. British

c. Muslim

d. Christian

8. Ernest Gellner's _____ is a text popularly anthologized in British institutions.

a. *Concepts and Society*

b. *Society and Culture*

c. *British Culture*

d. *British Society*

9. Asad implies that the essentially reductionist process of cultural translation is actually institutional. (**True** / False)

10. Asad explains about "a style" that is not only easy to _____ but also facilitates the categorization of other cultures.

a. teach

b. learn

c. reproduce

d. all of the above

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Write a brief note on Talal Asad's writings.
2. Comment on *Writing Culture* (1986).
3. Shed light on the concept of 'cultural translation'.
4. Briefly discuss 'translating culture'.
5. Talal Asad responds to Ernest Gellner's *Concepts and Society.* Comment.

16.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss Talal Asad and his contribution to understanding culture with reference to his works.
2. Write a detailed note on the key arguments of Talal Asad's essay on 'cultural translation'.
3. Critically analyse Talal Asad's essay on 'cultural translation'.

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* Routledge, 1994.

Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, editors. *Writing Culture*. University of California Press, 1986.

Cortés, Ovidi Carbonell and Sue-Ann Harding, editors. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*. Taylor & Francis, 2018.

Maitland, Sarah. *What Is Cultural Translation?* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.