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Literary Criticism : Ancient to Modern

SEMESTER-VI

ENGLISH

BLOCK- 2



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block 2 consists of seven units. While the first three units deals with significant texts of criticism, the rest of the units deal with some of the important theoretical trends. It must be noted that literary theory is the name given to a range of disparate critical practices and approaches which are used by members of the humanities while exploring literary texts, films, and aspects of contemporary and past cultures. Theory is, thus, an umbrella term which roughly brings together insights from Structuralism, Formalism, Poststructuralism, Feminism, Marxism, Postcolonialism as well as Linguistics, Psychoanalysis or Philosophy.

The ninth unit deals with S. T. Coleridge's ideas on fancy and imagination as revealed in his famous book *Biographia Literaria* which is a study on the nature of imagination and its role in creative actions. The tenth unit deals with Matthew Arnold's essay "The Study of Poetry". As a prominent poet critic of the 19th century, Arnold tried to discuss the role of literary criticism as a vehicle for bringing positive changes in society. Arnold believed that literary criticism, to be worthwhile, must serve the ends of life and promote a better understanding of cultural values so that social regeneration can be brought about. The eleventh unit deals with the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" written by T. S. Eliot. This essay formulates Eliot's influential concept of the relationship between the poet and the literary tradition which precedes him. Eliot states that a poet or artist has his or her complete meaning in isolation but must be judged, in contrast and comparison, among the dead. The twelfth unit deals with New Criticism which refers to the theory and form of practice prevalent in Anglo-American literary criticism in around 1940s to 1960s. The thirteenth unit deals with Structuralism, which refers firstly to a particular set of approaches to literature and other cultural art forms which flourished in France during 1960s. The fourteenth unit deals with Formalist criticism through a discussion of Russian Formalism. The Russian Formalist Critics became prominent in the early part of the twentieth century. It is usually defined against the subjectivist theories of literature as propounded by the Romantics as it is more concerned with the artistic structure and form. The fifteenth unit deals with some of the significant theoretical trends like Poststructuralism, Marxist criticism, Feminism and Postcolonialism.

After going through these units, you will be able to describe the three seminal texts of literary criticism and gain an insight into the significant theoretical tends. While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read some relevant ideas and concepts in "Let Us Know" along the text. We have kept "Check Your Progress" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study.

UNIT 9: S. T. COLERIDGE: 'FANCY' AND 'IMAGINATION' FROM *BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA*

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 S. T. Coleridge in the Context of Romantic Criticism

9.4 S. T. Coleridge: The Critic

9.5 Coleridge's Concepts of 'Fancy' and 'Imagination'

9.6 Coleridge as a Critic

9.7 Let us Sum up

9.8 Further Reading

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.10 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- enlist some of the important aspects Romantic Criticism
- discuss S. T. Coleridge as an important critic
- explore the important ideas implicit in *Biographia Literaria*
- discuss the varied aspects related to the concept of 'Fancy' and 'Imagination'
- make an assessment of the significance of Coleridge as a romantic critic.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the concepts of 'Fancy' and 'Imagination' as found in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's seminal work *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge was an English poet, prominent literary critic, philosopher as well as a theologian who, with his lifelong friend William Wordsworth, successfully carried out the Romantic Movement in England. He also

shared volumes and collaborated with Robert Southey, Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd. But his critical work *Biographia Literaria*; or *Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, is an autobiography (though not a linear one), published in 1817, in two volumes containing a total of twenty-three chapters. It is one of the most influential works of literary criticism produced in the English Romantic period, combining philosophy and literary criticism in a different way. It also deals with the form of poetry, examination of the sources of poetic credibility, the genius of the poet as well as the issue of diction used in poetry.

9.3 S. T. COLERIDGE IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANTIC CRITICISM

There is no doubt that the Romantic period was not only a period of excellent poetry but also of significant literary criticism as this age witnessed the rise of eminent personalities who were mostly critics as well as creative masters. William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quiency were the stalwarts of the period. Among them, the one who provided precise direction to the flow of literary criticism was S. T. Coleridge and he has rightly been called a romantic critic. He is popularly known as a critic whose criticism flourished during the time of romantic period.

Biographia Literaria is the work that Coleridge wanted to write for a long time, examining the relationships between literature and philosophy. The book began as a conversation between Coleridge and his neighbour, William Wordsworth, although the book did not appear for another seventeen years. Coleridge provided his ideas for the Preface to the second edition of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* and they were then developed into *Biographia Literaria*. It is basically concerned with the form of poetry, the genius of the poet and poetry's relationship to philosophy. Coleridge feels that all the great writers had their basis in philosophy because philosophy was the sum of all knowledge. All education at that time consisted of a study of philosophy. Coleridge examined

issues like the use of language in poetry and how it relates to everyday speech. He looked at the relationship between the subject of poetry and its relationship to everyday life.

The issue of Imagination is a vital component of this work as it transforms and modifies a particular object into something new having a different identity. Imagination is of two types— Primary and Secondary where the former is “the living power and prime agent of all human perception”. And the latter is the poetic vision, the faculty that a poet has “to idealize and unify”. It works on the raw materials that are sensations and impressions delivered by the primary imagination. Secondary imagination is the root of all creative works and it is a shaping and modifying power which is magical as it amalgamates human will, intellect, emotion as well as perception. Moreover, it is more active and conscious that clubs together subjective and the objective, the internal and external. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge has also given the idea of Fancy as he regards it to be Inferior to imagination that only combines different things into desperate shapes and forms but cannot fuse all into one whole like the Imagination. Coleridge is the first critic to study the nature of Imagination and examine its role in creative actions. It is undoubtedly an unparalleled contribution to the field of literary criticism.

Like all other famous romantic poets, he is an ultimate dreamer with the utmost perfection of a literary creative genius. Imagination seems to be the vital aspect of the romantic writers and imaginative qualities are vibrantly explored in their literary works most particularly in poetry which was seen as the “lava of imagination”. A Romantic critic like Coleridge emphasised emotion and imagination rather than good sense and human reason. The Neoclassicists in the previous age no longer looked down upon poetic enthusiasm, but a critic like Coleridge in the succeeding Romantic era also did not show contempt for it. He celebrated poetic sensibility and imaginative flight of human beings. Like the other Romantic writers, Coleridge also found solace in Nature.

In his pursuit of Nature, Coleridge may also be considered an escapist flying away from the realities of life, a characteristic that seems

to be common to all the poets of the romantic period. The poetic works of Coleridge carries some general characteristics such as – the love for Nature, Supernaturalism, Imaginative vibrancy, Fancy, Mysticism as well as Musicality to a great extent. Rather than adhering to rules and principles, he prioritised intuition as the base of literary creation. He believed in the simplicity of expression and considered literature to be judged on the basis of impression it created not on the basis of any rules of the past masters. His view of the poet was that a poet is born, not made. He believed that imagination created new forms and shapes of beauty by fusing and unifying the different impressions collected from the external world. Imagination, for him, is the soul of poetry and "a synthetic and magical power". In his famous critical work *Biographia Literaria* he argued that Imagination has two forms namely Primary and Secondary. He emphasised more on Secondary imagination as it is peculiar to some personalities, not universal. It makes artistic creation possible. Again, he made a distinction between 'Fancy' and 'Imagination' saying that both differ in kind. The former is not a creative power but simply a mechanical process. Imagination, especially Secondary Imagination, is far more vital aspect of literary production.

From the above discussion, it can be noted that Coleridge along with Wordsworth carried the tradition of romantic criticism upto a certain point that paved the way for the later romantic poets and critics.



LET US KNOW

Some of the significant literary works of Coleridge are: *The Fall of Robespiere*, "To a Friend", "Ode on the Departing Year", "France: An Ode", "The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel I and II", "Dejection: An Ode", "Frost at Midnight", etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is S. T. Coleridge?

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Q 2: What does *Biographia Literaria* contain?

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9.4 S. T. COLERIDGE: THE CRITIC

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772- 1834) was a literary critic, English bard, philosopher as well as theologian who, along with William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a prominent member of the Lake Poets. He is characterised by Saintsbury as the "high priest of Romanticism." The mystical note is vibrantly reflected in his poetical works. His significance in the context of romantic poetry lies in his treatment of the supernatural world which is created out of the natural world in a unique way. His critical potentialities and significant contributions to literary theory and criticism are unparalleled in the history of literature. He is the first critic to have incorporated psychological elements into criticism.

Different critics have perceived Coleridge's criticism from different perspectives. Arthur Symons refers to Coleridge's *Biographia Literari*a as "the greatest book of criticism in English," and Rene Wellek opines that Coleridge is a link "between German Transcendentalism and English romanticism." Again C'azamian observes: "No one before him in England had brought such mental breadth to the discussion of aesthetic values." Herbert Read considers him "as head and shoulders above every other English critic". He is undoubtedly a man of stupendous learning, both in literature and philosophy, ancient as well as modern, and known for his refined sensibility and sharp intellect, Coleridge was unquestionably fitted to the task of a literary critic.

Coleridge is further celebrated as a critic known for practical criticism which is original and illuminating. His practical criticism consists of his authentic evaluations of Shakespeare and other English dramatists,

as well as of William Wordsworth and John Milton. The Neo-classical critics seemed to judge a work of literature on the basis of fixed rules and regulations. They were either legislative or judicial, or were carried away by their prejudices. But Coleridge did not judge considering any rules or fixed ideas. He had a unique method of criticising and simply giving his own responses, reactions and suggestions to a particular work of art.

Coleridge is the first critic in England to base his criticism on philosophical principles and ideas. In his task as a critic, he was more interested in the process of creation that made it what it was than in the finished product. In his own words, he attempted 'to establish the principles of writing rather than to furnish rules how to pass judgement on what has been written by others'. He also brilliantly united philosophy and psychology with literary criticism. The most significant part of *Biographia Literaria* lies in Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetry and poetic Diction.

9.5 COLERIDGE'S CONCEPTS OF 'FANCY' AND 'IMAGINATION'

By this time, you must have noted that S. T. Coleridge is one of the greatest literary critics and his greatness has been universally acknowledged. His concepts of Fancy and Imagination occurs several times in his work *Biographia Literaria*. In the medieval and Renaissance tradition, the words *imaginatio* (from where the word imagination evolved) and *phantasia* (from where the word fancy evolved) were thought to be closely linked but in the later phase Fancy seemed to suffer the decline whereas Imagination started gaining significance. In the eighteenth century, the distinction between the two was properly marked.

In chapter XIII, Coleridge mentioned two types of Imagination—Primary and Secondary. He comments, "The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and primary agent of all human perception...The secondary imagination, I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all event it struggles to idealise and to unify.

It is essentially vital, even as all objects are essentially fixed and dead". Primary imagination is simply the power of receiving impression of the external world with the help of sense organs. It is universal; possessed by all. However, Secondary Imagination is not universal; it is the peculiar and distinctive attribute of the artist. It works upon what it perceived by the Primary imagination.

Whereas, Fancy is something different from imagination. Coleridge considered Fancy, to be the inferior to Imagination. Though it is according to him a creative power, it only combines different things into different shapes, not in the similar way as Imagination does to fuse them into one. According to him, it is the process of "bringing together images dissimilar in the main, by source. It has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites". Fancy, according to Coleridge, was employed for actions that were "passive" and "mechanical".

The distinction made by Coleridge between the two rested on the truth that Fancy was concerned with the mechanical operations of the human mind while Imagination, on the other hand, is described as a mysterious power. Fancy is a kind of memory; it brings together images in a to-and-fro manner, and even when brought together, they continue to retain their separate individual identity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Explain Coleridge's concepts of Imagination and Fancy. Mark the differences between the two.

.....

.....

Q 4: What are *imaginatio* and *phantasia*?

.....

.....

Q 5: Between Fancy and Imagination which one is considered inferior to the other? Comment.

.....

.....

9.6 COLERIDGE AS A CRITIC

Coleridge is one of the greatest literary critics and his greatness has been almost universally recognised. He occupies, without doubt, one of the prominent places among the English literary critics. Naming the greatest critics, Saintsbury concluded: “So: then there abide these three—Aristotle, Longinus, and Coleridge.”

Coleridge provided the solution to the relation between form and content of poetry. He demonstrated the organic wholeness of poetry through his philosophical ideas saying that a poem is an organic whole, and that its form is determined by its content, and is quite essential to that content. For true poetic pleasure, metre and rhyme in poetry are the vital components. His idea about the organic wholeness of a poem is one of his major contributions to literary theory.

His theory of ‘Willing Suspension of Disbelief’ is also an important aspect of his criticism that has been universally accepted now. Coleridge stated that while reading a poem or watching a play, there is neither complete belief nor disbelief, but a mere suspension of disbelief that occurs within the mind of the reader of a poem or a viewer of a play. His criticism is mixed with philosophical as well as psychological ideas which are not easy to be understood for all. Due to the fragmentary and unsystematic nature of his ideas, many readers find it tough to follow his theory. George Watson commented about Coleridge:

“As a descriptive critic his achievement is brilliant but sporadic and offers no single example worthy to be advanced as a model. If his criticism survives, as it vigorously does, it is not by virtue of what it demonstrates but by what it abundantly suggests, for no English critic has so excelled at providing profitable points of departure for twentieth century critics.”

His *Biograhia Literaria* is the best example of his literary genius. Here he states that his primary aim is “to establish the principles of writing rather than to furnish rules how to pass judgement on what has been written by others” and in his works, he has proven this fact

successfully. He was the first critic from England to display an interest in the theory of criticism. He has specially taken care of those aspects related to the language of poetry and he does not support Wordsworth views on the same. For him, language of poetry should not be the language of common men; it has its own charm which is not present in the language used in day-to-day conversation. Coleridge always comes up with his own ideas which are significant, clear as well as logical.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is the opinion of Coleridge regarding organic wholeness of poetry?

.....

.....

Q 7: What is 'willing suspension of disbelief'?

.....

.....

Q 8: What is Coleridge's opinion regarding the language of poetry?

.....

.....



9.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have noted that the *Biographia Literaria,* which is Coleridge's main critical work has earned him a distinctive position in the world of English criticism. In this book, he made many value judgments, leaving his audience with a clear understanding of his own position regarding certain issues. He clearly endorsed the creative power of human beings that helps in imagining a particular subject. Though many critics have reacted strongly to his *Biographia Literaria*, it stands out with his bold commentary on the issue of human imaginative capacity. He is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative actions. One important conclusion that can be drawn is that while most of the critics use Fancy and Imagination almost synonymously, Coleridge is the first critic to explore

their separate nature and define their respective roles. He also distinguishes between Primary and Secondary imagination thereby making an elaborate observation on human psychological facts. He has the distinctive quality to philosophise literary criticism bringing about a better understanding of the process of creation and the nature and function of poetry. Today, his inspiration is definitely very high.



9.8 FURTHER READING

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9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: S. T. Coleridge is one of the famous literary critics of England who belonged to the Romantic period and his greatness as a critic has been universally acknowledged. He was a man of stupendous learning both in philosophy and literature. He was the first to introduce psychology and philosophy to literary criticism.

Ans to Q No 2: Published in 1817, *Biographia Literaria* is an autobiography in discourse by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, written in two volumes of twenty-three chapters. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge offers a theory of creativity in a distinctive way. Coleridge is popularly known as a critic whose criticism flourished during the time of romantic period. In this work, the idea of Fancy and Imagination have been clearly discussed.

Ans to Q No 3: Imagination and Fancy are the two popular concepts that evolved during the time of S. T. Coleridge. The word Fancy is derived from the Greek word 'Phantasia' and Imagination, from the Latin 'imagination'.

In chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge mentions the two types of Imagination— Primary and Secondary. He comments, "The primary imagintion I hold to be the living power and primary agent of all human perception." Primary imagination is simply the power of receiving impression of the external world with the help of sense organs. It is universal, possessed by all. But secondary imagination is not universal, it is the peculiar and distinctive attribute of the artist. It works upon what it perceived by the primary imagination.

While Coleridge considered fancy to be inferior to Imagination. Though it is according to him a creative power, it only combines different things into different shapes, not in the similar way as imagination does to fuse them into one. According to him, it is the process of "bringing together images dissimilar in the main, by source. It has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites". Fancy according to Coleridge was employed for actions

that were “passive” and “mechanical”.

Ans to Q No 4: *Imaginatio* is the word from where the word imagination evolved and *phantasia* is from where the word fancy evolved.

Ans to Q No 5: Coleridge considers fancy to be the inferior to imagination. Though it is according to him a creative power, it only combines different things into different shapes, not in the similar way as imagination does to fuse them into one.

Ans to Q No 6: Coleridge has provided the solution of the relation between form and content of poetry. He has demonstrated the organic wholeness of poetry through his philosophical ideas saying that a poem is an organic whole, and that its form is determined by its content, and is quite essential to that content. For true poetic pleasure metre and rhyme in poetry are the vital component. His idea about the organic wholeness of a poem is one of his major contributions to literary theory.

Ans to Q No 7: Coleridge’s theory of ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ is an important aspect of his criticism that has been universally accepted now. He stated that while reading a poem or watching a play there is neither complete belief nor disbelief, but a mere suspension of disbelief that occurs within the mind of the reader of a poem or a viewer of a play.

Ans to Q No 8: For Coleridge, the language of poetry should not be the language of common men; it has its own charm which is not present in the language used in conversation.



9.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Make an assessment of Coleridge as an English literary critic.

Q 2: What is Coleridge’s opinion regarding poetry? Briefly discuss.

Q 3: How does Coleridge express his ideas on Fancy and Imagination?

Q 4: How does Coleridge place Imagination on a higher platform while comparing it with Fancy? Comment.

Q 5: What are the major differences between Primary and Secondary imagination? Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 10: MATTHEW ARNOLD: "THE STUDY OF POETRY"

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Victorian Criticism: A Brief History

10.4 Matthew Arnold: The Critic

10.5 Matthew Arnold's "The Study of Poetry"

10.6 Arnold as a Critic

10.7 Let us Sum up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.10 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the important aspects of Victorian criticism
- describe the life and works of the famous poet-critic Matthew Arnold in details
- explain the context of the essay "The Study of Poetry"
- discuss the importance of Matthew Arnold as a critic of the 19th century

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to some ideas in Victorian Criticism through Matthew Arnold's essay "The Study of Poetry". As a prominent poet critic of the 19th century, Arnold tried to discuss the role of literary criticism as a vehicle for bringing positive changes in society. He felt that against the Romantic criticism of the previous generation, criticism of his time must be drawn closer to men so that life could be made nobler and better. Arnold believed that literary criticism, to be worthwhile, must serve the

ends of life and promote a better understanding of cultural values so that social regeneration can be brought about. Defending literature against its enemies and critics, whose emphasis on science, moneymaking, and commercial prosperity had led them to regard poetry as merely a pleasant pastime, he argued that poetry prepared the people of the society to perceive authentic value in the workings of the society and culture around them. This is the message that Arnold tries to provide in his essay "The Study of Poetry". This essay was the General Introduction to *The English Poets* (edited, T.H. Ward) of 1880. Later on, it was included in Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* of 1888.

10.3 VICTORIAN CRITICISM : A BRIEF HISTORY

You have already read in brief about Neo-classical and Romantic criticism in the previous units. In this unit, we have undertaken Victorian Criticism. Although the 'rules' of criticism framed by the Neoclassical critics were ***dismantled*** by the Romantics, both trends demonstrated that poetry will still continue. It is in such a situation that a new set of critics appeared in the Victorian period with a mission to define 'the function of criticism at the present time".



Dismantled: torn down or broken by.

But the Victorian age was totally different with noticeable changes brought by the rise of democracy and the progress of science. The Reform Act of 1832, the introduction of free education and the establishment of new universities made room for a larger reading public and a large number of writers in society. When the Industrial Revolution increased the comforts in life; scientific progress shook people's faith in religion. This was also the time when Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and the sceptical inquiry into the status of the Biblical texts were dismantling the established principles of Faith into question.

Soon there emerged what we may call the 'Victorian Compromise' as a result of such changes in society. The industrial system subjected the working class people to the factories and workshops, and subsequently, they were forced to lead their life in extreme poverty. We may say that

it was an age in which authority co-existed with freedom, wealth with want, faith with doubt, and culture with what Arnold calls 'philistinism'. With science and democracy bringing writers and critics closer to men, literature in the Victorian society reflects Victorian life in its fullest sense. As literature addressed society and its problems, so did criticism of the Victorian period.

It was also the time that Taine and Sainte Beuve in France were trying to find a scientific system to assess the worth of a writer. Taine considered literature to be the product of social forces, and believed that the writer's mental and emotional makeup are determined by the social environment of the age in which he lives. Sainte Beauve too shared almost a similar approach. He proposed that of all factors that go into the making of his personality, the period of youth is the most decisive for it is the age in which the free exchange of ideas takes place. Following this method, a writer would be judged with reference to his own opportunities and limitations. Such a method, with the promise of exactness and disinterestedness, appealed to the Victorian critics like Matthew Arnold a lot.

Another influence came from the materialistic philosophy of Saint Simon and Auguste Comte. Their stress on facts and reality of the physical world reinforced the teaching of essence and undermined the Romantic and idealistic forces. This trend of socialism and matter-of-fact-ness, which we witness in Victorian criticism, was further supported and strengthened by the critical methods of the two French critics – Taine and Sainte Beuve. Both these critics emphasised the importance of the historical and biographical context for asserting a work of art. This method appealed to Arnold and the other Victorian critics, for it was a sort of compromise between romantic license to choose freely and neoclassical rigidity.

Regarding poetry and its functions, the Victorians found themselves divided into two groups: one represented by Carlyle and Ruskin, and the other by Pater and Oscar Wilde. The havoc caused by science and industrialism, and the threat posed by science, made Carlyle and Ruskin defend religion and morality in their creative writing and criticism. They

held that art and morals were interdependent. There could be no good art unless there is anything good to say. Pater and Wilde, on the other hand, held the view that art is a pleasurable pursuit by itself, unaffected by any ethical or social considerations. While Carlyle and Ruskin are said to have reverted to the neoclassical doctrine of 'art for life's sake', Pater and Wilde are said to have continued the romantic tradition of 'art for art's sake'. You should find it interesting to note that Arnold may be said to have stood midway between the two. According to Arnold, it was not the business of the poet to compose moral and didactic poems. Yet he could not overlook the fact that poetry was 'thought and art in one', and a 'powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life'. When both religion and philosophy failed England in the hour of need, only the poets could provide consolation. Criticism, as Arnold would have seen, is not merely, 'judgment in literature' it is rather "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and thus it establishes a current of fresh and true ideas." Arnold thus underlines the nature and function of poetry and tries to establish the importance of poetry in modern culture considering the fact that religion had failed because of its emphasis on its theological dogma.

From the short discussion above, you must have got an idea of Matthew Arnold as the poet-critic who reflected on the Victorian rift between faith and science, art and morality, ***philistinism*** and culture. This also reflects his concerns for the lost world of values as a consequence of the industrial revolution, and the need for 'classicism' in a changing world. The history of Victorian criticism must be read against such a context.



Philistinism: a desire for wealth and material possessions with little interest in ethical or spiritual matters.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What were some of the changes that the people in the Victorian period had experienced?

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Q 2: What are the contributions of Taine and Sainte Beuve to Victorian thought?

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Q 3: Which are the two groups that emerged around Victorian Poetry? Where does Matthew Arnold stand?

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Q 4: How does Arnold view criticism?

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Q 5: Mention the important preoccupations of Arnold as a Victorian poet.

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10.4 MATTHEW ARNOLD: THE CRITIC

Matthew Arnold (1822-) was the son of Thomas Arnold, a noted Victorian man of letters, a religious leader, a historian, and the influential headmaster of Rugby from 1828 to 1841. Educated at Rugby and Oxford University, Matthew Arnold seems to have concentrated more on his social life than on his studies. Soon he felt dissatisfied with the kind of poetry that he had been writing.

In 1851, Arnold was appointed inspector of schools, following which he started his discussions on teachers and administrators for educational reforms. Subsequently, he also travelled extensively in England and abroad in-between 1859 and 1865. The experiences gathered led to the publication of three books on European (particularly French) systems of education. Arnold viewed the schools as the crucial site for "civilising the next generation of the lower classes, who, as things are going, will have most of the political power of the country in their hands." During his tenure as an inspector, he took pains at the deprivations that workers and their families suffered, and subsequently dedicated his life to the task of social and cultural progress, identifying himself as a "Liberal of the future".

Arnold was named Professor of Poetry at Oxford University in 1857, a position he held until 1867. He died in 1888.

Along with being a critic Arnold also gained popularity as a poet. You will note that Arnold's literary career had started with *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems* (1849) and ended with the publication of *New Poems* in 1867. Between these years, he published *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems* (1852), *Poems* (1853), *Poems II Series* (1855) and *Merope*, a tragedy in verse (1858). In these volumes, he tried various poetic works like lyrics ("Dover Beach"), Poetic Drama ("Empedocles on Etna"), Narrative poem ("Sohrab and Rustum"), Elegy ("The Scholar Gipsy") etc. Although Arnold derives much from classical literature, his poetry is also marked by the sense of alienation, stoicism, despair and spiritual emptiness.

Arnold made his debut as a critic with the *Preface to the Poems of 1853,* in which he follows Dryden's method of throwing light on his own performance and of making critical observations suitable as a tool. His lectures as the Professor of poetry at Oxford were published in book form in two volumes– *On Translating Homer* and *The Study of Celtic Literature* as part of his endeavour to discuss "grand style" in literature. He also wrote for various literary journals. Of these miscellaneous writings he published a selection called *Essays in Criticism* in two series (1865 and 1888). You should also remember that both the series of *Essays in Criticism* contain the essence of Arnold's literary criticism.

His *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) is one of his significant critical texts in which he deliberates on the notion of "culture" in great detail. Here he defines "culture" and affirms the need for "culture" in a modern industrial society devoted to mechanism and profit. He calls culture "*a study of perfection"*. According to Arnold, culture has an intellectual and an ethical end to meet. Arnold calls "culture" to be "the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself" while he conceives religion as the "voice of the deepest human experience". But culture advances beyond religion, because through a "disinterested study of human nature," it fosters a

"harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature." Because culture represents for Arnold an inward condition of the mind, and not outward circumstances, he considers its function to be crucial in our modern civilisation which is "mechanical and external" as well as strongly individualistic, specialised, and inflexible.

Thus, you will find that Arnold's main concerns in most of his important critical works are marked by his views on poetry, criticism and culture.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: How did Arnold develop as a critic?

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Q 7: Why is Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* so significant?

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10.5 MATTHEW ARNOLD'S "THE STUDY OF POETRY"

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



***Charlatanism*:** The dishonesty of a flamboyant deceiver.

"The Study of Poetry" also insists on the social and cultural functions of literature, its ability to civilise and to cultivate morality, as well as its provision against the mechanistic excesses of modern civilisation. According to Arnold, the status of religion has been increasingly threatened by science, by the ideology of the "fact". Philosophy, too has been rendered powerless since it is hopelessly engaged with unresolved questions and problems. It is, he claims, to poetry that we must turn, not merely for spiritual and emotional support and consolation but to interpret life for us. So, he defines poetry as a 'criticism of life'. Poetry's high function is actually to replace religion and philosophy. Implicit in his essay is also the notions of the classic and tradition, which will be further developed by writers such as T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis. Arnold suggests that, in the first place, we need to be sure that our estimate of poetry is "real" rather than historical or personal.

Arnold is clear in drawing out the ways in which the two kinds of fallacies operate: the poets of the past tend to tempt us to an historical estimate, while the judgment of poets of the present traps us with a personal estimate. The first kind of entrapment is to be seen when ***anachronistic*** comparisons are made – Caedmon equated with Milton; Taillefer's chant compared to epics. Arnold returns criticism to the established classics: Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton.



Anachronistic: chrono-logically misplaced.



LET US KNOW

For Arnold's dictum to be successful, the study of poetry must first be based on extensive knowledge of the Graeco-Roman heritage, and knowledge of the great canons of western literature. In the next few paragraphs, (l.383 onwards) Arnold brings forth his discussion to the question of French romance-poetry by Christian of Troyes and the application of the "historical estimate".

In the essay, the discussion of Chaucer's status as an English poet is highly interesting for the light it sheds on the relation of English poetry to French traditions. However, Arnold rates Chaucer below Dante: "And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer, Dante." What Arnold names as Chaucer's weakness is a lack of the quality by which poetry achieves its high purpose—"The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness." Yet Arnold reveals an eclecticism in his judgment: "He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry." By the "real estimate", Chaucer has "sterling value".

Arnold then provides important estimate of the works of Dryden and Pope, as he states: "Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose." Gray is rated as 'classic' but the evaluation becomes more difficult as Arnold ranges over the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries: "We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife, and where the real estimate of them is not reached without difficulty." Robert Burns is taken up for consideration as Arnold attempts to show the workings of his method of estimation of poetry. Burns' poetry is not 'classic', nor is the poetry "a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core." Arnold remarks that "perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us".

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

judgments being fallacious because we regard ancient poets with excessive veneration, and personal judgments being fallacious when we are biased towards a contemporary poet. If a poet is a "'dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best . . . enjoy his work".



LET US KNOW

The main crux of the essay "The Study of Poetry" can be summarised as the following:

Arnold places great emphasis on seriousness. He is anxious to separate the good poetry from the bad: "If we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence."

This concern entails the definition of poetry as well: it is "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." In order to the get "the best poetry" that will provide the criticism of life, it is imperative that the critic be aware of what is the best to be obtained from poetry. He argues against the pitfalls of the "real estimate" of poetry – the "historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious." The pervasive sense of history that nineteenth century promoted is felt by Arnold to interfere with aesthetic criteria. Arnold is, here, an advocate of aestheticism who sees art as measurable only by standards innate to itself. This colours his argument: "The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to overrate it."

In his essay he wrote : "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will remain incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." Poetry must have "high seriousness"; it must be "a criticism of life"; it must exhibit "the application of ideas to life." This is how it is assumed that Arnold made very high demands for poetry.

Arnold had also stated that poetry is substitute for religion: "The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry". At this point, Arnold offers his theory of "Touchstone Method." Arnold's Touchstone Method is a comparative method of criticism. According to this method, in order to judge a poet's work properly, a critic should compare it to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry. Even a single line or selected quotation will serve the purpose. If the other work moves us in the same way as these lines and expressions do, then it is really a great work, otherwise not. The main purpose of Arnold was to caution the people to avoid false evaluations of the historic estimate and the personal estimate, and to attain to a real estimate by learning to feel and enjoy the best work of the real classic, and thus to appreciate wide difference between it and all lesser work. According to him the most useful method of discovering the worth of poetry is "to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry". The real classics can serve as the touchstone by which the merit of contemporary poetic work can be tested. This is the central idea of Arnold's "Touchstone Method".

[You are advised to read the text of "The Study of Poetry" from Das, B. and J. M. Mohanty edited *Literary Criticism: A Reading,* published by Oxford University Press.]



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How does Arnold express his high hopes for poetry?

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Q 9: What is Arnold's Touchtone Method?

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Q 10: What are the two fallacies that Arnold refers to?

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Q 11: What, according to Arnold, is Chaucer's weaknesses as a poet?

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10.6 ARNOLD AS A CRITIC

Lionel Trilling opined that Matthew Arnold is "virtually the founding father of modern criticism in the English-speaking world." He provided one of the best definitions of Criticism— "disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." Arnold assessed literary criticism with an important social function and paved the way for its "institutionalisation" in the academy. He regarded the pursuit of literature as urgent activities in the world, insisting "that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, to the question: How to live." Serious criticism, he believed, was responsible for generating and maintaining the proper context of ideas and high standards that the production of literature required. Furthermore, criticism for Arnold, meant an engagement with history, education, politics, religion, philosophy and other subjects and concerns.

Rene Wellek views Arnold as a historical critic working with a historical scheme in his mind. He states that Arnold "almost single-handedly

pulled English criticism out of the doldrums into which it had fallen after the great Romantic Age." While critics like Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and their followers used Arnold's Hellenism, his plea for "disinterestedness", "antipathy" for "Philistinism" as the sanction to withdraw from the practical world to a world of aesthetic sensibility.

Arnold continues today to represent an ideal of literary and cultural humanism that many critics honour. But, this same ideal is one that contemporary literary theorists have sought to complicate or undermine. As the scholar Joseph Carroll has noted, Arnold's key term 'disinterestedness' is "now the most violently disputed word in the Arnoldian lexicon," and many theorists today have launched their proposals by taking issue with Arnold and his followers' account of the critic's role and procedures. For example, Stanley Fish's Reader Response criticism denies the possibility of "disinterested" objective perception, and the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton emphasises Arnold's alignment with state power and the privileged classes in his stress on "timeless truths."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: What does Lionel Trilling state about Matthew Arnold?

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.....



10.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time you must have learnt that in the essay "The Study of Poetry" Arnold places high importance to poetry, as he writes: "Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry". He considered "high truth" and "high seriousness" to be the most important criteria to judge the value of a poem. By this standard, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* did not merit Arnold's approval. He also sought for

literary criticism to remain disinterested, and said that the appreciation should be of "the object as in itself it really is". Arnold in this essay also introduced the "Touchstone Method" to judge a poet's work properly as he stated that a critic should compare a new passage to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry. Thus, you have learnt that Arnold's main concerns in most of his important critical works are marked by his views on poetry, criticism and culture.



10.8 FURTHER READING

1) Das, B. and J. M. Mohanty. (eds). (1985). *Literary Criticism: A Reading.* Oxford University Press.

2) Habib, M.A.R. (2005). *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Malden: Blackwell.

3) Vincent B. Leitch (ed). (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc.

4) Wellek, Rene. (1983). *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950: Volume 1, The Later Eighteenth Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Websites:

1) http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/237816

2) http://www.english-literature.org/essays/arnold.php



10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The Reform Act of 1832, the introduction of free education, the establishment of new universities, the emergence of a larger reading public and a large number of writers in society, emergence of the Industrial Revolution, scientific progress that shook people's

faith in religion, Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and the sceptical inquiry into the status of the Biblical texts and so on.

Ans to Q No 2: Taine considered literature to be the product of social forces, and believed that the writer's mental and emotional makeup are determined by the social environment of the age in which he lives. Sainte Beauve too proposed that of all factors that go into the making of his personality, the period of youth is the most decisive for it is the age in which the free exchange of ideas takes place. Following this method, a writer would be judged with reference to his own opportunities and limitations.

Ans to Q No 3: The first group was represented by Carlyle and Ruskin who tried to defend religion and morality in their creative writing and criticism against the threat posed by science. They held the view that art and morals were interdependent. There could be no good art unless there is anything good to say. The other group represented by Pater and Wilde, on the other hand, held the view that art is a pleasurable pursuit by itself, unaffected by any ethical or social considerations. Arnold stands midway between the both the groups.

Ans to Q No 4: A disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and thus it establishes a current of fresh and true ideas.

Ans to Q No 5: Matthew Arnold as the poet-critic was reflecting on the Victorian rift between faith and science, art and morality, philistinism and culture. This also reflects his concerns for the lost world of values as a consequence of the industrial revolution, and the need for 'classicism' in a changing world.

Ans to Q No 6: Arnold made his debut as a critic with the *Preface to the Poems of 1853.* His lectures as the Professor of poetry at Oxford were published in book form in two volumes– *On Translating Homer* and *The Study of Celtic Literature* as part of his endeavour

to discuss "grand style" in literature. His miscellaneous writings were published as collection called *Essays in Criticism* in two series (1865 and 1888).

Ans to Q No 7: Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) is one of the significant critical texts in which he deliberates on the notion of "culture" in great detail. Here he defines "culture" and affirms the need for "culture" in a modern industrial society devoted to mechanism and profit. Culture represents for Arnold an inward condition of the mind, and not outward circumstances. He considers its function to be crucial in our modern civilisation which is "mechanical and external" as well as strongly individualistic, specialised, and inflexible.

Ans to Q No 8: More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.

Ans to Q No 9: Touchstone Method is a comparative method of criticism. According to this method, in order to judge a poet's work properly, a critic should compare it to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry.

Ans to Q No 10: The poets of the past tend to tempt us to an historical estimate, while the judgment of poets of the present traps us with a personal estimate.

Ans to Q No 11: Arnold names Chaucer's weakness as a lack of the quality, or high seriousness as Arnold terms it, by which poetry achieves its high purpose— "The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness."

Ans to Q No 12: Lionel Trilling opined that Matthew Arnold is "virtually the founding father of modern criticism in the English-speaking world" as he provided one of the best definitions of Criticism—"disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."



10.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the important aspects of Victorian Criticism? Discuss with reference to Matthew Arnold.

Q 2: Discuss the contexts in which Arnold defined poetry as the "Criticism of Life."

Q 3: Who are the English poets Arnold brings into the purview of his study? Discuss.

Q 4: Assess the importance of Matthew Arnold as a Victorian Critic.

Q 5: What are the characteristics of good poetry according to Matthew Arnold?

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UNIT 11: T. S. ELIOT: "TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT"

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 T. S. Eliot: The Critic

11.4 T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

11.5 Eliot as a Critic

11.6 Let us Sum up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.9 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- identify T.S. Eliot as an important poet critic of the 20th century
- explore "Tradition and Individual Talent" as an important text of modern criticism
- grasp the main ideas both stated and implied in the essay
- discuss the importance of Eliot's articulation as a critic

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" written by T. S. Eliot. This essay was first published in 1919 in *The Egoist* and soon after included in Eliot's *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920). This essay formulates Eliot's influential concept of the relationship between the poet and the literary tradition which precedes him. Eliot states that a poet or artist has his or her complete meaning in isolation but must be judged, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. As Eliot sees it, the order of art is complete before a new work of art is created, but with that new creation all the

prior works forming an ideal order are modified, and the order itself is altered. After you finish reading the unit, you will be able to learn how Eliot typifies some of his critical stance and concerns through this essay.

11.3 T.S. ELIOT: THE CRITIC

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was an American-English poet, playwright, literary critic, and editor who was a leader of the Modernist movement in poetry. His experiments in diction, style, and versification revitalised English poetry, and in a series of critical essays he shattered many of the old orthodoxies. In 1948, he was awarded both the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Eliot entered Harvard in 1906 and received a B A in 1909. He spent the year 1910–11 in France, attending Henri Bergson's lectures in philosophy at Sorbonne and reading poetry with Alain-Fournier. From 1911 to 1914 he was back at Harvard reading Indian philosophy and studying Sanskrit. By 1916, he had finished, in Europe, a dissertation entitled *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. But World War I had intervened, and he never returned to Harvard to take the final oral examination for the doctoral degree. Eliot was to pursue four careers: editor, dramatist, literary critic, and philosophical poet. His first important publication, and the first masterpiece of "Modernism" in English, was "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". It represented a break with the immediate past as radical as that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). From the appearance of Eliot's first volume, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, in 1917, one may conveniently date the maturity of the 20th-century poetic revolution.

For a year Eliot taught French and Latin at the Highgate School. Then in 1917 he began his brief career as a bank clerk in Lloyds Bank Ltd. Meanwhile, he also became a reviewer and essayist in both literary criticism and technical philosophy. In 1919 he published *Poems*, which contained the poem "Gerontion", a meditative interior monologue in blank verse: nothing like this poem had appeared in English before.

It was however, with the publication of his poem "The Waste Land" in 1922, that Eliot won an international reputation. "The Waste Land" expresses with great power the disenchantment, disillusionment, and disgust of the period after World War I. In a series of vignettes, loosely linked by the legend of the search for the Grail, it portrays a sterile world of panicky fears and barren lusts, and of human beings waiting for some sign or promise of redemption.

Consciously intended or not, Eliot's literary criticism created an atmosphere in which his own poetry could be better understood and appreciated than if it had to appear in a literary milieu dominated by the standards of the preceding age. In the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", appearing in his first critical volume, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), Eliot asserts that tradition, as used by the poet, is not a mere repetition of the work of the immediate past; rather, it comprises the whole of European literature from Homer to the present. The poet writing in English may therefore make his own tradition by using materials from any past period, in any language. Two other essays "The Metaphysical Poets" and "Andrew Marvell", published in *Selected Essays, 1917–32* (1932) almost complete Eliot's critical works. In these essays, he affects a new historical perspective on the hierarchy of English poetry, placing at the top Donne and other Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and lowering poets of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Eliot was confirmed in the Church of England (1927); in that year he also became a British subject. The first long poem after his conversion was "Ash Wednesday" (1930), a religious meditation in a style entirely different from that of any of the earlier poems. This and subsequent poems were written in a more relaxed, musical, and meditative style than his earlier works. Eliot's masterpiece *Four Quartets* (1943) made a deep impression on the reading public, and even those who were unable to accept the poems' Christian beliefs recognised the intellectual integrity with which Eliot pursued his high theme, the originality of the form he had devised, and the technical mastery of his verse. This work led to the award to Eliot, in 1948, of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Eliot also wrote plays like *Sweeney Agonistes* (published 1926; first performed in 1934), *The Elder Statesman* (first performed 1958; published 1959), *Murder in the Cathedral* (published and performed 1935) and so on. All his plays are in a blank verse of his own invention; thus he brought "poetic drama" back to the popular stage. *The Family Reunion* (1939) and *Murder in the Cathedral* are Christian tragedies.

Eliot's career as editor was ancillary to his main interests, but his quarterly review, *The Criterion* (1922–39), was the most distinguished international critical journal of the period. He was a "director," or working editor, of the publishing firm of Faber & Faber Ltd. from the early 1920s until his death. From the 1920s onward, Eliot's influence as a poet and as a critic—in both Great Britain and the United States—has been immense.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In which magazine did the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" first appear?

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Q 2: Write briefly on the theme of Eliot's chief work, "The Waste Land".

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Q 3: Mention the chief feature of Eliot's plays.

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11.4 T.S. ELIOT'S "TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT"

Eliot begins the essay "Tradition and The Individual Talent" by stating that "In English writing we seldom speak of tradition." Such an

argument soon made "tradition" a key topic for poets, critics, intellectuals, and teachers of literature in the academy. The essay is divided into two sections— the first dealing with 'tradition', and the second, the impersonal nature of poetry. While the first gives us a broad view of how a writer surrenders before an impersonal process which is tradition, the second part gives a close view of how the personality of the poet is negated in the act of poetic creation. Hence, it is impersonality that characterises both poetry and tradition.

Thus, the essay mostly deal with two broad concepts—Tradition and Impersonality of Poetry. Literary tradition is not unconscious handing down of literary knowledge. On the contrary, the poet must acquire it through great labour. Central to Eliot's idea of tradition is the notion of 'historical sense'. A poet leaves behind him a past history of literary culture. Historical sense is not merely knowledge of literary history; it brings in the two contexts— past and present. The past is not a series of works ordered in a fixed chronology to which present works are constantly making adaptations because it is seen from perpetually shifting viewpoints of the present. In this way, tradition implies a dynamic process in which a writer of the present is deeply implicated. The poet must be aware of the fact that many have gone before him, and are therefore dead. In contrast, the poet and the present are two distinct orders and both exist simultaneously. Hence, certain elements of the past enter into the realm of the present, whereas some other elements exist as specificities of a particular historical culture.

You would be interested to know that two of the canonical texts of modern Anglo-American Literary criticism, F. R. Leavis' *Revaluations: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936) and Cleanth Brooks' *Modern Poetry and The Tradition* (1939), were expansions of Eliot's ideas on tradition.

Therefore, literary tradition suggests both continuities and discontinuities, the temporal and the timeless elements of a historical continuum. Tradition is not mere growing accumulation of knowledge neither does it indicate an assemblage of works written down the ages.

It sets in ideal order every work of art occupies, a distinctive position, with a certain value attached to it. When a new work comes into existence, this ideal order is disturbed and a new order is created. In this way, tradition implies a perpetual re-adjustment of works belonging to past and present.



LET US KNOW

For Eliot, each poem exists within the tradition from which it takes shape and which it, in turn, redefines. Thus tradition is both something to which the poet must be 'faithful' and something that he or she actively makes: novelty emerges out of being steeped in tradition. Eliot was later criticised by later critics such as Harold Bloom as a 'weak' poet-critic because of the priority that he assigned to tradition. Eliot maintains: 'What happens when a work of art is created, is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it.' Eliot has also been criticised for picturing tradition as variously a 'simultaneous order', 'a living whole', 'an ideal order' and the 'mind of Europe', thereby idealising its conflicts, contradictions and commissions." (taken from *Norton Anthology*)

The essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" is also important for Eliot's theory of Impersonality of Poetry. If we look at the Romantic theory of poetry, it did not make a distinction between a poem and the experience that gave rise to it. Poetry is the unmediated expression of private feeling and emotion of the poet. In Romanticism, confession was a dominant model of literary expression, in which the author reveals the 'truth' of his mind. The Romantic concept of poetry is characterised by the overwhelming insistence on sincerity of thought and feeling, where language is not a detractor of a poet's felt truth, but a vehicle of its expression. Eliot makes a distinction within the poet the man who experiences emotion and feeling, and the creator who works upon the felt experiences: "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate

in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates" (*The English Critical Tradition*, 172). To Eliot, the role of the mind is the role of a catalyst in a chemical reaction. Mind is not more than a space for poetic composition but remains unaffected by the process. You can explore how far Eliot describes the role of the mind in the creative process. Mind facilitates the process but is itself detached from the process where "impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (*The English Critical Tradition*, 174). It can lead to the absurd notion that a poem writes itself, and the poetic process is beyond the reach of the poet. What is however, unambiguously clear is that a poem is not a record to the poet's private experiences. Whereas the Romantics found in the poetic emotion the presence of an actual 'feeler', the poet himself, according to Eliot, assumes a certain impersonality, sharply different from the actual experience of the poet.

You must have learnt that in the essay Eliot attempts to accomplice two things. He first redefines "tradition" by emphasising the importance of history in understanding poetry, and then he argues that poetry should be "impersonal," that is separate and distinct from the personality of the poet. Eliot's idea of tradition is complex and unusual, involving something he describes as "the historical sense" which is a perception of "the pastness of the past" but also of its "presence." For Eliot, past works of art form an order or "tradition"; however, that order is always being altered by a new work which modifies the "tradition" to make room for itself. This view, in which "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past," requires that a poet be familiar with almost all literary history—not just the immediate past but the distant past and not just the literature of his or her own country but the entire "mind of Europe."

Eliot's second point is one of his most famous and contentious. A poet, Eliot maintains, must "self-sacrifice" to this special awareness of the past; once this awareness is achieved, it will erase any trace of personality from the poetry because the poet has become a mere medium for expression. Using the analogy of a chemical reaction, Eliot explains

that a "mature" poet's mind works by being a passive "receptacle" of images, phrases and feelings which are combined, under immense concentration, into a new "art emotion." For Eliot, true art has nothing to do with the personal life of the artist but is merely the result of a greater ability to synthesise and combine, an ability which comes from deep study and comprehensive knowledge. Though Eliot's belief that "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" sprang from what he viewed as the excesses of Romanticism, many scholars have noted how continuous Eliot's thought—and the whole of Modernism—is with that of the Romantics'; his "impersonal poet" even has links with John Keats, who proposed a similar figure in "the chameleon poet." But Eliot's belief that critical study should be "diverted" from the poet to the poetry shaped the study of poetry for half a century. It is difficult to overemphasise the essay's influence. It has shaped generations of poets, critics and theorists and is a key text in modern literary criticism.

After reading this unit, you have learnt that Eliot presents his conception of tradition and the definition of the poet and poetry in relation to it. Eliot wishes to correct the fact that, as he perceives it, "in English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence." Eliot felt that the true incorporation of tradition into literature was unrecognised, that tradition, a word that "seldom...appear[s] except in a phrase of censure," was actually a thus-far unrealised element of literary criticism. For Eliot, the term "tradition" is imbued with a special and complex character. It represents a "simultaneous order," by which Eliot means a historical timelessness – a fusion of past and present – and, at the same time, a sense of present temporality. A poet must embody "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" while, simultaneously, expressing his contemporary environment. Eliot challenges the common perception that a poet's greatness and individuality lie in his departure from his predecessors; he argues that "the most individual parts of his (the poet) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most

vigorously.” Eliot claims that this “historical sense” is not only a resemblance to traditional works but an awareness and understanding of their relation to his poetry.

This fidelity to tradition, however, does not require the great poet to forfeit novelty in an act of surrender to repetition. Rather, Eliot has a much more dynamic and progressive conception of the poetic process: Novelty is possible only by tapping into tradition. When a poet engages in the creation of new work, he realises an aesthetic “ideal order,” as it has been established by the literary tradition that has come before him. As such, the act of artistic creation does not take place in a vacuum. The introduction of a new work alters the cohesion of this existing order, and causes a readjustment of the old to accommodate the new. The inclusion of the new work alters the way in which the past is seen, elements of the past that are noted and realised. In Eliot’s own words: “What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it.” Eliot refers to this organic tradition, this developing canon, as the “mind of Europe.” The private mind is subsumed by this more massive one.

This leads to Eliot’s so-called “Impersonal Theory” of poetry. Since the poet engages in a “continual surrender of himself” to the vast order of tradition, artistic creation is a process of depersonalisation. The mature poet is viewed as a medium, through which tradition is channelled and elaborated. He compares the poet to a catalyst in a chemical reaction, in which the reactants are feelings and emotions that are synthesised to create an artistic image that captures and relays these same feelings and emotions. While the mind of the poet is necessary for the production, it emerges unaffected by the process. The artist stores feelings and emotions and properly unites them into a specific combination, which is the artistic product. What lends greatness to a work of art are not the feelings and emotions themselves, but the nature of the artistic process by which they are synthesised. The artist is responsible for creating “the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place.” And, it is the intensity of fusion that renders art great. In this view, Eliot rejects the

theory that art expresses metaphysical unity in the soul of the poet. The poet is a depersonalised vessel, a mere medium.

Great works, Eliot states, do not express the personal emotion of the poet. The poet does not reveal his own unique and novel emotions, but rather, by drawing on ordinary ones and channelling them through the intensity of poetry, he expresses feelings that surpass, altogether, experienced emotion. This is what Eliot intends when he discusses poetry as an "escape from emotion." Since successful poetry is impersonal and, therefore, exists independent of its poet, it outlives the poet and can incorporate into the timeless "ideal order" of the "living" literary tradition.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the two main concepts of the essay?

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Q 5: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality". Explain.

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Q 6: How, according to Eliot, is poetry an "escape from emotion"?

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11.5 ELIOT AS A CRITIC

Often hailed as the successor to poet-critics such as John Dryden, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot's literary criticism informs his poetry just as his experiences as a poet shape his critical work. Though famous for insisting on "objectivity" in art, Eliot's essays actually map a highly personal set of preoccupations, responses and ideas about specific authors and works of art, as well as formulate more

general theories on the connections between poetry, culture and society.

In 1928, Eliot stirred up the English intellectual world with strong responses by stating that he was a royalist in politics, Anglo- Catholic in religion and a classicist in literature. Paul De Man mentions in "The Resistance to Theory" that Eliot was a perfect embodiment of New Criticism by dint of his "original talent, traditional learning, verbal wit and moral earnest ness" (*Modern Literary Theory*, 275). Eliot's critical thoughts and insights prepared the ground for the flourishing of New Criticism in the 1940s and the 1950s. Besides, it was Eliot who helped to establish English as an academic discipline and remodelled the canon of English literature. In the essay "To Criticize the Critic", Eliot builds up and upholds a distinctive tradition of English poetry that includes the Metaphysical poets. Again, he also demonstrates the 'best' by explaining an objective criterion to judge the worth of poetry, in his theory of 'impersonality'.

In later section of "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Eliot states "honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry". In such sentences, we can see the origins of New Criticism with its concern for the words on the page. For many critics in the 1970s and after Eliot—Anglican, conservative, New Critical, formalist—has been the arch enemy. Harold Bloom, for example, derided Eliot's poetry and criticism and sought to revitalise the Romantic tradition that Eliot had shunned. Many others, arguing for the inclusion of women and minority writers within the literary canon, have attacked his judgments about literary and cultural tradition.



11.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through the different sections of the unit, you have learnt that the essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" formulates Eliot's influential concept of the relationship between the poet and the literary tradition which precedes him. Eliot states that a poet or artist has his or her complete meaning in isolation but must be judged, for contrast and comparison, among

the dead. As Eliot sees it, the order of art is complete before a new work of art is created, but with that new creation all the prior works forming an ideal order are modified, and the order itself is altered. From this unit, you have also received sufficient ideas regarding Eliot's Impersonality Theory of Poetry. Since the poet engages in a "continual surrender of himself" to the vast order of tradition, artistic creation is a process of depersonalisation.



11.7 FURTHER READING

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5) Vincent B. Leitch (Gen. Ed) *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc. 2001.

Websites :

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._S._Eliot

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/essay/237868



11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: This essay was first published in 1919 in *The Egoist.*

Ans to Q No 2: "The Waste Land" expresses with great power the disenchantment, disillusionment, and disgust of the period after

World War I. In a series of vignettes, loosely linked by the legend of the search for the Grail, it portrays a sterile world of panicky fears and barren lusts, and of human beings waiting for some sign or promise of redemption.

Ans to Q No 3: All his plays are in a blank verse of his own invention; thus he brought "poetic drama" back to the popular stage.

Ans to Q No 4: The essay mostly deals with two broad concepts—Tradition and Impersonality of Poetry.

Ans to Q No 5: Refer to Section 11.4

Ans to Q No 6: Great works, Eliot states, do not express the personal emotion of the poet. The poet does not reveal his own unique and novel emotions, but rather, by drawing on ordinary ones and channelling them through the intensity of poetry, he expresses feelings that surpass, altogether, experienced emotion. This is what Eliot intends when he discusses poetry as an "escape from emotion."



11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: How does Eliot view the idea of 'Tradition' in the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"?

Q 2: What is Eliot's Impersonality Theory of Poetry? Discuss.

Q 3: Discuss T. S. Eliot as a modern critic with reference to the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

Q 4: What are the two segments of the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"? Discuss with reference to Eliot's major arguments in the essay.

Q 5: Assess the significance of T. S. Eliot as a modern critic.

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UNIT 12: NEW CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Introducing New Criticism

12.4 Important New Critical Thinkers

12.5 Let us Sum up

12.6 Further Reading

12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.8 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss New Criticism as an influential critical movement in modern literary criticism
- write short notes on the important critics and thinkers associated with New Criticism
- discuss the ideas and concepts central to New Criticism

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the critical movement called New Criticism. The term New Criticism refers to the theory and form of practice prevalent in Anglo-American literary criticism in around 1940s to 1960s. The term 'New Criticism' was coined by John Crowe Ransom. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will be able to discuss the major propositions put forth by the New Critics thinkers. The New Critics believed that the text is an autonomous, self-contained entity and is itself the proper object of criticism. In this unit, you will also get acquainted with some of the important New Critical thinkers like I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, W. K. Wimsatt, etc. among others.

12.3 INTRODUCING NEW CRITICISM

The term New Criticism refers to the theory and form of practice prevalent in Anglo-American literary criticism in around 1940s to 1960s. Three important books served as the foundational texts of the New Critical movement—*Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1929), and *Understanding Poetry* (1938), as well as many of T. S. Eliot's critical essays.

New Criticism is a reaction against some of the important critical insights and tendencies of Romantics Criticism which sought to uphold authorial intention or the 'expression' of the intention of the authors to be the most important area of scholarly discussion. New Criticism, on the other hand, dispensed with the question of the author while assessing a literary work. John Crowe Ransom, who coined the term New Criticism when he was Carnegie Professor of Poetry at Kenyon College, organised academic discussions regularly pleading for a pure criticism that could overthrow historical and ***philological*** scholarship then in vogue in the universities. He argued for exclusive focus on the literary techniques rather than on biography, morality, psychology, and sought to replace 'extrinsic' criticism with 'intrinsic' criticism.



Philogocial : the study of the structure, historical development and relationships of a language or languages.

New Criticism, thus became a self-contained academic discipline. Although there were differences and disagreements amongst the New Critics themselves, yet they all agreed upon the question of the object of literary criticism. The basic assumption was that reading a text in terms of 'authorial intention', effect on the reader or its historical context cannot do justice to the text which is a texture of variously patterned linguistic elements. The text is an autonomous, self-contained entity and is itself the proper object of criticism. A text must be studied in its own terms and extra-textual yardsticks should not be brought to bear upon it. The New Critics were oriented towards "close-reading" or 'practical reading' on the lines laid down by I.A. Richards. A text, because it is constituted by a unique language, is itself a source of its meaning and value, and is thus distinguished from other texts or other uses of language. A poem is an

embodied experience inextricably bound up with language, and hence its meaning cannot be conveyed by prose paraphrase. The New Critics' consensus on the object of critical analysis leads to the separation of a literary work from its different historical, biographical, sociological and other contexts. To isolate a work from its wider socio-historical context is to assume that the work is subjected to 'scientific' analysis.

It is also important for you to note that an affinity between the Formalists (discussed in Unit 14) and the New Critics can be drawn. Both regard literature as a self-contained verbal entity and insist on the autonomy of the literary text. One important offshoot of such an assumption is that they promote a mode of 'intrinsic criticism' and reject extra-literary criteria to judge literary texts. Both ***unanimously*** fix the object of investigation. Both employ a mode of 'intrinsic' criticism, brushing aside the 'extrinsic' elements from the scene. Both share a pervasive concern for 'form'. However, unlike the formalists, the New Critics insisted on the irreducibility of literary experience that cannot be paraphrased by any degree of scientific precision. In the next unit, you will find an opportunity to read on Formalism in detail.



Unanimously : in full agreement.
Debunked : reveal a windely held opinion or reputation to be false.

However, the basic theoretical premises of this school have been variously contested in subsequent periods. New Criticism's implicit assumption about the high cultural values embedded in English literary culture was ***debunked*** by the 'Culture studies' scholar. Besides, New Historicism which opts for the historical and social elements as important source of literary speculation, is in sharp contrast to the insular and textual reading upheld by the New Critics. New Historicism insists on a dynamic text, context and dialogue in the production of meaning and value of literature. It is not an exaggeration to state that the theoretical movements such as Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Deconstruction. Post colonialism, Feminism, Cultural Studies and New Historicism that started from the 1960s onwards began as a reaction against the basic principles and ideas of New Criticism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you understand by the term New Criticism? Name some of the foundational texts of New Criticism.

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Q 2: What were the common agendas of all New Critical thinkers?

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Q 3: Do you think that both the Formalist critics and New Critics share certain common characteristics? Explain.

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12.4 IMPORTANT NEW CRITICAL THINKERS

It must be noted that John Crowe Ransom, I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, John Crow Ransom, William Empson, Yvor Winters, W. K. Wimsatt, etc. among others are the most important new critics. The following is an attempt at understanding their contributions.



Formidable : causing fear or respect through being very long powerful or capable.

- **I. A. Richards (1893-1979) :**

  I. A. Richards was an important critical thinker of the 20th century. Once, he distributed some papers containing poems (where he withheld the names of the poets) in his class and asked the students to critically evaluate them. The task was ***formidable*** because it inspired a direct, 'unmediated' encounter between the literary text and the students or the 'critical reader'.

  The earlier phase of his critical works focused on meaning, comprehension and communication. *Principles of Literary Criticism* by Richards is a reaction against a time when there was nothing but "an echo of critical theories". The book is an expression of the enthusiasm he felt for science and the scientific mode of enquiry.

Practical Criticism, another work by Richards, had a **pedagogic** necessity as it promoted a particular method of teaching literature in many Anglo-American universities, and inspired the practice of 'close-reading' in subsequent critical developments. Richards is usually seen as the founder of the modern school of New Criticism.



Pedagogic: related to the profession or theory of teaching.

Richards contributed a good number of terms to literary criticism such as—'stock responses', 'pseudo-statements', 'bogus entities', distinction between 'tenor' and 'vehicle', terms like 'referential', 'referent', 'ambiguity', etc. The term 'ambiguity' may suggest a negative marker, but Richards asserted that ambiguity is a basic trait of language itself.

- **William Empson (1906-1984) :**

William Empson was the student of I. A. Richards. He emphasised more on a linguistic analysis of literary texts. In his book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, he expounded the term 'ambiguity' coined by I. A. Richards. He maintained that a particular word does not have a single meaning but a cluster of meanings, and his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* showed careful analysis of small units of a text (word, line, sentence, etc.). He insisted on alternative readings, and stated that ambiguity is characteristic of poetic and literary language.

I.A. Richards' principles regarding the nature and function of criticism, was first applied to poetry by Empson. In the *English Critical Tradition,* he is regarded as one of the sharpest and the most sensitive of modern critics. Empson, as S. Ramaswami and V. S. Sethuraman have said, is "perhaps the first analytical critic to apply the principles of I.A. Richards on the nature and function of language consistently and with gusto to particular passages of poetry."

- **Allen Tate (1899-1979) :**

Allen Tate belongs to the Southern group of American critics. While I.A. Richards separated the referential and emotive functions of language, Tate distinguished between scientific and literary discourses. According to Tate, 'tension' is a general characteristic



Denotative : be a sign of something.
Connotative : suggestive of meaning in addition to its primary meaning.
Ontologically : philosophy concerned with the nature of being.

is poetry. In an essay, "Tension in Poetry" he uses the term in a special sense. A poem has both ***denotative*** and ***connotative*** meaning. He said that "In poetry, words have not only their denotative meanings but also their connotative significance." To indicate the logical meaning and the denotative aspects of language Tate used the word 'extension'. And to refer to the suggestive and the connotative aspect of language, he used the word 'Intension'. Hence, he reiterated that "A successful poem is one in which these two sets of meaning are in a state of 'Tension'".

- **John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974) :**

Ransom was a pioneering figure of New Criticism in America. He opined that the function of criticism is the elucidation of literary works. Most notable among the critical works by Ransom are *The New Criticism* and *The World as Body.* Both works contain important facets of New Criticism. In his essay entitled "Criticism, Inc.", for instance, he puts forward certain basic principles of this school, and expressed his aim to make literary criticism "more scientific or precise and systematic". Ransom further asserted that poetry is ***ontologically*** different and hence irreducible to prose-meaning. Ransom's view of the distinctive nature of poetic experience can also be understood through the distinction he makes between 'texture' and 'structure' of a poem. The structure is the argument of the poem seen as a whole. 'Texture' is constituted by elements that have local value and affect the overall shape of the poem. The 'texture' does not easily give rise to the 'structure' but rather impedes it. It complicates whatever argument the poet is going to establish. As a result "in the end we have our logic but only after a lively reminder of the aspects of reality with which logic cannot cope."



LET US KNOW

The term 'Texture' has been actually derived from the plastic arts which denotes the surface quality of a work, as opposed to its shape and structure. As applied in modern literary criticism, it thus designates the concrete qualities of a poem as opposed to its idea: thus the verbal surface of a work, its sensuous qualities and the density of its imagery.

- **William Wimsatt, Jr. (1907-1975) & Monroe C. Beardsley (1915-1985) :**

  Wimsatt, a professor of English at Yale University, contributed to New Criticism with important works as *The Prose Style of Dr. Johnson, Philosophic Words, The Verbal Icon* and *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (with Cleanth Brooks). Similarly, Beardsley was a professor of philosophy and his works included *Practical Logic, Aesthetics, An Introduction to Philosophic Thinking.* The most notable contributions of both critics are found in essays titled "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy". These were controversial papers which elaborated a basic tenet of New Criticism—the issue of authorial intention and effect on the reader. 'Intention' and 'Affect' must be avoided in criticism because they are not implicated in the text itself. If a poem expresses certain thoughts and attitudes, they can be ascribed to the 'dramatic speaker' or 'persona' of the poem and not to the biographical author. Therefore, in critical discourse, terms such as sincerity, authenticity, originality need to be replaced by terms like integrity, relevance, unity, function etc. because it is the literary work which is the sole object of critical scrutiny.

You should note that "The Intentional Fallacy" by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley is a 'foundational' text of New Criticism which states that 'intention' of the author should not be brought to bear upon the analysis of the literary text. They argue that knowledge of an author's

original intention is neither integral to, nor essential in the critical analysis of a work. One can interpret a text even without making any reference to 'authorial intention'. The other text 'Affective Fallacy' thus refers to a confusion between a poem and its "affect" on the readers. As used by Wimsatt and Beardsley (in *The Verbal Icon*, 1954), this term connoted 'a confusion between the poem and its result (what it is and what it does)'. They opined that judgment of a literary text should not rest upon the effect it has on the readers. A text, however emotive its context might be, must nevertheless be judged as a text, or a self-sufficient entity. It must be seen as a system of language. Thus, evaluating a work of art in terms of its results in the mind of the readers is supposed to be a critical error.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q 4: What is the significance of William Empson as a New critic?

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Q 5: Name the two significant essays written by William Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley? Why are they significant?

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12.5 LET US SUM UP

After you have finished reading this unit, you have noted that New Criticism institutionalises the study of literature and establishes it as a self-sufficient academic discipline. The term New Criticism refers to the theory and a form of practice prevalent in Anglo-American literary criticism in around 1940s to 1960s. It also promotes a particular reading practice: the habit of "close reading." You have realised the importance of certain thinkers like I. A. Richards, John Crow Ransom, William Empson, Yvor Winters, W. K.

Wimsatt, etc. who have contributed immensely towards the theory of New Criticism.



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12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The term New Criticism refers to the theory and form of practice prevalent in Anglo-American literary criticism in around 1940s to 1960s. *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) by I. A. Richards, and *Understanding Poetry* (1938) by Cleanth Brooks and many of T. S. Eliot's critical essays are some of the foundational texts of New Criticism.

Ans to Q No 2: All New Critics agreed that a text is an autonomous, self-contained entity and is itself the proper object of criticism. They were oriented towards "close-reading" or 'practical reading' on the lines laid down by I.A. Richards. They also believed that a text, because it is constituted by a unique language, is itself a source of its meaning and value, and is thus distinguished from other texts or other uses of language.

Ans to Q No 3: Yes. Both regard literature as a self-contained verbal entity. Both insist on the autonomy of the literary text. Both employ a mode of 'intrinsic' criticism, brushing aside the 'extrinsic' elements from the scene. Both share a pervasive towards for 'form'.

Ans to Q No 4: William Empson emphasised a linguistic analysis of literary texts. In his book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, he expounded the term 'ambiguity' by which he maintained that a particular word does not have a single meaning but a cluster of meanings. He insisted on alternative readings, and stated that ambiguity is characteristic of poetic and literary language.

Ans to Q No 5: The most notable contributions of both critics are found in the essays titled "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy". In the first they argued that 'intention' of the author should not be brought to bear upon the analysis of the literary text. While the second refers to a confusion between a poem and its "affect" on the readers.



12.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the basic premises of New Criticism? Discuss.

Q 2: Write an account of the famous New Critics and enumerate their specific contributions to New Criticism.

Q 3: What do you mean by 'close reading'? Why is 'close reading' so important in New Criticism?

Q 4: Do you find any similarity between the New Critics and Formalists? Explain.

Q 5: Write short notes on:

a) The Intentional Fallacy

b) John Crowe Ransom and New Criticism

c) I. A. Richards as a New Critic

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UNIT 13 : STRUCTURALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Introducing Structuralism

13.4 Important Structuralist Thinkers

13.5 Let us Sum up

13.6 Further Reading

13.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.8 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss Structuralism as another important critical trend
- identify the important structuralist thinkers and trace their contributions
- explain the significance of both New Criticism and Structuralism

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with another important critical trend called Structuralism. It refers firstly to a particular set of approaches to literature and other cultural art forms which flourished in France during 1960s. Taking its ideas from Linguistics, Structuralism focuses on the conditions that make meaning possible. It tries to map the ‘structures’ that are the actual carriers of meaning and the various relations among the elements within those structures. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will be able to discuss the major propositions put forth by the New Critics and the Structuralist thinkers.

13.3 INTRODUCING STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism can be said to have formally begun with the *Course in General Linguistics,* a series of lectures delivered by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) at the University of Geneva. Although published posthumously in 1960, this book provided a new definition of the 'object of linguistics'. It has been unanimously accepted that the models for structuralist ideas can be traced in Ferdinand de Saussure's pioneering linguistics, which centres not on individual utterances but on the underlying rules and conventions that enable language to operate.

But before going into the details of Saussure's ideas, let us try to look at the meaning of 'structure'. Sometimes 'Structure' is understood along with the idea of a 'form', 'structure' usually refers to the overall shape and pattern of a text. However, all critical theories, have tried to define the 'structure': or the developing unity of a work. According to the characteristics of that unity; the term may mean pattern, plot, form, argument, language, rhetoric, paradox, metaphor, myth and so on. Starting from such dispositions, the term 'structure' becomes an apt reference to the internal means, and emphasised features likely to be found in literature and language. Peter Barry has stated the following while discussing 'structure'.

"The structures in question here are those imposed by our way of perceiving the world and organising experience, rather than objective entities already existing in the external world. It follows from this that meaning or significance is not a kind of core or essence *inside* things: rather, meaning is always *outside.* Meaning is always an attribute of things, in the literal sense that meanings are *attributed* to the things by the human mind, not contained within them. But let's try to be specific about what it might mean to think primarily in terms of structures when considering literature. Imagine that we are confronted with a poem, Donne's "Good Morrow". Our immediate reaction as structuralists would probably be to insist that it can only be understood if we first have a clear notion of the genre which it parodies and subverts. Any single poem is an example of a particular genre, and the genre and the example relate

to each other rather as a phrase spoken in English relates to the English language as a structure with all its rules, its conventions, and so on. In the case of Donne's poem the relevant genre is the *alba* or 'dawn song', a poetic form dating from the twelfth century in which lovers lament the approach of daybreak because it means that they must part." From this, you must have received certain ideas regarding the definition of a 'structure' .

Saussurean structuralism analyses the social or collective dimensions of language, focusing on grammar rather than usage; rules rather than actual expressions; and *langue* (the system of language) rather than *parole* (actual speech). This type of linguistics is concerned with the infrastructure of language common to all speakers at a given time (which operates on an unconscious level), and not with surface phenomena or historical charge. Thus, it attends to the synchronic (that which exists now) not the diachronic (that which exists and changes over time). Saussure wanted to show that 'language has its own potentials' and can exist 'outside the individual'. For him, Language is a self authenticating system and is not determined by the physical world. Whatever one sees in language is simply the connection of a meaning to a particular sound-image.

In the previous unit, you have read about New Criticism. You will note that Anglo American New Criticism and Russian Formalism are the two most significant theoretical trends which provided grounds for the development of Structuralism. The New Critics paid a particular attention to the formal aspects of literature, which they believed, contributed largely to its meaning and their attempt at 'close reading' made their effort easier. Simultaneously in Russia, some literary theorists argued that it was 'literariness' that differentiated literary texts from other forms of writings like an advertisement, or a newspaper article. Borrowing much from the Russian Formalists, the structuralist thinkers in Prague began to see a literary text as a structure of differences. Finally, they propounded that a literary text differs from other texts because of its orientation towards itself, its own form and not towards any outside sources.

The subsequent periods saw the publication of some very important books on Structuralism. Robert Scholes's *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974) and Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (1975) still remain good introductions to Structuralism. Two classic introductions to Structuralism have been John Sturrock's *Structuralism* (2003) and Terence Hawkes's *Structuralism and Semiotics* (2003). Jonathan Culler's massive and wide-ranging book *Structuralism* (2006) collects practically all important structuralist contributions to the humanities and the human sciences.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you understand by the term 'structure'?

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Q 2: What is so specific about Sassurean structuralism?

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13.4 IMPORTANT STRUCTURALIST THINKERS

The practice of Structuralism is usually related to thinkers like Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Gerard Genette, Jonathan Culler and so on. The following is a very brief discussion of the contributions of some of the important Structuralist thinkers.

- **Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) :**

  Saussure who soon came to be known as "the father of modern linguistics" influenced mid-twentieth century thought in a wide variety of fields. After spending a year studying in Berlin and receiving his doctorate from the University of Leipzig in 1880, he became a senior lecturer at the "Ecole des Hautes Etudes" (School

for Advanced Study) in Paris, where he began by teaching Gothic and Old High German, later adding Sanskrit (which he had studied since 1874), Latin, Persian, and Lithuanian. In 1891, he accepted a professorship at the University of Geneva, teaching there for the rest of his life. It was in 1906 that, after the death of a colleague, he was asked to add "general linguistics" to his teachings in historical and comparative linguistics. Ferdinand de Saussure is well known for his book *The Course in General Linguistics.* You should note that this book is based on student notes, and was compiled by his colleagues in 1916 after Saussure's death.

What was Saussure's contribution to the new theory of language? Saussure was almost convinced about the "arbitrary" (purely conventional) nature of the sign. Since there are thousands of human languages, the relation between words and things cannot be based on natural resemblances. Saussure's own theory illustrates this point through his terms *langage, langue,* and *parole* which have never been satisfactorily translated into English. *Le langage* (in English, "language") is a general human faculty, that which enables us to speak of "body language" or "the language of fashion." Language, for Saussure, is a structured system of conventional signs, studied in their internal complexity as if frozen in time (synchronically) rather than as changing over time (diachronically). Saussure further explained the study of language in terms of 'sign', 'signifier' and 'signified'. In his *Course in General Linguistics* Saussure presented the idea of the 'sign' and the distinction between the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. For him, the linguistic 'sign' unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image. The atom of language is the 'sign', which is functionally split into two parts: a 'signifier' (sound-image) and a 'signified' (concept), brought inseparably together like the two sides of the same coin. The relation between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' is "arbitrary" not "motivated" (by natural resemblance),

even in cases of Onomatopoiea (words that sound like what they mean).

Saussure then goes on to say that *everything* in language is relational as he states: “in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms”* (Saussure’s emphasis). In other words, neither ideas nor sounds exist prior to their combination. This description of a difference that does not depend on the prior existence of knowable entities is one of Saussure’s most radical declarations. Saussure used an interesting example to explain what he meant by saying that there are no intrinsic fixed meanings in language—for an instance, he cites the example of the 8.25 Geneva to Paris express train, as he states: “What is it that gives this train its identity? It isn’t anything material, since each day it will have a different engine and carriages, different drivers and passengers, and so on. If it is late, it won’t even leave at 8.25. Does it even have to be a train? I once asked at Southampton station for the Brighton train, and the ticket collector pointed to a bus standing outside the station and said, ‘That’s it’. It was a Sunday, and because of engineering works on the line a bus service was being used to ferry passengers beyond the sections being worked upon. Sometimes, then, a ‘train’ *doesn’t* have to be a train.” Saussure’s conclusion is that the only thing which gives this train its identity is its position in a structure of differences: it comes *between* the 7.25 and the 9.25, that is, its identity is purely relational.

In Saussure’s conception of language, the ‘sign’ is not only **arbitrary** but also **linear** (he thus uses a spatial term for what is in fact temporal, the succession of signs as they unfold in time during speech). Signs are combined like links in a chain to form the line of language according to two relations: the *syntagmatic* (all units present in their articulation) and the

associative (all related units present in the mind but absent from the actual sequence). This distinction, later called *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic,* would form an important part of Roman Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy. For Saussure, some syntagmatic relations beyond mere grammatical rules count as *language* rather than *speech.* Far from being freely chosen by each speaker, they constitute the "idioms" that a newcomer must master in order to "know" a language. Saussure believed that the proper object of linguistic study is the system which underlies all signifying practices, and not the individual utterances. In his views, words are not merely symbols which correspond to their referents, but 'signs' which are made up of two ingredients—'signifiers' and 'signified' whose relationship is always arbitrary. The elements of language derive meaning not because of the connection between the word and the thing but because of a system of relations. This means that there is no one-to-one relationship between the word and the object it signifies.

Such important findings made by Saussure revolutionised Modern Linguistics which also contributed to the development of Structuralism.

- **Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009) :**

  Claude Levi-Strauss was a French anthropologist. He rose to prominence in around 1950- 1960. Taking inspiration from Ferdinand de Saussure who had defined language as a system of signs and linguistics as a branch of Semiology, Levi-Strauss argued that the objects of Social Anthropology (cultural phenomena such as kinship systems and rituals) consist of communications, not just functions. Reframing Anthropology as a study of Culture rather than cultures, Levi-Strauss underscored the discipline's implications for history, politics, art, literature, economics, and philosophy, dramatically transforming anthropology's profile in the academy. Within the discipline many scholars have contested the empirical validity of his analyses of kinship, totemism, and myth

and have accused Levi-Strauss of engaging in a kind of metaphysical colonisation. Though the structuralist method that Levi-Strauss pioneered has been superseded, the analogy he proposed-that cultural phenomena constitute exchanges of messages and that cultural codes may be analysed as languages remains a tacit working assumption of many forms of cultural theory.

Levi-Strauss proposed adapting the methods of structural linguistics to the analysis of kinship and other cultural phenomena. His *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* was published in 1949. In his view, the prohibition of incest, which seems to be a universal rule in human society, is designed not to ward off biological or psychological damage but to make women available for "trade" by men of their group with men of other groups.

- **Roland Barthes (1915-1980) :**

  Roland Barthes, another French Structuralist, introduced Saussurean ideas of Linguistics to the study of literature. Inspired by the methods of Structural Linguistics, during 1960s, Barthes wanted to explore the possibility of developing a science of culture. It was also the time when he came closer to the contemporary thinkers like Claude Levi-Strauss and Michel Foucault. His books *Elements of Semiology* and *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* clearly verify his stand on Structuralism. The systems of classification and 'binary opposition' encouraged him a lot.

  The publication of *S/Z* marks a turning point in Barthes's relation to Structuralism. He is famous for the essay "The Death of the Author" which begins with an example taken from Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*—the tale of a sculptor who falls in love with an Italian diva subsequently revealed not to be a woman. Barthes argues that the effective, productive, and engaged reading of a text depends on the suspension of preconceived ideas about the character of the particular author-or even on human psychology

in general. A text is a structure composed of elements of signification by which the elements make themselves manifest. From the moment that writing detaches itself from an immediate context, "It is language which speaks, not the author." The author, the text, and the reader are each composed of a universe of quotations without origin or end. In its celebration of the birth of the reader, "The Death of the Author" explores the consequences of freeing the reading process from the constraints of fidelity to an origin, a unified meaning, an identity, or any other pre-given exterior or interior reality. Such ideas help in understanding some of the important aspects of Structuralism.

[You may try reading the essay "The Death of the Author" from *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, edited by David Lodge and Nigel Wood]

- **Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) :**

  Lacan, although better known as a Poststructuralist, began his theory of psychoanalysis on the linguistic models of Saussure and Roman Jacobson as well as the on the psychoanalytic methods of Sigmund Freud. The point he made is that language is a manifestation of structures in the unconscious and that linguistic patterns reveal important characteristics of the individual subject's psychic state. But he deviates from Saussure in a specific way. Where Saussure regards the relationship between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' as being almost fixed, Lacan argues that the 'signifier' can shift in meaning and that the 'signified' is always provisional.

- **Gerard Genette (1930-) :**

  Gerard Genette, another French theoretician and Structuralist critic, is known for his Literary Structuralism later becoming popular as Narratology. The focus of Genette was not on the underlying structures of the content of stories, but on the structure of narration itself-the way stories are told. In fact the underlying structures that make stories possible is what distinguishes Genette's

Structuralist approach. His book *Narrative Discourse* (1972) is one of the most significant contributions to Narratology whose ultimate goal is to discover general rules of narration that will cover almost all the possible ways in which stories are told to produce the intended meaning. Working on his Structuralist approach to narratives, Genette introduced a number of new terminologies redefining already-existing categories and insights. His main contribution to Narratology can be discussed in terms of his interests and concerns as stated below :

- Genette was concerned with the way the chronological **'order'** of events and actions of a novel is narrated in the actual story. One can express this relationship between the chronological order (formalist's ides of the 'Fabula') and the narrative order (the 'Syuzhet') in terms of their connection at a given point of time.
- Genette propounded the notion of **'duration'** which meant the relationship between the actual time in which an event occurs in the reality of the 'world out there' and the time that the narrator takes to narrate that event. Hence, narration should speed-up the happenings so that there is no disastrous consequence like watching a day-long movie in the cinema hall.
- Genette's third concern was with **'frequency'** which actually covers the relation between the number of times that an event occurs in the world and the number of times that it is actually narrated. 'Frequency' is in use when one tries to repeatedly describe occurring events only once like we might say we went to the beach every single day during the last summer. Such discussions on narrative were very significant contributions to Struturalist Narratology.

- **Jonathan Culler (1944-) :**

Making an attempt to assimilate French Structuralism to an Anglo-American critical perspective, the American literary critic Culler

sought to establish the notion that linguistics presents the best model of knowledge for the humanities and social sciences. His highly acclaimed book, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (1975), first introduces 'the linguistic model' on the basis of the works of Claude Levi -Strauss, Roman Jacobson, A. J. Greimas, Vladimir Propp, and particularly Roland Barthes and draws attention to the theoretical limitations of each of these thinkers. Secondly, he attempts to synthesise 'the linguistic model' derived from European Semiotics and Structuralism of the 1960s, especially that of Saussure and finally he articulates a Structuralist poetics, an effective model for reading literature whose very basic job is 'to make explicit the underlying systems which makes literary effects possible.'

- **Northrop Fry (1912-1991) :**

  Structuralism in Western culture can be anticipated in the works of the Canadian thinker Northrop Fry who contributed to the emergence of a type of criticism called "Myth Criticism" functional in-between 1940-1960. Drawing on Anthropology and Psychology, he began to consider universal myths, rituals, and folktales; and also tried to restore the spiritual values to a world he considered alienated, fragmented and commonly ruled by scientism, empiricism, positivism, and technology. In his view, myths were created as integral to human thought. Subsequently, he assumed that literature too emerged out of a collective effort to establish a meaningful context of human existence on the part of various cultures and groups. Northrop Fry's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) emphasised that criticism should be scientific, objective and systematic discipline, subsequently, his models exhibited recurrent patterns, which were later shared by Structuralist views of language and literature.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Name some of the theories of language that Saussure proposed?

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Q 4: How did Levi Strauss view the discipline of Social Anthropology?

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Q 5: What are Genette's contributions to Narratology?

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, regarding Structuralism you have learnt that it explores the various possible ways of making meaning prominent rather than meaning itself. It tries to frame the structure and the interrelation of the various elements within that structure. Although structuralism is closely related to Russian Formalism and the Prague Linguistic Circle, French Structuralism is distinguished by its variety and interdisciplinary character. Following Saussurean ideas based on the premise that language is a self-sufficient system operating by its own internal rules, and on the relation between the 'signifier' and the 'signified', Structuralists try to formulate the idea that a text is a self-sufficient system. Now you should also be in a position to discuss the major new critical and structuralist thinkers and assess the significance of their contributions to language and structure.



13.6 FURTHER READING

1) Barry, Peter. (2009). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* (3rd Edition) Manchester: Manchester University Press.
2) Bertens, Hans. (2001). *Literary Theory: The Basics* London: Routledge.
3) Cuddon, J. A. (1999). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
4) Makaryk, Irena R. (Ed.) (1993). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.
5) Ramaswami S. & V.S. Sethuraman (Ed.) (1978). *The Critical Tradition: An Anthology of English Literary Criticism Vol-2*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited.
6) Vincent B. Leitch. (Gen. Ed) (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc.



13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: 'Structure' is understood as a 'form', but it usually refers to the overall shape and pattern of a text. However, the term may also mean pattern, plot, form, argument, language, rhetoric, paradox, metaphor, myth and so on.

Ans to Q No 2: Saussurean structuralism analyses the social or collective dimensions of language, focusing on grammar rather than usage; rules rather than actual expressions; and *langue* rather than *parole*. This type of Linguistics is concerned with the infrastructure of language common to all speakers at a given time, and not with

surface phenomena or historical charge. Saussure propounded that 'language has its own potentials' and can exist 'outside the individual'.

Ans to Q No 3: Arbitrariness of language; Sign, Signifier and Signified; Langue and Parole, Diachronic and Synchronic Study of Language, Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic relationship, etc.

Ans to Q No 4: Levi-Strauss argued that the objects of Social Anthropology like kinship systems and rituals consist of communications, not just functions. Reframing Anthropology as a study of Culture rather than cultures, Levi-Strauss underscored the discipline's implications for history, politics, art, literature, economics, and philosophy, dramatically transforming Anthropology's profile in the academy.

Ans to Q No 5: Genette was concerned with the way the chronological 'order' of events and actions of a novel is narrated in the actual story. He propounded the notion of 'duration' which meant the relationship between the actual time in which an event occurs in the reality of the 'world out there' and the time that the narrator takes to narrate that event. Genette's third concern was with 'frequency' which actually covers the relation between the number of times that an event occurs in the world and the number of times that it is actually narrated.



13.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What is a Structure? Discuss Saussure's contributions to the theory of language.

Q 2: Who are the major Structuralist thinkers? Discuss the significance of their contribution to the development of Structuralism.

Q 3: Why is Saussure called the Father of Modern Linguistics? Explain.

Q 4: In what ways, according to you, the Stucturalist thinkers engage themselves with the meaning of structure both in literature and cultural forms.

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UNIT 14: FORMALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Introducing Russian Formalism

14.4 Important Russian Formalist Critics

14.5 Major Concepts in Russian Formalism

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Further Reading

14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.9 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss Russian Formalism as an important trend in Literary Theory
- explain the history of Formalist criticism
- make a list of the major formalist thinkers
- examine the concepts popularised by the formalist thinkers
- discuss the overall significance of Russian Formalism in subsequent times

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to some basic ideas of Formalist criticism through a discussion of Russian Formalism. You will note that the Formalist Critics became prominent in the early part of the twentieth century. It is usually defined against the subjective theories of literature as propounded by the Romantics. Thus, Formalist criticism is not concerned with the feelings or the biography of poets. Nor it is concerned with the responses of readers. Instead, it is concerned with artistic structure and form. There are two best-known schools of formalist criticism—Anglo American New Criticism and Russian Formalism. Like Anglo-American

New Criticism, Russian Formalism initially concentrated on poetry. However, the interesting point is that the Russians who developed the so-called *formal method* were almost unaware of the developments in England and America. The following sections of this unit will help you to discuss Russian Formalism in terms of its various important aspects.

14.3 INTRODUCING RUSSIAN FORMALISM

In the later 19th and early 20th centuries, sociological considerations were dominant in the critical climate of Russia as the Russian critics dwelt extensively on the connection of literature with issues of social well-being. Some of the dominant views on literature like—literature should contribute to social betterment while at the same time remain artistic and social, and also while political demands overshadow the aesthetic in literature. Critical debates on Pushkin's works being harmful to social progress and so on became part of important critical debates in the mid-19th century. Against these political and intellectual debates, it is important to discuss the role played by Russian Formalist. The French Symbolist Movement offered a highly subjective and impressionistic mode of criticism. The Formalists, however, entered the scene with a reaction against the subjectivism of the Symbolists, pleading instead for a scientific mode of literary study.

Initially, the Formalist critics offered a distinctive view of language, and underlined the distinctiveness of literary against ordinary language. The second decade of the twentieth century saw the emergence of two circles of literary thinkers and linguists in Russia namely Moscow Linguistic Circle based in Moscow, and the OPOJAZ often known as the "Society for the Study of Poetic Language" based in St. Petersburg. The former circle was formed in the capital city of Russia in 1915. It was founded by the eminent linguist and scholar, Roman Jakobson. The other members of the group were Grigory Vinokur, Peter Bogatynev, Osip Brik and Boris Tomashevsky. The second circle OPOJAZ was formed in St. Petersburg in 1916 of which Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Boris Eichenbaum and Viktor Vinogradov were the members. Although the Russian critics were

associated in their intellectual efforts yet, their intellectual co-operation gave birth to several volumes of essays, entitled *Studies in the Theory of Poetic Language* (1916-23). However, the issue on which both the two circles converged was the specificity of literature. Following this, both linguists and literary theorists were compelled to ask: What is literature? What constitutes its uniqueness, or its special mode of being?

Viktor Shklovsky in his essay “Art as Technique” (1917) made an example of poetry by stating that poetry clearly exhibits the tendency to make our contact with the written word difficult. Consequently, he characterised poetic language as speech consciously constructed for the purpose of drawing attention to the very fabric of expression. This was a radical view adopted by Shklovsky as it debunked a tradition that associated literary craft with a special kind of thinking. Thus, literature started offering itself as a legitimate object of systematic scholarship. The goal of such scholarship was to study the very devices that distinguish artistic writing from all other modes of discourse. Subsequently, Roman Jakobson summarised their mission by stating that he and his colleagues should devote themselves fully to the study of the device by drawing attention not on literature per se, but on ‘literariness’—that is, the function or quality that makes a text artistic.

While poetry, with its highly crafted idiom, was privileged by the formalists in their initial search for the distinctive properties of literature, they were also well aware of the significance of a formalist analysis of prose texts. The formalists also made a major contribution to the theory of prose by elaborating the concept of Skaz. For instance, Shklovsky tried to show that the principle of impeded form is applicable to works of fiction as well. Thus, he developed the views on narrative fiction based on the opposition of Fabula and Sjuzhet, translated roughly as “story” and “plot”. Fabula is the story “told straight”. Sjuzhet, on the other hand, is this same story, not as it might have happened in real life, but in its literary presentation: with all the twist and turns.



LET US KNOW

Skaz stands for a style of literary narration that strives to approximate the characteristics of oral delivery. For it to qualify as skaz, the narration must be appreciably distanced from literary speech, that is, it must be evocative of dialect, particular jargon or lower-class speech. Thus, Skaz is a type of narration that points to its own production: the intonation, linguistic patterns, and verbal peculiarities of the fictional storyteller.

The formalists were not really interested in exploring at length the peculiarities of past traditions, even less in tracing lines of development from past to present. For them history mattered mostly insofar as it offered them a series of facts unfolded in time. They focused primarily on the sequences that demonstrated how one literary phenomenon is engendered by another on the principle of opposition. The end of Formalism came in the years 1929–30 following Stalin's consolidation of power. However, extinguished in the Soviet Union, Formalism enjoyed an afterlife of some sorts through the activities of the ***Prague Linguistic Circle*.**

You must have understood by now that Russian Formalism was not a uniform movement. It comprised diverse theoreticians whose views were shaped through methodological debates on the distinction between poetic and practical language. The diverging and converging forces of Russian Formalism gave rise to the Prague School of Structuralism in the mid-1920s and provided a model for the literary wing of French Structuralism in the 1960s and 1970s. After Post structuralism, the basic Formalist assumption that there is something distinctive about literary language and that it differs substantially from ordinary uses of language, has been contested.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Which are the two Linguistic Circles that became effective in Russia in the second half of the 20th century?



***Prague Linguistic Circle*:** it was an influential group of literary critics and linguists in Prague. Its proponents developed methods of structuralist literary analysis and a theory of the standard language. The linguistic circle was founded in the Café Derby in Prague. Roman Jakobson was a prominent member of the Circle.

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Q 2: What do you mean by the term Skaz?

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14.4 IMPORTANT RUSSIAN FORMALIST CRITICS

The following is a discussion of the major Russian critics whose contributions gradually shaped what we now call Russian Formalism.

- **Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) :**

  Roman Jacobson was one of the most influential linguists, literary theorists, and semioticians of the twentieth century. He was the founder of Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1915 and was also associated with the OPOJAZ. He founded the Prague Linguistic Circle where he started studying the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's work. He rendered a considerable impact on the study of linguistics in general. His role in the formation of Russian Formalism and in the post-war development of Structuralism, established him as one of the pioneering figures of literary and cultural theory. His advocacy of the idea that the study of language is essential to the study of literature, as it made him one of the most influential figures in the "linguistic turn" in Critical Theory.

  Jakobson developed his linguistic approach to literary theory by constructing a scientific basis for distinguishing literature from all other forms of linguistic communication. Together with other formalists like Yury Tynianov and Viktor Shklovsky, he developed the theory of "literariness" of literary writing inviting close scrutiny of the phonological, semantic, and metrical "devices" of the work. This linguistic approach to literature represented a radical break from the historical and biographical modes of literary analysis popular at that time. Jakobson viewed that 'Poetics' cannot be separated from 'Linguistics'. Incorporating the concepts of synchrony and diachrony, he explains that literary study is concerned with elements of the

literary text that persist at a given point of time. In order to understand the distinction between 'practical' and 'poetic' language, Jakobson formulates the functions of language. Jakobson's concepts are very technical. You will do well by trying to discuss and understand them by repeatedly reading them.

Jakobson describes six functions of language schematizing six elements of linguistic communication in this way:

	Context	
Addresser	**Message**	**Addressee**
	Contact	
	Code	

In a verbal communication, the Addresser sends a Message to the Addressee. The Message is placed in specific 'context' and sent though a physical channel (Contact). Both the Addresser and the Addressee may use a common Code. A particular function of language is attached to each of these six factors of verbal communication. For instance, Referential function is linked to the Context while Emotive function indicates the predominance of the Addresser. Thus, the functions can be schematised in this way:

	Referential	
Emotive	**Poetic**	**Conative**
	Phatic	
	Metalingual	

- **Emotive**: It focuses on the addresser and conveys the speaker's attitude
- **Poetic**: It focuses on the message and makes verbal signs palpable.
- **Conative**: It is oriented towards the addressee. It consists in the vocative and imperative use of language.
- **Referential**: It consists in what the message 'means' or 'denotes'.
- **Phatic**: It implies those messages that establish or prolong communication as metalingual: Its focus is language itself,

instead of denoting object on events or expressing attitude.

For the convenience of our discussion here, we must try to understand that Jakobson is a vital link between Structuralism and Linguistics. His life-long research was directed mostly towards the relation between language and literature. He held that literary research and the study of Linguistics should go hand-in-hand.

- **Yuri Tynyanov (1894-1943):**

  The question of what counts as literature and what does not, was one of his major pre-occupations as a critic. He held the view that a text being 'literary' depended on its relationship with both literary and extra-literary orders. Thus, you should note that his concept of a literary system is that a text may be literary and non-literary depending on the nature of the literary systems within which it is set. By 1924, Tynyanov introduced a systematic and functional perspective into literary studies. The most distinguished work of Tynyanov in this regard was *Theses on Language*—a collaborative effect with Jakobson. He raised the following important points in this book:

  - Literary study must be carried out rigorously on a theoretical basis using precise terminology.
  - Within a particular form in literature (such as poetry) structural laws must be established before it is related to other fields.
  - Study of literary history must be systematic and 'evidences' must be analysed attending on how they work within the system.
  - A system is not assemblage of all contemporary phenomena; it involves a hierarchy of which elements can be situated.

- **Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984):**

  Shklovsky was yet another initiator of Russian Formalism. He gave Formalism many of its crucial concepts and key words. His theoretical works and analyses of literature and film influenced crucial developments in Prague Linguistic Circle, Morphology, and Structuralism. Shklovsky coined the term "ostranenie" (estrangement), one of the most important "devices" of poetic language and an essential concept for the "scientific method" of formalist textual analysis. Later,

he became a member of Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOYAZ) which was known for being the forum for debating and for publishing on formalist subjects.

In cooperation with Jakobson's Moscow Linguistic Circle, Shklovsky and the other members of OPOYAZ developed a full-fledged formalist theory. His seminal essay "Art as Technique" first published in 1917, can be read as the "manifesto of formalism". Here, he illustrates how, in contrast to common language, poetic language achieves its "resurrection" through a device what may be called *ostranenie* (making strange in Russian) or 'defamiliarisation' (in English).

Since, the mid 1960s, as the formalist theorists were being introduced to the West and as interest in Marxism and revolutionary Russia was being renewed, Shklovsky's works began to be translated and widely disseminated among a diverse field of scholars and critics.



LET US KNOW

Viktor Shklovsky's essay "Art as Technique" is crucial to the Formalist movement in Russia because it served as a manifesto of the earlier Formalist schools. The essay offers many radically different views on the nature of art and literature. The concept of 'defamiliarisation' expounded in this essay, gained widespread currency giving the 'Formalist School' the status of a movement. The publication of "Art as Technique" is a significant event in the history of Russian Formalism as it made an important 'statement' of the early Formalist method by announcing a break with the early 'aesthetic approach' and by providing a methodology of criticism and the purpose of art. This essay is a reaction against Potebnya who propounded the notions that 'art is thinking in images' and that the purpose of art is to present the unknown in terms of the known. You are advised to read the essay in original which is easily available.

- **Boris Eichenbaum (1886-1959):**

  Boris Eichenbaum was another leading figure among the Russian formalist critics. His famous essay “Theory of the Formal Method” (1926) surveys the history and the central theoretical concepts of Russian Formalism. At St. Petersburg University, Eichenbaum initially planned to become a medical doctor but switched his studies to language and literature. He graduated in 1912. His involvement with the formalist movement represents only one phase. Since 1928, his work shifted from the analytical approach of formalism to a series of biographical studies of the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). Like all of his colleagues under the Stalinist era, he knew that if he wished to continue writing criticism, he would have to support Socialist Realism. The final volume of his Tolstoy Project appeared only posthumously, and the draft of another volume was lost during the German army’s siege of Leningrad during World War II.

  In “The Theory of the Formal Method” Eichenbaum takes stock of the first decade of work of the formalist movement. He states that many opponents criticised their focus on literary language and formal innovations. Most notably, the Marxist Leon Trotsky, an early leader of the Russian Revolution as well as a powerful writer on history and literature, castigated them for their lack of attention to the social significance of literary works. Besides, those who joined under the mantle of formalism were not a tightly unified school but a heterogeneous movement. Eichenbaum also emphasised Viktor Shklovsky’s role as the leader of the formalist movement. Such an understanding of Eichenbaum’s role as Russian Formalist provides valuable insights into our discussion of the history of Formalism.

- **Vladimir Propp (1895-1970):**

  Vladimir Propp was a Russian Formalist scholar who analysed the basic plot components of Russian Folk Tales to identify their simplest irreducible narrative elements. His *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928)

is a major contribution to 'formalism' as well as an important step towards the poetics of fictional narrative. Narrative, Propp says, is characterised by its syntactic structuring. He examined narratives not in terms of character but as constituted by 'functions' that the characters have within the plot. Propp identifies certain functions that confer uniformity on the tales. He concludes that a character is attached to a certain function. The functions are distinguishable and they are constant elements independent of their agent. Propp distinguishes a total of thirty one functions. He also concluded that all characters in the 100 tales that he analysed could be resolved into only 7 broad character types which are as the following:

- **The villain:** Struggles against the hero.
- **The donor:** Prepares the hero or gives the hero some magical object.
- **The (magical) helper:** Helps the hero in the quest.
- **The princess and her father:** Gives the task to the hero, identifies the false hero, marries the hero, often sought for during the narrative. Propp noted that functionally, the princess and the father cannot be clearly distinguished.
- **The dispatcher:** Character who makes the lack known and sends the hero off.
- **The hero or victim/seeker hero:** Reacts to the donor, weds the princess.
- **False hero:** Takes credit for the hero's actions or tries to marry the princess.

[adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Propp]

Propp's main focus had been on elements that construct a narrative. His concepts immensely contribute to our understanding of Structuralism.

- **Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975):**

Mikhail Bakhtin was a Russian theorist. He is recognised as one of the major literary theorists of the twentieth century and is famous for his theory of the novel based on concepts such as ***dialogism*****,**



Dialogism: the term refers to the concept used by Bakhtin in his work *The Dialogic Imagination.* Here, he contrasts the dialogic and the monologic work of literature. The dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue withother works of literature and other authors.

Polyphony: it is a feature of narrative, which includes a diversity of points of view and voices.

Carnivalesque: it is a term which refers to a literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humour and chaos.

polyphony and ***carnivalesque***. Forced into internal exile around 1929, Bakhtin was an obscure figure in his native Russia. But, in the West, he was discovered only in the 1960s. Bakhtin's writings were produced during the Russian Revolution of 1917 followed by a Civil War (1918–1921), famine, and the repressive dictatorship under Joseph Stalin. While Bakhtin himself was not a member of the Communist Party, his works have been regarded by some as Marxist in orientation. Bakhtin pointed out that traditional Stylistics had ignored the social dimensions of artistic discourse, which had been treated as a self-subsistent phenomenon, cut off from broader historical movements.

Despite his critique of Formalism, he has also been claimed as a member of the Jakobsonian formalist school, as a Post-structuralist, and even as a religious thinker. Bakhtin's major works as translated into English include *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* (1990), *Rabelais and his World* (1965; trans. 1968), *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929; trans. 1973), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1930s; trans. 1981), and *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What are the six functions of language based on the six elements of linguistic communication, according to Jakobson?

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Q 4: What are the views expressed by Yuri Tynyanov regarding Literary Studies?

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Q 5: Explain the significance of Shklovsky's essay "Art as Technique".

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Q 6: What is Vladimir Prop's contribution to Folktales?

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Q 7: What is the cause of Bakhtin's fame as a theorist?

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14.5 MAJOR CONCEPTS IN RUSSIAN FORMALISM

You must have understood by now that the Russian Formalists were pre-occupied with the question of form. Perhaps the most important questions they raised and resolved were—what makes a work of literature 'artistic' and 'literary'? What is the object of literary and critical study? How is the study of artistry of a given work related to language? Let us now discuss some of the key concepts of Russian Formalism under the following headings.

- **Literariness :**

  The Formalist critics were preoccupied with the literary quality of a given work. For them, 'literariness' elicits the distinction between literary language and the language of practical discourse. Roman Jakobson held the view that the object of literary study is not literature per se, but 'literariness'—that is to say—the sum of special linguistic and formal properties that distinguish literary texts from non literary texts. For example, as 'poetic' language focuses on the 'message' for its own sake, a verbal message, on the other hand, calls attention to itself. Thus, the relation between 'sign' and its 'referent' is disturbed. You must however understand that 'poetic' function does not necessarily refer to poetry only. Instead, it points to any verbal message that foregrounds the signs more than making them a vehicle for meaning. It also suggests a basic organising principle underlying all verbal discourse. Jakobson says, "Poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into that of combination."

  In order to discuss literariness in poetry, Jakobson stated that

a particular word is selected from among a stock of equivalent words. The chosen words are then combined not according to the grammatical rule of combination, but according to the same principle of equivalence. Along the axis of combination, this equivalence is created through various means such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, parallelism, or other rhetorical devices. These two ways of organising verbal discourse are likened to 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. Jakobson not merely expounds the metaphoric and metonymic principles, but tries to understand different 'genres' and 'types' of literary work in these terms. Poetry exhibits the principle of metaphor whereas metonymic principle is the very heart of prose literature. Thus, we can see that the issue of 'literariness' marginalises the content element of a given work of art.

- **The idea of Form:**

  The Formalists were oriented towards the idea of 'form'. 'Form' includes all formal aspects, compositional elements, constitutive principles, as well as the rhetorical devices that go into the making of a literary text. You perhaps remember that the neo-classical critics defined 'form' as a combination of component elements that could be used to maintain decorum, where the parts are inseparably related to the whole. Even the New Critics used the term 'structure' synonymously with 'form'. Thus, what prevailed throughout the different phases of critical tradition is the dichotomy between 'form' and 'content'. It is important to note that the formalists resist the idea that 'form' is a container or an envelope. Instead, they define 'form' as something concrete, dynamic and self-contained. Form determines structure and meaning. From early on, the Russian Formalist critics distanced themselves from the traditional distinction between 'form' and 'content'. Although in early formalist writings explicit definitions of 'form' and 'content' are limited, yet gradually, formalist discourse moved into a theoretical field and reached a common understanding that combined 'form' with the concept of 'material' and not with 'content'.

  Almost all Formalist critics are of the view that it is 'form' that

remains to be studied as the proper object of literary study. However you should also note that they have often avoided providing any definitive meaning of the term, preferring terminology less burdened with prior ***significations***. Thus, the formalist notion of 'form' developed not so much as the result of explicit definitions, but as the corollary of concrete attempts to grasp and analyse the ***elusive*** artistic nature of texts. This was the pursuit that shaped and distinguished the Formalist movement. The Russian Formalist Boris Eichenbaum even stated that the question of Form eventually became synonymous with the question of literature.



Significations: meaning.
Elusive: difficult to find grasp or achieve.

- **Fabula and Syuzhet:**

The conceptually related terms Fabula and Sjuzhet, rendered into English approximately as "story" and "plot," were elaborated by the Russian formalists within their overall theory of narrative prose. In formalist usage, the two terms acquire a significance markedly different from that of their English equivalents, as well as from their traditional meaning in Russian. Thus, Sjuzhet is best understood as plot construction (or emplotment), viewed formally, while Fabula is grasped as the sequence of events that make up a story (or storyline), but viewed outside the artistic process of narration. The distinction between the two allowed the formalist theoreticians to make significant headway in their study of narrative fiction.

In similar manner, we can also refer to Shklovsky's distinction between story and plot. The story is the basic succession of events that the artist is disposed to. Plot, on the other hand, is the distinctive way in which the story is organised so as to 'defamiliarise' the familiar materials. Plot, therefore, has to do with the 'form' of a novel. As Syuzhet (or plot) works upon the Fabula (or story), and 'defamiliarises' familiar material, one Fabula can give rise to a number of Syuzhets. It is interesting to find that such a formulation is also akin to Structuralism. This story/plot ***dichotomy*** was carried forward by structuralists and subsumed in their theories of narrative. Vladimir Propp is an important link between these two movements. Vladimir



Dichotomy: a seperation or contrast between two things.

Propp was greatly inspired by the distinction between Fabula and Syuzhet, and his *Morphology of the Folktale* is evident manifestation of formalist influence. Here, Propp studies many Russian folktales and fairy tales and reveals that underlying all of them, there is only one story. The individual tales ('Syuzhet') are variations upon a basic 'Fabula'.



LET US KNOW

As stated in the previous section, one important area of exploration in Russian Formalism was the language of prose fiction. This brings us back to the concepts of Fabula and Syuzhet explicated by Boris Tomashevsky. *The Dictionary of Narratology* however, defines Fabula as 'the set of narrated situations and events in their chronological sequence'. Syuzhet, on the other hand, implies a logical ordering of events and situations. Fabula is a straightforward account of events and situations an ordering of which has nothing to do with the artistic effect to arouse suspense. Syuzhet, on the other hand, is the artistic re-arrangement of the representational elements.

Influential Western theories have relied more on analogous dichotomies to analyse the structure of fictional texts: "histoire" vs "recit" (Gerard Genette), "story" vs "discourse" (Seymour Chatman), "fabula" vs "story" (Mieke Bal) and so on. The isolation of these two aspects has enabled, on the one hand, the exploration of the narrative structures that underlie the endlessly varied stories we tell; on the other hand, it has furthered inquiry into the different modalities of narrative presentation (order, point view, voice, mood, and so on).

- **Defamiliarisation:**

  The term was first introduced in 1917, by Shklovsky in his essay "Art as Technique" published in the journal of *Studies in the Theory of Poetic Language*. Defamiliarisation, which quickly became a key

concept for Formalist literary criticism, works by making everyday objects unfamiliar and thus recovering for the audience "the sensations of life". Shklovsky, beautifully identifies defamiliarisation as the artistic technique "to make the stone stony". You should note that Shklovsky introduced the term in opposition to Russian symbolist theories of art, which abandoned the familiar to provide the audience a fresh perspective on the world of the mundane. Defamiliarisation, in Shklovsky's use, thus becomes a theory about artistic perception. Art defamiliarises images, ideas or situations which are otherwise familiar to us and thus impedes our perception. Art and literature assume significance only against the backdrop of ordinary habitual perception. It is important to note that the Formalists were much occupied with the formal aspects of literature or the literary devices that make a work 'literary'. As Tony Bennett puts it his book *Formalism and Marxism*: "the formalists sought to reveal the devices through which the total structure of given works of literature might be said to defamiliarise, make strange or challenge certain dominant conceptions ideologies even, although they did not use the word of the social world."

Shklovsky proposed that artists accomplish the task of defamiliarisation in three fundamental ways:

- **First**, they purposefully distort syntax and heighten diction, in order to make their subjects more extraordinary or unsettling. Additionally, they use rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and metaphor to produce defamiliarising effects, as in the famous example cited by Shklovsky of Nikolai Gogol's comparison of the sky to the "garment of God".
- **Second**, artists may avoid common expressions and names of familiar objects or activities in favour of phrases and descriptions that highlight the novel or the aspect of strange in the familiar. Shklovsky illustrates this estranging technique with Leo Tolstoy's detailed description of flogging in "Shame," which is never explicitly named but rather presented as if the

event “were happening for the first time”.

- **Third**, the artist may use “parallelism,” Shklovsky’s term for the importation into one genre of the terms, methodology, or content typical of another, such as in the use of slang terms, dialect, or ordinary speech in place of “literary language”. The resulting “disharmony” requires readers to readjust their expectations of the form.

Shklovsky opposes his notion of defamiliarisation to an “economic” theory of language according to which statements should express the most information in the fewest words and to an artistic method according to which art clarifies “the unknown by means of the known”. Accordingly, defamiliarisation may be understood as part of the debate over the role of art in Western society since Romanticism – whether art simply provides an accurate representation of reality or plays a more transformative role in the shaping and understanding of that reality. Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarisation in his essay “Art as Technique” thus provided Formalism with one of its key concepts for defining and appreciating a literary work.



LET US KNOW

Shklovsky’s ideas rendered strong influences on a wide diversity of thinkers and artists. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht developed the concept of ‘Verfremdungseffekt’ – translated as “alienation effect” – in his “epic” or “dialectical” theatre, owes a great deal to Shklovsky’s ideas of defamiliarisation. Brecht employed verfremdungseffekt technique to reflect his belief that a play should never encourage its audience to think of themselves as passive spectators of a realistically presented scene but should draw attention to its framing, its constructedness, in order to lead audience members to actively make judgements on the events and characters depicted in a play.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How would you define the concept of Literariness?

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Q 9: How do the formalist critics consider the idea of 'form'?

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Q 10: How does Shklovsky discuss the concept of Fabula and Syuzhet?

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14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have found out that Formalism has been one of the important methods for analysing art in the early twentieth-century. Its influence on the humanities, particularly the study of literature can never be denied. Formalist Critics became prominent in the early part of the twentieth century. Formalism is usually defined against the subjectivist theories of literature as propounded by the Romantics. You are aware that Roman Jakobson, Yuri Tynyanov, Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum, Vladimir Propp, Mikhail Bakhtin etc. are the most significant Russian Formalists whose contributions helped establish Formalism as an influential theoretical trend in the early part of the 20th century.



14.7 FURTHER READING

1) Bertens, Hans. (2007). *Literary Theory: The Basics*. (Second Edition). New York: Taylor and Francis.

2) Castle, Gregory. (ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Literary and*

Cultural Theory. Vol 1. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

3) Habib, M.A.R. (2005). *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present.* UK: Blackwell Publishing.

4) Macey, David. (2000). *Dictionary of Critical Theory.* London: Penguin Books.

5) Makaryk, Irena R. (ed). (1993). *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.

6) Ramaswami S. & V. S. Sethuraman. (ed). (1978). *The Critical Tradition: An Anthology of English Literary Criticism Vol-1 & 2.* New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited.

7) Vincent B. Leitch. (Gen ed). (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc.

Websites:

1) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Propp



14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Moscow Linguistic Circle based in Moscow, and the OPOJAZ or "Society for the Study of Poetic Language" based in St. Petersburg. The former circle was founded by Roman Jakobson, and the second was formed by Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Boris Eichenbaum and Viktor Vinogradov among others. Their intellectual co-operation gave birth to several volumes of essays, entitled *Studies in the Theory of Poetic Language* (1916-23).

Ans to Q No 2: Skaz stands for a style of prose narration that strives to approximate the characteristics of oral delivery. For it to qualify as skaz, the narration must be appreciably distanced from literary speech, that is, it must be evocative of dialect, particular jargon or lower-class speech. Thus, Skaz points to the intonation, linguistic patterns, and verbal peculiarities of the fictional storyteller.

Ans to Q No 3: Addresser, Context, Message, Contact, Code and Addressee.

Ans to Q No 4: Tynyanov viewed that Literary study must be carried on rigorously on a theoretical basis using precise terminology. Within a particular form in literature (such as poetry) structural laws must be established. The study of literary history must be systematic. A literary system involves a hierarchy of elements.

Ans to Q No 5: This essay can be read as the "manifesto of formalism". Here, Shklovsky illustrates how, in contrast to common language, poetic language achieves its "resurrection" through a device what may be called *ostranenie* (making strange in Russian) or 'defamiliarisation' (in English).

Ans to Q No 6: Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is a major contribution to 'formalism' as well as an important step towards the poetics of fictional narrative. Propp argued that a narrative is characterised by its syntactic structuring. He examined narratives not in terms of character but as constituted by 'functions' that the characters have within the plot.

Ans to Q No 7: Because, Bakhtin is recognised as one of the major literary theorists of the twentieth century and is famous for his theory of the novel based on concepts such as dialogism, polyphony and carnival.

Ans to Q No 8: Roman Jakobson held the view that the object of literary study is not literature per se, but 'literariness'—that is to say—the sum of special linguistic and formal properties that distinguish literary texts from non literary texts.

Ans to Q No 9: The Formalist critics viewed the idea of 'Form' as inclusive of all formal aspects, compositional elements, constitutive principles, as well as the rhetorical devices that go into the making of a literary text.

Ans to Q No 10: Fabula and Sjuzhet, may be translated as story and plot. The story is the basic succession of events that the artist is disposed to. Plot, on the other hand, is the distinctive way in

which the story is organised so as to 'defermiliarise' the familiar materials. Plot, therefore, has to do with the 'form' of a novel. Syuzhet (or plot) works upon the Fabula (or story), and one Fabula can give rise to a number of Syuzhets.



14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write an account of the history of Russian Formalism.

Q 2: Give a brief account of the major Russian formalist critics.

Q 3: Describe the works of the Russian Formalists with special reference to their ideas of 'form' and 'content'.

Q 4: What are the different concepts popularised by the Russian Formalist critics? Discuss.

Q 5: Enumerate the contributions of Roman Jacobson to Russian Formalism.

Q 6: "Formalist critics often state that it is 'form' that needs to be studied as the proper object." Discuss.

Q 7: Discuss Victor Shklovsky's contributions to Formalist ideas with special reference to his concept of Defamiliarisation.

Q 8: Write short notes on the following:

a. Fabula and Syuzet

b. Literariness

c. Defamiliarisation

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UNIT 15 : MODERN THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Introducing Poststructuralism

15.4 Introducing Feminism

15.5 Introducing Marxism

15.6 Introducing Postcolonialism

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.10 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss Poststructuralism as an approach to literary studies
- describe Feminism as a dominant trend in modern Literary Theory
- highlight Marxism as an important critical trend
- explain Postcolonialism as an important critical and theoretical trend

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with some of the very significant modern theoretical trends, namely, Poststructuralism, Feminism, Marxism and Postcolonialism. The term Poststructuralism became popular in 1970s. Like Structuralism (Unit 13), it is not a unified school of thought or movement. Feminism is in fact a political movement that encompasses a diverse range of perspectives, theories, and methods. Simon de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet, Juliet Mitchell, Sheila Rowbotham, Michèle Barrett, etc. are some of the important figures associated with feminism. Marxism is a school of thought founded by the German philosopher Karl

Marx who is best known for his work *Das Kapital* (1867) and two other works *The German Ideology* (1846) and the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) written in collaboration with his friend Friedrich Engels. Postcolonialism refers to the production of literary texts in countries and cultures that were under the control of European colonial powers at some point in their history. Let us look at the following sections to get a better idea of these theoretical concepts.

15.3 INTRODUCING POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism refers to a broad variety of critical perspectives and approaches that displaced Structuralism from its prominence in the 1970s. Previously, Structuralism was considered a radical and innovative way of dealing with language and other signifying systems. An important expression of Poststructural point of view has been Jacques Derrida's paper entitled "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," delivered in 1966 in an International Seminar at Johns Hopkins University.

Derrida in this essay attacked the systematic, quasi-scientific pretensions of the strict form of Structuralism—derived mostly from Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the structure of language and represented by the cultural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss—by asserting that the notion of a systemic structure, whether linguistic or other, presupposes a "center" that serves to organise and regulate the structure itself that "escapes structurality."

In Saussure's theory of language, for example, this "center" is assigned the function of controlling the endless differential play of internal relationships, while remaining itself outside of and immune from, that play. As Derrida makes clear, he regards this incoherent and unrealisable notion of an ever-active yet always absent 'center' as only one of the many ways in which all of Western thinking is "logo-centric" or dependent on the notion of a self certifying foundation, or absolute, or essence, or ground, which is ever needed but never present.

Other contemporary thinkers including Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Roland Barthes (in his later phase), in diverse ways, also

undertook to “decenter” or “undermine” or “subvert” traditional claims for the existence of self-evident foundations that guarantee the validity of knowledge and truth, and establish the possibility of determinate communication. Poststructuralist thinkers opine that theory has more than literature to account for. Since everything, from the unconscious to social and cultural practices, is seen as functioning like a language, the goal of Poststructuralist theorists is to find out what controls interpretation and meaning in all possible system of signification.

In the recent decades, Poststructuralism has set the terms and the agenda for many of the major developments and debates in the field of Criticism and Literary Theory. You will note that it has played a significant role in shaping the direction of other schools and movements, particularly Feminist criticism, Marxist Criticism, Postcolonial theory, Reader-Response Criticism, Cultural Studies, and so on. Thus, originally a radical movement of French literary intellectuals and philosophers who came into prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, and all of whom were critical of Structuralism, it quickly spread to intellectuals around the globe. By the close of the twentieth century, Poststructuralism had become the leading edge of Postmodernism. The main features of Poststructuralism include: the problematising of linguistic preferentiality, the emphasis on heterogloss ia, the decentering of the subject, the rejection of “reason” as universal or foundational, the criticism of humanism, and a stress on difference.



LET US KNOW

Poststructuralism has much to do with structuralism itself. Hence, there is a valid ground to state that the premises and findings of Structuralism established the basis for Poststructuralism. It has also been argued that Poststructuralism began with a suspicion of Structuralism’s tendency to impose a comprehensive theory on literature. Thus, Poststructuralisn is concerned less with having a firm hold over the text than with celebrating the text’s elusive nature and the fallibility of all readings.

The greatest success of Poststructuralism in the domain of aesthetics is the assertion that no text can ever be considered complete in itself or as communicating a fixed meaning over time. It also dismissed the claim of the author's producing or controlling meaning or interpretation and that of the critic's offering a definitive meaning of the author's supposed intentions. Together with the Psychoanalytic theory of Lacan, Derrida's theory of 'Deconstruction' launched a new category of writing—Lacan reading Freud, Derrida re-reading Plato and Rousseau, Barthes reading Balzac and so on. The developments in the field of Criticism and Literary Theory in the last decades of the twentieth century is partly a rejection of and partly a reaction to Derrida's 'Deconstruction'. In fact, it enabled the people to see that the order of the 'world out there' is not something given, but something that is chosen to be 'constructed' through language. 'Deconstruction' provided a new angle from which that structure of Western society was sought to be analysed. The most prominent thinkers labelled as Poststructuralist theorists and thinkers are Jacques Derrida,Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan,Roland Barthes,Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Mention the main features of Poststructuralism?

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Q 2: How is Poststructuralism related to Structuralism?

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Q 3: What is the greatest success of Poststructuralism?

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15.4 INTRODUCING FEMINISM

Feminism is concerned with the representation of women in literature and with changing the position of women in society by setting them free

from all types of oppressive restraints of the patriarchal society. You will note that Mary Wollstonecraft's book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is often considered a beginning of modern feminism in Britain. In this book she called for reforms against the social, political, and economic marginalisation of women at a time when the question of the "rights of man" was being debated in France and the US. She argued that the existing social structures constructed female inequality and subordination as "natural" and that women do not choose to behave as they do, but are instead 'enslaved' by a society that forces them to behave in certain "sentimental" ways. She even identified 'gallantry' and 'sensibility' as major social fabrications which had been developed (by men) to encourage women's subordination. The overarching problem, she argued, was women's lack of access to education, which held them in a "state of perpetual childhood." *The Vindication* became an immediate international success and was quickly translated into other languages and published. Wollstonecraft's articulation of 'femininity' as a condition resembling slavery, encouraged American women to involve themselves in anti-slavery campaigns and turn their attention to female suffrage.

In Britain, in the second half of the nineteenth century, debates about women's lack of access to education expanded into a wider questioning of women's political inequality. Gradually, the terms "feminism" and "feminist" entered public usage by the 1890s. The British political theorists John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor developed aspects of Wollstonecraft's liberal feminist thought, campaigning for women's suffrage and equal access to education. Mill, in his famous *The Subjection of Women* (1869) argued that all women were repressed citizens. Although this book is recognised as a progressive feminist text in its call for gender equality; Mill's stance has been criticised for its refusal to question women's position in the domestic sphere. The latter part of the nineteenth century, following the activities of National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the British suffrage movement represented a demand for equality, grounded in political and legislative reforms.

The passing of the 1928 Representation of the People Act marked the culmination of over six decades of political and social agitation, and extended the partial suffrage that women had received ten years previously in 1918. The same period is marked by different sorts of literary experimentation and innovation to address the relation between women and literature, and gender and language, by noted authors such as Virginia Woolf, Hilda Dolittle, Edith Wharton, Zola Neale Hurston, and Djuna Barnes. The most influential of these was Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) which addresses the relation of "women and fiction" and the various ways in which this relationship had been imagined. Her underlying and much celebrated assertion is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction". She argued: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size". She also highlights how woman's exclusion from electoral and civil privilege is not the result of political legislation and economic inequity only, but also of cultural mores. She foregrounded why women need to undertake critical and creative activity alongside political activity.

Feminist criticism till 1960s formed part of the broader cultural questioning and collective challenges to authority made by civil rights, students, and antiwar movements. Drawing on previous suffragette activities, women once again began to form organised political bodies, including the liberal National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. Rooted in a conviction that 'sexism' (which means women's subordination to men), is one of the main causes of women's oppression, radical feminism stressed on women's experiences of subjugation as women. A key aim was to encourage all women to become involved in political activity and challenge the separation between the personal and the political. Besides, the focus on the sexist ideologies underlying the male authored canon integral to "images of women" criticism was followed by a female centered approach or, in Elaine Showalter's coinage, **"**gynocritics**"** that is, an approach that was engaged with "woman as writer–with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and

structures of literature by women."

However, one needs to make all possible attempts to understand how contemporary feminist criticism has new things to say. The publication of the book *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar had helped to locate women's experience at the center of attention. But other writers like the French theorists Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray began to pay attention to the nature of 'woman herself'. Their works introduced further challenges to the established ideas of feminism and raised complex questions about our understanding of human subjectivity and its relationship to language. While doing so they were both influenced by and reacting against the Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida and Psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan. Although critics like Alice Jardine, Mary Jacobus and Jacqueline Rose produced feminist criticism within this deconstructive and psychoanalytic frame work, many also criticised the French perspectives as remote from practical and political end.

An interesting theoretical turn came into feminist criticism during 1980s when the ideas of Michel Foucault and New Historicism were effectively used by works done by Feminists. Critics like Catherine Gallaghar, Nancy Armstrong, Gillian Beer, Mary Poovey and others considered gender and class relations within 19th century society. No doubt, they were influenced by the discussion of identity and gender in Deconstruction, Lacanian Psychoanalysis and New Historicism. Another extension of Feminism could be seen in the rise of gay and lesbian criticism which developed in part in response to the early phases of Feminism which was based largely on the experiences of white, middle class heterosexual women and to offer that experience as universal. This directly challenged the traditional views of sexuality.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What is Feminism?

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Q 5: Name the important books that shaped the history of Feminism in England.

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Q 6: Who coined the term 'Gynocriticism' and why?

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15.5 INTRODUCING MARXISM

Marxism in its diverse forms is based on the theory and practice on the economic and cultural theory made available by Karl Marx (1818-83) and his friend Friedrich Engels. M. H. Abrams enumerates the major claims of Marxism like the following:

- The history of humanity, of its social groupings and relations, of its institutions, and of its ways of thinking are largely determined by the changing mode of its "material production"— that is, of its overall economic organisation for producing and distributing material goods.
- Historical changes in the fundamental mode of material production effect changes in the class structure of a society, establishing in each era dominant and subordinate classes that engage in a struggle for economic, political, and social advantage.
- Human consciousness is constituted by an ideology—that is, the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and by recourse to which they explain, what they take to be reality. An ideology is the product of the position and interests of a particular class.

Thus, one of the most significant concepts in Marxism is Marx's theory of 'modes of production'. Marx divided the human history into seven successive historical modes of production—tribal hordes, Neolithic kinship societies, Oriental despotism, Ancient slave holding societies, Feudalism Capitalism and Communism. He also opined that class struggle within a specific mode of production follows a basic pattern. For example, the capitalist or bourgeois mode of present times has been characterised

mainly by the conflict between the industrial working class and owners of the means of production. But Marx did predict that sooner or later, labour will win and the communist mode of production will come out triumphant which will further make the society free from rampant inequalities, exploitations and class struggle.

Certain terms have gained prominence in Marxist criticism like class struggle, base/superstructure, ideology, hegemony and so on. According to Marxist theory, the socio-economic elements in society constitute its base while its cultural spheres like – politics, law, religion, philosophy and arts compose its super structure. Ideology consists of the ideas, beliefs, forms and values of the ruling class that often circulate through all the cultural spheres. Similarly, hegemony refers to the continuous ideological domination of all classes by the ruling class through institutions such as church, school, family, media, arts and so on. These institutions are termed Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and they manage social instability and conflict to impose and maintain hegemonic order.

Similarly, the Marxists also discuss culture and the arts which, in their view, are neither innocent entertainment nor independent of social forces. They usually play a significant role in transmitting ideology. It is however not correct to state that artists and intellectuals always work for the dominant social class, as many have explicitly protested the ruling system and have critiqued their contradictions and shortcomings. However, the ideological orientations of the literary works can be quite complicated. A literary text often contains mixed and contradictory messages that reflect its broad social milieu rather than the author's personal philosophy. However, the Marxist perspective also states that sometimes artistic works also present alternative and counter hegemonic images suggesting libratory possibilities.

Marxism has developed into different branches and schools of thought. Different schools place a greater emphasis on certain aspects of classical Marxism while rejecting other aspects of Marxism, sometimes combining Marxist analysis with non-Marxian concepts. Some of the variants of Marxism focus mostly on one aspect of Marxism as the determining force in social development – such as the mode of production, class, power-

relationships or property ownership – while arguing other aspects are less important or current research makes them irrelevant. Despite sharing similar premises, different schools of Marxism might reach contradictory conclusions from each other. For instance, different Marxian economists have contradictory explanations of economic crisis and different predictions for the outcome of such crises. Furthermore, different variants of Marxism apply Marxist analysis to study different aspects of society like economic crisis or feminism. As students studying Marxism, you are supposed to keep these ideas in mind while reading the history of Marxism and the development of Marxism as an important critical trend. Some of the important Marxist thinkers are Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What do you understand by the term Marxism?

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Q 8: How do the Marxists look at literature?

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Q 9: What are the three basic premises of Marxism?

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Q 10: How did Marx divide human history?

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Q 11: What is the Marxist view on Arts and Culture?

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15.6 INTRODUCING POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonial literature and criticism arose following the struggles of

many African, Asian, Latin American nations, which now are referred to as the "tricontinent" for independence from colonial rule. According to Robert Young, Postcolonial criticism has embraced a number of aims to re-examine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonised; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonised peoples and the colonising powers; to analyse the process of decolonisation; and above all, to participate in the goals of political liberation which include equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities.

Peter Barry provides a list of what Postcolonial critics usually do. These are as the following:

- They reject the claims to universalism made on behalf of canonical Western literature and seek to show its limitations of outlook, especially its general inability to empathise across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference.
- They examine the representation of other cultures in literature as a way of achieving this end.
- They show how such literature is often evasively and crucially silent on matters concerned with Colonisation and Imperialism.
- They foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity and examine their treatment in relevant literary works.
- They celebrate Hybridity that is, the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture (for instance, that of the coloniser, through a colonial school system, and that of the colonised, through local and oral traditions).
- They develop a perspective, not just applicable to Postcolonial literatures, whereby states of marginality, plurality and perceived 'Otherness' are seen as sources of energy and potential change.

The year 1950 saw the publication of some seminal texts of Postcolonialism like: Aimé Césaire's *Discourssur le colonialism*, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth,* Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* and so on. According to Robert Young, the "founding moment" of

Postcolonial theory was the journal called *Tricontinental*, launched by the Havan Tricontinental of 1966, which "initiated the first global alliance of the peoples of the three continents against imperialism". Edward Said's landmark work *Orientalism* appeared in 1978 and this book inaugurated Postcolonial criticism in a more fruitful way. More recent works of Postcolonialism include *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin and *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990) by Gayatri Spivak as well as important works by Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, and Kwame Anthony Appiah and so on. All these have shaped what we today know as Postcolonial Studies.

Although Said, Bhabha, and Spivak still remain the most prominent influences yet, Postcolonial Studies in recent years have moved away considerably from its Poststructuralist inclination. The broadly historical-materialist (Marxist) perspective that we find in a number of recent Postcolonial Studies has also left its mark on Postcolonial Literary Studies. Especially, Benita Parry and Robert Young (Young in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001)) have worked to direct attention to a politics grounded in the material, social, and existential conditions of the colonised people. Young's revisionist attitude towards religion, nationalism, and pan-Africanism has substantially broadened our view and understanding of colonial and postcolonial resistance.

Early voices of anti-imperialism stressed the need to develop or return to indigenous literary traditions so as to exercise their cultural heritage of the spectres of imperial domination. Other voices advocated an adaptation of Western ideals toward their own political and cultural ends. The fundamental framework of postcolonial thought has been furnished by the Marxist critique of Colonialism and Imperialism, which has been adapted to their localised contexts by thinkers from Frantz Fanon to Gayatri Spivak.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: What do you understand by the term Postcolonialism?

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Q 13: Name some of the most significant books that introduced Postcolonialism.

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15.7 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit, you must have understood that Poststructuralism is the working out of the various implications of Structuralism. However it is also quite evident that Poststructuralism defies many of the assumptions of Structuralism. Poststructuralism instead believed that this desire is futile because there are various unconscious, or linguistic or historical forces which cannot be mastered.You must have realised by now that Feminism in general has a long social and political history, developing in America and Britain throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. You have also gained idea on the Marxist approach to literature which is based on a tendency to view the literary work as a product rooted or based in the realm of economics and production.In this unit, we have also come across Postcolonial Studies which critically analyses the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, from the earliest days of colonial exploration.



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15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The main features of Poststructuralism include: the problematising of linguistic preferentiality, the emphasis on heteroglossia, the 'decentering' of the subject, the rejection of 'reason' as universal or foundational, the criticism of humanism, and a stress on difference.

Ans to Q No 2: Poststructuralism has much to do with structuralism itself. But, it has also been argued that Poststructuralism began with a suspicion of Structuralism's tendency to impose a comprehensive theory of literature. Thus, Poststructuralism is concerned less with having a firm hold over the text like in Structuralism than with celebrating the text's elusive nature.

Ans to Q No 3: The greatest success of Poststructuralism is the assertion that no text can ever be considered complete in itself or as communicating a fixed meaning over time. Besides, it also helped in dismissing the claims of the author's producing or controlling meaning or interpretation.

Ans to Q No 4: Feminism refers to the different campaigns, activities, and texts concerned with challenging and transforming the ways women are treated and represented in society. It is a political movement that encompass a diverse range of perspectives, theories, and methods. Besides analysing the patriarchal set-up, Feminist thinkers seek to propose new ways of 'reading' women to bring about social change.

Ans to Q No 5: Mary Wollstonecraft's book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

Ans to Q No 6: Elaine Showalter coined the term 'Gynocriticism'. It is an approach engaged with "woman as writer– with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women".

Ans to Q No 7: Marxism is a school of thought founded by the German philosopher Karl Marx who believed that historical change is primarily the result of class struggle and that the state always exploits the labouring masses for the benefit of the wealthy and privileged class.

Ans to Q No 8: The Marxists look at literature as based on a tendency to view literature as a product of work rooted or based in the realm of economics and production. Marxist criticism addresses literary works as the products and often emphasise the role of

'class' and 'ideology' in reflecting, propagating and even challenging the prevailing social order.

Ans to Q No 9: (1) The history of humanity is largely determined by the changing mode of material production. (2) Historical changes in the fundamental mode of material production effect changes in the class structure of a society, establishing in each era dominant and subordinate classes. (3) Human consciousness is constituted by an ideology.

Ans to Q No 10: Marx divided human history into seven successive historical modes of production—tribal hordes, neolithic kinship societies, oriental despotism, ancient slave holding societies, feudalism capitalism and communism.

Ans to Q No 11: Arts and Culture in the views of the Marxists are neither innocent entertainment nor independent of social forces. They usually play a significant role in transmitting ideology.

Ans to Q No 12: It embraces a number of aims to re-examine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonised; to determine the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonised peoples and the colonising powers; to analyse the process of decolonisation; and above all, to participate in the goals of political liberation which include equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of political and cultural identities.

Ans to Q No 13: Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth,* Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, Edward Said's *Orientalism,* Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths' *The Empire Writes Back* and so on.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What do you understand by the term Poststructuralism? What are some of its major premises?

Q 2: What do you mean by the term Feminism? Discuss in detail.

Q 3: Write an account of the history of Feminism in England.

Q 4: What are the major claims of Marxism? Discuss in details.

Q 5: What do you understand by the term Postcolonialism? What does a Postcolonial critic usually do? Discuss.

*** ***** ***



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Name of the Paper: Course Code:

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Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

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(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course?

2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

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