LITERARY CRITICISM- I

M.A., (English)

Semester – III, Paper-I

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FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining 'A' grade from the NAAC in the year 2016, Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from over 443 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education in 2003-04 with the aim of taking higher education to the door step of all the sectors of the society. The centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A., and L.L.M., courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.

To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise in the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.

It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn be part of country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will go from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Coordinators, Editors and Lesson-writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavours.

Prof. P. Raja Sekhar
Vice-Chancellor
Acharya Nagarjuna University

M.A (English)
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301EG21: LITERARY CRITICISM - I
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SYLLABUS

UNIT I

Plato : Theory of Ideas & 'The State' from Republic.
Aristotle : Rhetoric & Poetics
Longinus : On the Sublime

UNIT II

Philip Sidney : An Apology for Poetry
John Dryden : An Essay on Dramatic Poesy
Alexander Pope : An Essay on Criticism.

UNIT III

Samuel Johnson : Preface to Shakespeare
William Wordsworth : Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical BalladsSamuel Taylor Coleridge: Biographia Literaria
P.B.Shelley : A Defence of Poetry.

UNIT IV

Mathew Arnold : The Function of Criticism & Touchstone Method.
T.S. Eliot : Tradition and Individual Talent

UNIT V

I.A. Richards : Four Kinds of Meaning
Cleanth Brooks : Irony as a Principle of Structure

SUGGESTED READINGS:

1. Martin Tucker: A Library of Literary Criticism.
2. Patricia Waugh: Literary Theory & Criticism : An Oxford Guide.
3. M.S.Naagarajaw: English Literary Criticism & Theory2006

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PLATO

Introduction: The age of Pericles was the golden age of ancient Greek literary Criticism. The literary creative activity and criticism had prospered in this age. The literary criticism was enrichedby the critical theories of philosophers cum critics like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides, and Socrates etc. But it was not until the dawn of Plato that literary criticism was systematized. Plato was the first Greek Philosopher to express a systematic views on art and poetry.

Plato (427B.C.-347 B.C.) was the renowned Greek philosopher. He was the most celebrated student of Socrates. Philosophy and Politics are his main areas of study and analysis. He abandoned politics after the execution of his master Socrates. He established Academy in 387
B.C. As the director of the Academy he guided the students to study Philosophy, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Jurisprudence and Practical Legislation. His significant works are *Apology*, *Ion*, *Memo*, *Phaedrus*, *Cratylus*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Philebus*, *Laws* and *Dialogues*.

Plato's Views on Poetry: Plato's views on literature are largely of his master Socrates'. Poetry is impulse of the moment according to plato. The main object of Plato's critical exercise is in two ideas.

i. To construct an Ideal State and
ii. To build an Ideal Man who is the individual counter part of the state.

To pursue truth and virtue is the central task of his Ideal Man and State. Plato strongly believed that art or poetry will not always contribute to the pursuit of virtue. So he banned or condemned poetry on the following grounds:

a) **Poetic Inspiration:** The poet is a divinely inspired frenzy. Poet writes because he is inspired. The poetic language flows from the inspired poet only. Plato defines in "Ion" about the poetic inspiration that
"For the poet is light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses,…"
b) **Theory of Imitation:** Plato's theory of art and poetry is based on the concept of imitationor mimesis. According to Plato life is an imitation of the idea of life which is abstract. Andpoetry is imitation of life. Then, poetry is an imitation of imitation of the ingenious realitythat is the idea of life. The critic has derived his theory of imitation from painting and applied it to poetry. The painter who paints a bed is imitating the carpenter who imitated the idea of bed while making the object- bed. Hence the painted bed is twice removed from the reality. Similarly, the poetry is twiced removed from the reality or the idea.
c) **Poet vs Philosopher:** In his "Republic" Plato makes a distinction between the poet and thephilosopher. He ranks the poet inferior to the philosopher. Because, the poet appeals to theemotion and the philosopher appeals to the intellect.

d) **Impulsive is poetry:** Plato says that poetry "feeds and waters the passions." Since poetry is the product of inspiration and imitation it affects the emotion rather than reason.

e) **Lack of Concern with morality:** He notes that the characters, or scenes or situations treat both virtue and vice alike. In the epics of Homer, the narrative verse of Hesoid, the Odes of Pinder, and the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides the virtue suffers in the hand of the vice. So, Plato complains that poets show the heroes as weak and cowardly and the villains as prosperous. In "Republic Plato comments that

"They give us to understand that many evil livers are happy and many righteous men are unhappy; and that wrong doing, if it be undetected, is profitable, while honest dealing is beneficial to one's neighbor, but damaging to one's self."

Plato feels that such poetry is corrupt to the citizen and the state. Hence he banned such poetry from his Ideal State or Republic.

Functions of Poet or Poetry: Plato does not completely banished poetry from his ideal state. An idealist poet and poetry are permitted to continue in his ideal state.

a. **Ideal Poetry:** Pleasure should not be only object of poetry. It must not be divorced from the morals. The expression of truth must be its fundamental aim. Poetry must promote the reason and virtue of the people. The ideal poetry must have following five features –

1. Highest Truth
2. Ideal forms of justice
3. Goodnesss
4. Beauty and
5. Virtue

The ideal poetry ought to be the hymns to the gods and praises of famous people.

b. **Ideal Poet:** An ideal poet must be a good teacher. They must be inherently good who can notice good in the world around and highlight the same in the poetry. The ideal poet must be a civic-minded poet. The ideal poet must be a man more the age of fifty.

Therefore, Plato has not throw out poetry from his Republic. He censured the creativity of the poet so that it must be moralistic and instructive.

Plato's Contribution to Criticism: Plato is the first acclaimed critic. His contribution to the literary criticism is under following headings:

1. **A Pioneer:** He is the first to study poetry in relation with life. He is the first to draw the difference between the inspired poet and the ordinary person.

2. **Classification of Arts:** Plato is the first to define art as imitation of life or nature. He classified art into two kinds –

   The Fine Arts – literature, painting, sculpture and music. They provide pleasure.

   The Useful Arts – Medicine, agriculture, and cooking.

3. **Classification of Poetry:** Plato first of all classified poetry into three categories. They are
   The Dithyrambic – Purely lyrical
   The mimetic or imitative – Drama which imitates life in action and speech and
   The mixed Type – Epic Partly lyrical and partly introduce action and speech

4. **Poetry and Life:** Plato is the first to give a philosophical vision to poetry. He advocates the cause of seriousness and moral profundity. He recognizes the mysterious power of poetry to communicate the profundity of life. Thus, Plato for the first time indicated the relation that exists between literature and life.
5. **Organic Unity in Art and Poetry:** Plato is the first to emphasis the doctrine of artistic unity. Plato expresses that a piece of art or poetry must have well though-out matter, knowledge of its technique, and unity of design. He writes that "Every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own,…not to be headless or footless,…"

Plato is a pioneer in literary theory. His idealism, the subtly of his irony and humour, the clarity, ease and excellence of his prose style have endeared him as the first critic through the ages.

ARISTOTLE

Introduction: The age of Pericles was the golden age of ancient Greek literary Criticism. The literary creative activity and criticism had prospered in this age. The literary criticism was enriched by the critical theories of philosophers cum critics like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides, and Socrates etc. But it was not until the dawn of Plato that literary criticism was systematized. Plato was the first Greek Philosopher to express the systematic views on art and poetry.

Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C) is most distinguished thinker and forefather to many fields of knowledge. His role in literary criticism is equally significant. He was the most famous student of Plato. Plato died without naming Aristotle as the principle of Academy. Disheartened Aristotle left the Academy. Later, he established his own education institution Lyceum. His important 158 Constitutions, Dialogues, On Monarchy, Alexander, The Customs of Barbarians, Natural History, Organon or The Instrument of Correct Thinking, On the Soul, Rhetoric, Logic, Eudemian Ethics, Physics, Metaphysics, Politics, and Poetics.

***Poetics*:** Poetics is the chief work of the Aristotle's literary critical work. It is a storehouse of literary theories whose influence is continuous and universal. It is a short treatise of twenty five chapters in forty four pages. It is lecture notes of Aristotle for his personal teaching purpose. The disjunctive treatise dealt with various literary topics as classified below,

a. The first four chapters and the twenty fifth – Poetry
b. The fifth – A sweeping notes on Comedy, Epic and Tragedy
c. Next fourteen Chapters (6^{th} to 19^{th}) – Exclusive discussion about Tragedy
d. The twenty – twenty three – Poetic Diction and
e. The last and twenty fifth chapter – Poetry and Tragedy

Aristotle's views on Poetry:

1. **The Nature of Poetry:** Poetry is an imitation or Mimesis. Plato was the first to apply the term to describe poetry. Plato condemned poetry for being an imitation. Aristotle corrects his master Plato's impression about poetry. He defines poetry as "Art imitates nature….Art finishes the job when nature fails, or imitates the missing parts." According to Aristotle imitation of poetry is the imitation of the inner human action. Whereas for Plato imitation is the imitation of the physical reality which is again an imitation of the idea of life. Aristotle writes in *Poetics* that Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy and Dithyrambic Poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all…, the manner or the mode of imitation."
2. **Object of Imitation:** Aristotle's equivalent term for mimesis is Homoioma. Homoioma meant imitation of passions in the form of rhythm and melody. However, Aristotle is the first critic to stress that metrical composition is not necessary for poetry. The peculiar object of imitation of poetry is "men in action." The men could be higher or lower and could be better worse than in the real life. For example according to Aristotle comedy shows men as worse than the real. On the other hand,

tragedy shows men as better than the real. Thus, Aristotle places the object of poetry in imitation of human nature.

3. **The Nature of Poet:** The poets are specialized geniuses in imitating imagination and they alone can create poetry. Poet is a grown up child with an impulse to relate the higher meanings of truth to reality.
4. **The Function of Poetry:** Aristotle continues the ancient Greek norm that aesthetics should not be divorced from civic end. But his opinion rejects his master Plato's charges against poetry. Aristotle emphasizes, through his theory of catharsis that literature provides safe outlet for disturbing passions. So poetry helps to generate a better state of mind.
5. **Classification of Poetry:** Aristotle's classification of poetry is based on the character of the writer. And there are two kinds of poetry.
    - **A) The Heroic/Dithyramb/Tragic:** The noble writers imitate noble action, especially of good men. Example: Homer composed hymns to the Gods and the praises of famous men.
    - **B) The Lampooning/Satire/Comedy:** The more trivial poets imitate the actions of meaner persons. The inferior spirits composed satires. The parent forms of comedy are satirical verse and phallic songs. The comedy must ridicule the ugliness or vices but should not cause pain.
    - **C) The Epic:** Along with the above two Aristotle gives one more classification of poetry that is the epic. The Epic is older than either Tragedy or Comedy. It is both narrative and meter.

Aristotle makes a passing remark to lyrical poetry but does not elaborate it. To conclude, Aristotle views on poetry are more relevant to modern view of poetry than his master Plato or his predecessors.

Aristotle's views on Tragedy

Aristotle assigns very important place to tragedy. His definition of Tragedy is –

"Tragedy, then, is an imitation that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the serval kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions."

The Nature of Tragedy: the main object of tragedy is "an imitation of action."According to Aristotle 'action' implies an event or process of events. The action unfolds through human agents, the characters.

Constituent Parts of Tragedy: According to Aristotle, tragedy has six parts-

1. **The Plot:** The plot means "the imitation of the action" and "the arrangement of incidents." For Aristotle plot is more important than character. The plot must have a distinctive beginning, middle and the end. The middle and the end must be the natural and inevitable consequence of the beginning. The plot must be arranged in certain length to have proper magnitude.

Three Unities: A good plot must subscribe to three unities,

1. Unity of Action: A compact and complete plot with no unnecessary dialogues or events or characters. Aristotle disapproves episodic plots.
2. Unity of Time: The whole plot must complete within the single revolution of time. and
3. Unity of Place: Aristotle did not directly mention unity of place. It is implied in his proposition of unity of time. Since in real life people could not change their place within 24 hours, the unity of place is understood unity.

The Kinds of Plot: Aristotle gives two kinds of plot. They are,

1. Simple Plot: An action which is one and continuous and in which the change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation (Periteteia) and without recognition (Anagnorisis) leading to morality is simple.
2. Complex Plot: The complex plot has peripeteia accompanying anagnorisis or one of the two. Peripeteia is irony of worlds. And Anagnorisis is heroes' realization of irony of the world. Hamartia - the heroic flaw is the catalyst of the complex plot. The moral consequence is the object of Peripeteia, Anagnorisis and Hamartia.

Plot – Emotions of Pity and Fear: The plot must contain a powerful appeal to emotions of pity and fear. In order to effect this there must be a change from good to bad fortune, and this change or disaster must be so managed as to enlist the sympathies of the spectator in the highest degree. Aristotle explains that – "It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of fortune presented must be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity for this means neither pity no fear; it merely shocks us.

Division of Plot: The plot is divisible into two parts – complication and its unraveling or denouement. The former ties the events into the tangled knot, the latter unties it. The complication extends from the beginning of action to the part which marks the turning point to good or bad fortunes. The unraveling is that which extends from the beginning of change to the end. The first is commonly called rising action and the second falling action.

2. Character: A tragic hero must be good human as per the classical Greek tradition. He is a person above common level. Aristotle prescribes four things for character portrayal. They are-

a. A Good Person

b. Has propriety – manly valour, but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, inappropriate

c. Character must be true to life. And

d. Consistency – Consistency in consistent.

3. Thought and Diction: Thought is the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. Character is revealed through thought and thought

diction. Aristotle says that character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Thought has to be produced by speech. Proof and refutation are its subdivisions. It includes "the excitation of the feelings, such a pity, fear, anger and the like: the suggestion of importance or its opposite." Diction to Aristotle "the expression of the meaning in words," He believed that the language of poetry must be enriched especially by the use of metaphor which he pronounces to be the greatest of technical aids and adds that "it is proof of natural ability; for to write good metaphors is to have an eye for analogies."

4. Songs: Aristotle allows judicious use of songs.

5. **Spectacle**: According to Aristotle spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

The Function of Tragedy: Catharsis: Aristotle describes the specific effect, the proper function of tragedy, which is "through pity and fear effecting "in calm of mind, all passions spent." Thus, tragedy provides a harmless and pleasurable outlet for instincts which delights the soul. So, the function of Tragedy is purgation.

Aristotle's observation on Style: The use of current and proper words contributes to clarify and lucidity aimed at dignity and charm.

Conclusion: Aristotle's Poetics remains one of the greatest contributions to literary and critical theory. The Renaissance was deeply influenced by Poetics. His influence can be felt in Sidney, Ben Jonson, etc English critics. The pseudo or neo-classicism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was formed on the various interpretations of *Poetics*.

LONGINUS – THE SUBLIME (LECTURE)

Introduction: The identity of Longinus, the first Romantic Critic, is a mystery. The scholars are confused between Dionysius Longinus and Cassius Longinus. Despite the controversy about the identity of Longinus, the impact of *On the Sublime* is valid. The original title of *On the Sublime* inGreek is *Peri Hupsous*. One third of "On the Sublime" is missing. Longinus, the author of *Sublime* was a neo-Platonists. He was well versed in Hebrew, Greek and Roman literature.

Nature and Definition of the Sublime: The main purpose of poetry is not mere pleasure, instruction or persuasion but of ecstasy and transport- "lifting out of oneself." This passion, intensity exaltation, transport was surely a fundamental condition of sublimity in literature. Defining sublimity Longinus remarks: "The Sublime consists in a certain loftiness and consumateness of language, and it is by this and this only that the greatest poets and prose writers have won pre-eminence and lasting fame."The ecstasy in poetry startles the readers which prevails.

The Sublime: True and False: The false sublime is characterized, first, by timidity or bombast of language, which is as great an evil as swellings in the body. "It is drier than dropsy." Secondly, it is characterized by puerile, affected, and frigid expressions. Thirdly, the false sublime results when there is a cheap display of passion, when it is not justified by occasion, and so is wearisome. The literature of the age of Longinus was falsely sublime - "All these ugly and parasitical languages."

Acquiring The Sublime: Nature and Art: The Nature, the inherent quality of the poet to rise to loftiness/sublime must be trained in art of regulation. So, the Nature and Art are dependent on eachother.

Source of the Sublime: The source of the sublime, is five in number according to Longinus –

1. Grandeur

2. Capacity for strong emotion

3. Appropriate use of figure

4. Nobility of diction and

5. Dignity of composition.

1. <u>Grandeur of Thought:</u> The thought of the author must be noble and sublime. Sublime thoughts alone can produce sublime effect. For acquiring noble thoughts the writer shouldbe living on the higher plane of life. Longinus says: "sublimity is the echo of greatness ofsoul,"
2. <u>Capacity for Strong Emotion</u>: The genuine emotion is the strong emotion. He confirms that"I would confidently affirm that nothing makes so much for grandeur

as true emotion in the right place, for it inspires the words, as it were, with a wild gust of mad enthusiasm andfills them with divine frenzy."

3. The Appropriate use of Figures: In short, the use of figures must be psychological, intimately connected with thought and emotion, and not merely mechanical. Longinus suggested three figures of speech for sublimity. They are
   a. Asundeton (absence of conjunctions) metaphor.
   b. Huperbaton or Hyperbole (Inversion) – change of number, person, tense and
   c. Periphrasis (a round about way of saying something, rhetorical ornamental question).
4. Nobility of Diction: Suitable and striking words according to Longinus have "a moving and seductive effect." He is at one with his Greek and Roman predecessors in consideringthe metaphor as valuable to sublimity in literature. Aristotle limits us of number of metaphors to two at a time. Since then it become a rule. Longinus does not approve it. Hesays proper timing for metaphor is "when the passions roll like a torrent." He feels that Hyperboles overdose except in bathos.
5. Dignity of Composition: The arrangement of sublime poetry must blend thought, emotion, figures and words into harmonious whole. But want of harmony must not spoil the sublimity of a literary work. The dignity of composition also implies the avoidance of overrhythmical writing and superficial polish.

An Estimate:-

1. His Romanticism Tempered with Classicism: As first romantic critic, he recognized the importance of imagination in literature. The poet creates the sublime affect by putting his creative and imaginative faculty into action. Longinus's romantic enthusiasm did not allow license and unrestrained liberty. Thus he reinvented the classicism anew.

2. His Theory of Literary Style: Longinus was the first who attempted to formulate the nature and constitution of that style in literature. His style elevates language above its ordinary uses.

3. His Comparative Criticism: He is the first to contrasts the literature of his time with ancient Greek, Roman and Hebrew literature. He suggests that works of great masters are tough-stone onwhich should be tired the worth of the works of later writers. In this respect he anticipates Mathew Arnold, who champions the cause of the comparative method of criticism.

4. His Analytical Criticism: Longinus is also a pioneer in the field of analytical criticism. He analyses passages from a particular works to estimate the aptness of the words, images, epithets etc, used by the author. The best example of his analytical method is his analysis of one of the important love-lyrics of 'Sapho.'

5. His Emphasis on Universality of Appeal: Longinus insists that one of the tests of sublimity in literature is its universal appeal. He states that when a piece of literature transports men of differing in their interests, their ways of life, their tastes, ages and languages then it has wide catholicity ofappeal.

Conclusion: As a critic Longinus was disinterested and free from prejudice. He displays a rare breadth and catholicity of outlook. His *On The Sublime* remains towering and unsurpassable among all other works of its class.

AN APOLOGIE FOR POETRIE

Sir Philip Sidney (1554 – 1586)

OBJECTIVE

You studied about the Renaissance period during the previous semesters. It was an age of rebirth – rebirth of several issues related to culture, art and literature. Here in this lesson you will understand

- the origin of English literary criticism
- how poetry as a genre was criticized and
- how Sidney refutes the charges against poetry through his 'Apology'

STRUCTURE

- Biography of Philip Sidney
- The Origin of English Literary Criticism
- *Apologie for Poetry*: Origin
- The Form of *Apologie for Poetrie*
- *Apologie for Poetrie*: Summary
- Greatness of Poetry
- Three Main Divisions of Poetry
- The Other Subdivisions and Greatness of Poetry over Philosophy, History and Theology:
- Charges against Poetry and Sidney's answers

BIOGRAPHY OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

Sir Philip Sidney, one of the most outstanding men of the Elizabethan age was born on 29th November 1554 at Penhurst, Kent. Sidney went for a tour of the continent in 1571. It was a grand success and Sidney made use of the time to study mathematics, music, astronomy, history, and the practices of chivalry. He was generous and was a profound scholar. He was severely wounded in a war and died on 17th Oct.1586. His reputation was so great and his death was mourned by much of Europe.

Spenser dedicated his 'Shepherd's Calendar' to this noble and virtuous gentleman, most worthy of all titles – both of learning and chivalry, Master Philip Sidney. He described him thus

"*that most heroic spirit,*
the heaven's pride, the glory of our day".

Fulke Greville, his friend and biographer says, "Sir Philip Sidney was a true model of worth; a man fit for conquest, plantation and reformation, or what action so ever is the greatest and hardest among men; a lover of mankind and goodness". (*Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, 1652:143)

"Like Zephyrus, he gave life where he blew."

Apart from the *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney's main works are *Arcadia*, *Astrophel and Stella, Psalms* and *the Lady of May.*

➢ THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH LITERARY CRITICISM

Serious Literary Criticism in England had a late beginning. Chaucer's description of the Monk in his *Prologue*, is perhaps the origin of literary criticism in England. Until the close of the 15th century and for some decades afterwards, we find that no single critical treatise in English existed in English language or even in Latin (Saintsbury). There were two reasons for this late beginning. Firstly the literary output was very limited. English Literature was especially seen in translation. Secondly, the perfect standards were not established. England needed a national language. It had several dialects but it did not have its own national language. Renaissance opened the gates for new knowledge. English criticism originated when the Renaissance placed before English men, the classical literature and the criticism of Italy and Greece. The early critics wanted to model English literature on these classics.

Plato banished poets from his *Republic*. Aristotle challenged Plato's accusations indirectly in his *Poetics*. Sidney took the inspiration from Aristotle, Plato and Horace. A set of critics and writers formed a literary circle called "Areopagus" with the aim of reforming English verse. The group consisted of Sidney, G.Harvey, Spenser and E.Dyer.

These men advocated Greek and Latin system of prosody instead of the traditional English system. The classical prosody was based on the number of syllables and the traditional English prosody was based on the accent.

"Areopagus", the literary circle advocated unrhymed classical metres instead of rhymes. Thus a controversy sparked off among literary men. Some supported the native tradition and some, the classical tradition. Though Spenser and Sidney supported the classical system, they wrote mostly in the native tradition.

While this controversy was going on over the form of poetry, another controversy developed on the moral aspect of English literature and it was in this context of this controversy, real serious criticism originated in England. Puritans argued that 'poetry' and 'drama' were vicious and demoralizing. Elizabethan criticism began in a rather unliterary fashion.

John Northbroke in 1577 attacked 'drama' from the moral aspect and grouped it with dancing, dicing and other evils. Two years later Stephen Gosson published a pamphlet with an imposing title "The School of Abuse…..".

➢ *APOLOGIE FOR POETRY* : ORIGIN

A regular school of criticism was inaugurated by Sir Philip Sidney. He was the father figure of English literary criticism. His "Apologie" was an answer to pamphlet produced by his friend Stephen Gosson with an imposing title. "The School of Abuse: Containing a Pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers ..." Stephen Gosson was an oxford man and he did not step outside the moral and religious line. He wanted to show that the path of literature would lead to hell.

The most important reply to Gosson was Sidney‘s. Gosson had dedicated his pamphlet to Sidney without his permission. Sidney was pained at this strange dedication and wanted to prevent the public misunderstanding of his real views. He also wanted to defend the name of “poor poetry”.

“An Apologie for Poetrie” is a defense of the higher poetic ideals. It is a clarion call to his fellow poets. It is not abusive in tone. Sidney wrote it only to satisfy himself but not to win a victory over Gosson.

“An Apologie” is the finest exposition in English of the critical ideas of the Renaissance. It is the first important critical text in English literary criticism.

- **THE FORM OF THE *APOLOGY*:**

The ‘Apology’ is written in the form of a classical oration and it follows the normal rhetorical style. Aristotle laid down three essential parts for an oration – narration, proposition and proof. But Sidney’s oration demands a more elaborate system of rhetoric. It can be divided into seven parts. The scheme is presented thus –

1. Exordium 2. Narration 3. Proposition 4.Division 5. Conformation 6. Refutation 7. Peroration or Conclusion.

In the *Exordium* the speaker tries to capture the attention of the audience by a humorous anecdote and expression of modesty. Sidney also begins his *Apology* recalling his association with John Pietro Pugliano.

In the *Narration* he commends the dignity of poetry by relating its antiquity, universality, etymology etc., In the *Proposition* part he briefly states the central issue. Poetry is to be commended for its essential quality imitation.

In the *Division* Sidney classifies the poetry according to its ‘subject matter and form.’

In the *Conformation* part, the poet examines the functions of human arts and proves how poetry is superior to all other arts. He also discusses the various parts of poetry.

In the *Refutation* Sidney deals with all the charges against poetry made by its accusers and answers them.

Sidney was England’s first dramatic critic. While discussing the state of English poetry he gives an assessment of the drama of the time. He says that tragedy deals with the higher circle and the astounding things of life. It deals with the fall of tyrants and the uncertainty of life.

Sidney opposed the mingling of the comic and the tragic. He calls the *tragi comedy* a mongrel. It produces the effects neither of tragedy nor of comedy. Sidney stands as the father figure of the English criticism. His *Apology* is an epitome of renaissance criticism.

- ***AN APOLOGY FOR POETRY*: SUMMARY**

Sidney worries for the degradation of the state of poetry from the highest estimation of learning to the laughing stock of children. He decides to make a pitiful defence of "poor poetry".

❖ Greatness of Poetry:

He announces his definition of the poet and of poetry. Poetry is the primary source of enlightenment; and the parent of History and philosophy. It was formerly a kind of philosophy which by its sweet milk nurtured men until they came to expand their hands and gain the fruits of the knowledge. But now her own children came to kill their parents like vipers.

Amphion moved stones with the power of poetry; even the cruel beasts were dumb founded by Orpheus's power of music. Thus poetry is the supreme kind of art.

Sidney follows Scaliger's classification of poets (1) scientific poets (2) poets of moral philosophy concerned with politics, Economics and (3) poets concerned with ethics directly.

Thales, Empedocles and Parmenides sang their natural philosophy (natural science) in verses. Pythogoras and Phocylides uttered their moral counsels in poetry. Poetry is the source of all kinds of knowledge. Even Plato who banished the poets from the Republic was himself poetic. Philosophers like Herodotus also attempted poetry as their medium.

Without the passport of poetry no philosopher or historian could pass his judgement. Even among the barbarous people poets were held in a devout reverence. The Romans called the poet *vates*. The poet was to them a prophet. The oracles of Delphos and the prophecies of Sybylla were in verses. Poetry has some divine force in it.

David's *Psalms* in the Bible are divine poems, hence they are prophetic. The Greeks called the poet a maker. All other arts and sciences are only the representation of natural phenomena. But poetry alone is creative. It makes things better than nature does. It creates forms that are not in Nature. A poet is capable of going hand in hand with Nature. A poet is such an ingenious fellow that he can make the brazen world into Golden. Nature's skill is mostly employed in man. Man is the first Nature and all created things are placed under man by God. Those things constitute the second nature. Man exhibits God's resemblance in him in the creation of poetry. His poetic force has the divine breath. Hence the Greeks granted him a supreme name – Poet.

Poetry is the art of imitation. Its purpose is to teach and delight. Aristotle terms it in his word Mimeses or imitation. For Aristotle the end of art was delight whereas for Horace and other Renaissance critics, its function was teaching. Most of the 18^{th} century writers and critics stressed the end delight. The modern tendency also demands didacticism in poetry.

❖ Three Main Divisions of Poetry:

Poetry is broadly divided into three kinds: religious, philosophical and creative. This classification is based on the Renaissance critic Scaliger.

Such were the Hymns, Psalms, and the Book of Job. These poems give comfort to some in their sorrowful pangs. There are some philosophical poets like Tyrtaeus, Phocylides

and Cato. The creative poets like the Religious Poets imitate to teach and delight. So these may be justly termed as *vates* as every form of knowledge has something to teach.

These three types are sub divided further.

❖ **The Other Subdivisions and Greatness of Poetry over Philosophy, History and Theology:**

The most notable are the *heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, Iambic, Elegiac, Pastoral* and such others. These names are given according to the art of perfection. It offers self knowledge; it purifies the soul. It corrects the private and public life. It lends a virtuous action. The skill which helps most to lead men to virtuous actions, is the prince of all skills. It is acquired through knowledge. The final supreme end of man is to attain a fuller knowledge. Different people were there on the ground towards different branches of knowledge in order to attain perfection. But their end is private and it is restricted to themselves. Every man has to strive to attain perfection. (Eg: Saddler to Horseman to Soldier). A good poet achieves this perfection at a stretch.

Sidney declares the claims of the moral philosophy. He says that these philosophers speak against subtlety, their speech itself is misleading. They cannot destroy Vice, but in addition to this, they are destroyed by it. They have to master the passion but they become its servants.

Then Sidney gives a long list of the claims of history. The historian keeps old mouse other histories. He authorizes himself for the most part upon other histories. His curiosity is for the antiquities. He takes much trouble in reconciling the conflicting statements of different writers. Though he seems to be unreal he defends for himself. Anyhow, history gives the example and philosophy offers the precepts.

Sidney also compares Theology and Law in this field. They are not true competitors; because the scope of theology is beyond all arts and Law is not concerned with men's moral behavior. All these four – moral philosophy, history, theology, and law deal with the manner of men. But they cannot gain their goal. The philosopher sets down with a thorny argument and he cannot solve the problem till he becomes old. On the other side the historian who lacks the consciousness of reasoning adheres to his own principles, even though it is wrong. Both the philosopher and historian fail to produce a fruitful doctrine.

Then Sir Philip Sidney declares the superiority of poetry over philosophy. The peerless poet can perform the doctrines left unsettled by the philosophers and Historians. He presents a perfect picture of it. The poet offers it with his imaginative and judging power. He presents to us a speaking picture. Poetry embodies the philosophic precepts through concrete examples.

Poetry teaches even the parables of Christ. The sayings of Christ about the uncharitable nature and humble nature, the disobedience and mercy and many other moral precepts are not historical facts instructing parables. They are all poetry.

The philosopher speaks for the learned; but the poet offers his sweet food for the tenderest minds. He is indeed the right popular philosopher. Aesop's fables offer virtues for the humans, who are beastlier than beasts.

Poetry is superior to history also. The historian can't bring you the images of true matter. Poetry is more philosophical and it is more serious than his history. Poetry deals with the particular.

The examples of poets are more instructive than the episodes of history. The Historians can't be liberal. "A historical example gives nothing more than the character of what is likely to happen. But an example from poetry has the same force like the example of a History.

Nothing can limit the imagination of the poet. The poet takes the same subject of the Historians and by using his imagination he creates another subject. The Historian can only offer us the examples, but the poet delights and teaches us. His pen acts as the commanding wand and it changes the brazen material into golden. If some poets have failed, it is not the fault of the art of poetry.

Poetry ever offers virtues. But History is captivated by the truth of a foolish world. Poetry excels History. Poetry may not be more effective than History and philosophy in respect of teaching. But poetry excels in moving people to virtuous actions. The end of moral philosophy is doing, but not knowing; so says Aristotle. Sidney like other Renaissance critics like Scaliger and Minturno speaks of the triple aim of poetry i.e., teaching, delighting and moving. Action is impossible without movement.

Poet is the monarch of all masters. He not only delights us but also teaches the right way. Poetry attracts all people. Poetry takes precepts from philosophy and examples from History, and offers us the moral values as a sweet admixture.

Poetry, is therefore, the prince of all sciences.

Then Sidney observes the technical sub divisions of poetry. He does not discuss them because they are equally good individually and also in combination.

Sub-divisions of Poetry:

The Pastoral poetry deals with the suffering of the poor people. Sometimes they deal with the pretty tales of wolves and sheep; it also deals with the miseries of common people at the hands of wicked lords and greedy soldiers. It deals with everyday themes. It should not be condemned.

The Elegy expresses sympathy for all reasonable sorrow; it shows the uselessness of giving imortance to unreasonable sorrow. Sidney 's definition of elegy seems narrow.

The Iambic attacks villainy and therefore it should be praised. Iambos in Greek means a lampoon poem. Iambic now means a verse based on iambuses, i.e. feet consisting a short syllable followed by a long syllable.

The Satire attacks folly and makes people to laugh and recognize their own faults

The Comedy represents the common errors of our private and domestic life in a ridiculous and scornful fashion. It helps us to avoid them. In Sidney's time, comedy had sunk to the level of farce and had become obscene. So that it was vehemently attacked by the

moralists like Gosson. Sidney tries to defend true comedy. Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life. Sidney follows Aristotle's definition of comedy.

A comedy is a more powerful weapon than a tragedy in connecting the faults of the society it delights and teaches. It includes the satiric vein.

The Tragedy shows the sins and tribulations of great people. It shows us the uncertainty of life by moving us to pity and wonder. Sidney seems to have followed Aristotle's definition of tragedy.

The Lyric always moved us with descriptions of thrilling incidents. It gives praises, the reward of virtues to virtuous events.

The Epic is the best and the most accomplished form of poetry. It frames and instructs the mind by its stirring actions and images.

Poetry is the father of all human learning. It is the most ancient and the most excellent. Romans and Greeks have given if divine names. If surpasses History and Philosophy. It is sacred. It takes precepts and examples from philosophy and History and offers us worthy moral values.

Thus Sidney proves the greatness of poetry.

Sidney answers the objections raised by critics against poetry in a polite manner. He brushes aside the idle scoffing of poet haters; and stands as a mighty defender and answers the objections against rhyme and metre.

Sidney is of the opinion that metre is not essential to poetry. Scaliger says that metre gives polish and harmony to poetry. Sidney feels that metre and rhyme are the best side to remember poetry.

❖ **Charges against Poetry and Sidney's Answers:**

Many charges are laid against poetry from antiquity. Sidney chooses four of the most important charges. **The First charge against poetry is that poetry is a waste of time because there are more fruitful branches of knowledge than poetry.**

Sidney answers thus: Poetry is the only knowledge that teaches and moves the people to learn virtue. So other knowledge can both teach and move.

The second objection is that poetry is the mother of lies. But Sidney doesn't accept this objection. He says that the poet never lies because he never affirms anything. A poet is not a conjuror. The other scientists try to affirm things. So there is a possibility for them to lie. A person reads history to know the truth. But he gets false hood. He reads poetry looking for fiction but he finds the exercise profitable. Sidney says that the lawyers are the only people who expose fictitious names and characters. But a poet remains true, his knowledge and presentation is also true.

The third objection is that poetry is the nurse of abuse.

Sidney reasserts that poetry is not enough to move people to nobler actions or valour. His argument is based on the principle that the worst is a corruption of the best. He admits that poetry has been abused. The abuse of poetry can do no great harm. It proves the great potentiality of goodness,that poetry possesses.

Plato has banished poets from his Republic. Sidney says that Plato has condemned not the use of poetry but the abuse of poetry. Plato's dialogues are full of foolish and filthy stories. Those who attack poetry as immoral should notice that the writings of all philosophers also contain a lot of obscenity. Moreover, Plato himself shows the divine inspiration of the poet. The harm done to society by poets is much more less than the harm done to society by philosophers. For, the poets merely repeat the stories about Gods and Goddesses which were there already in existence. Poetry has been honoured by many philosophers.

State of English Poetry:

Then Sidney examines the state of English Poetry. He says that poetry is despised in England. It is undertaken only by base men. Genuine poets now refused to write poetry. He feels that poetry would be shaking English men's lethargy. It was written only in the war time; but not in the time of peace. The poets of the 16^{th} century wrote for their delight and for their friends but not for publication.

Sidney explains the mistakes, the wrongs of contemporary poets. He says that they write poetry without proper preparation. An orator is made but a poet is born. He says that the modern poets start writing before acquiring knowledge. Sidney despises the contemporary poets that they take up any theme that comes to their hands and they observe the possibilities of spinning it into verse and then they make a poem. They felt that whatever they said was verse.

Sidney reviews the condition of English poetry. Sidney talks about Chaucer's *Trolius and Criseyde*, because of its completeness and popularity. He praises Chaucer for establishing a new tradition in England. Sidney criticizes Edmund Spenser's *'The Shepherd's Calendar'.*

He says that the style of Spenser is old and rustic.He cites Theocritus, Virgil and Sannazzard to say that they never used archaic language. He says that many poets write without planning and arranging the whole, before they start. He then criticizes the English drama.

He says that English tragedies and comedies lacked decency and decorum. They lack the unity of place also which has been opined by Aristotle. In English literary criticism Sidney is the first man to refer to the three unities. He further says that the English dramatists have discarded the unity of time also. In Italy and France, the unities of the drama were much more scrupulously observed than in England. The historian should write the events of history necessarily in a chronological order. But the poet or the writer of a tragedy can mould his incidents according to his convenience. Drama does not allow certain things to be presented on the stage. Generally such things are reported by some character or other. Sidney praises Euripedes's treatment of the story, though he has not strictly followed the unities of time and place.

Like classical critics Sidney advocates the separation of tragedy and comedy. Most critics of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries in England supported this. But Shakespeare and other Romantics violated this tradition.

Comedy in England is often partial and immoral. He feels that this view is wrong. Here Sidney distinguishes between delight and laughter. We delight in good chances and we laugh at bad moments. A delightful thing may provoke laughter. But laughter does not necessarily go with delight. He observes that contemporary lyrics are artificial and uninspired. He feels that these lyrics, like unmannerly daughters are bringing their honourable mother and her chastity to a stake.

Diction in Poetry:

Sidney then turns his attention towards diction in English Poetry. Diction means the choice of words. Sidney is the first man to use this word. He says that the diction in English Poetry is affected. He condemns the writer, who borrow exotically the vocabulary; and wh employ alliteration assiduously and who waste their diction with figures of speech.

He then pronounces his digression on euphemism on contemporary Prose. He advises the imitators of great masters that they should try to study and appropriate for themselves the words and phrases used by their masters; rather than merely repeat them in artificial manner.

English language has a mingled nature. It is not pure. But Sidney denies the force of allegations that English is not a pure language. Some editors feel that Sidney is referring to Anglo Saxon and French. Sidney feels that English language is the most suitable for Poetry because of its "*mingled*" nature, its simplified grammar and its ability to make compound structures. He says that the English language is fit for both classical and native systems of versification. In classical Poetry the manner of syllables is not fixed. What was important was the number of stresses in a line. Thus the English language is most suited to rhyme. Sidney assumes a kind of solemnity in concluding his oration.

Summary

Sir Philip Sidney pays a rich tribute to the genre of poetry. He follows the Aristotlean oration model and he talks about the greatness of Poetry over History, Philosophy, Theology and other sciences. He discusses the various forms of poetry and refutes the charges against Poetry with his befitting answers. Sidney's treatise holds a lot of importance because it is the pioneer for critical thinking in the history of English Literature.

Self-Assessment Questions:

1. How does Sidney prove the superiority of the poetry to other forms of learning.
2. Examine critically Sidney's views on poetry, philosophy and history.
3. Examine the views of Sidney on poetic and dramatic forms.
4. Sidney's 'Apology ' is the epitome of the renaissance criticism: Discuss

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AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY BY JOHN DRYDEN
JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700)

OBJECTIVES:

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- understand the synopsis of the text written by Dryden
- analyse the different conditions of the stage during Dryden's age
- appreciate how Dryden supports the English stage and makes his observations about the French through Neander

STRUCTURE

2.1 STATE OF CRITICISM DURING THE RESTORATION PERIOD:

The Restoration was, thus, a period of considerable critical activity in England and the critics of the period were faced with many rival creeds and opinions that stood sharply opposed to each other. There were contradictory opinions about each other: the ancient versus the modern; the French versus the English dramatists; the new poetics under formulation versus the highly imaginative Elizabethan and Jacobean literary works; faith in the superior refinement of the contemporary reading-public opposed to the native excellence of the ignored poets belonging to the ages of comparative barbarism – both Elizabethan and Medieval: these were only the most outstanding problems demanding satisfactory solution for placing literary criticism on a sound footing.

2.2 GREATNESS OF JOHN DRYDEN

During this critical period of transition John Dryden appeared as a critic at once comprehensive and clear-sighted, widely informed and naturally gifted to dissipate the mist enveloping the critical scene. He was fully acquainted with all that was being said and written by the contemporary French critics. He exhibited a freedom of judgement and patriotic liberalism in relation to the literature of his country, which placed him, above the rest of his contemoraries in the literary sphere. His critical output, though of uniform excellence, is large and varied and a choice will have to be made among his Essays and Prefaces for singling out the best pieces for analysis and examination.

2.3 A SUMMARY OF HIS CRITICAL TEXT

His *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* which was composed in 1665 and published in 1668 is one of his masterpieces in literary criticism and deserves a closer examination than we can afford to give to other essays. In form it is a Ciceronian dialogue; the four speakers, Crites,Eugenius, Lisideius and Neander present diverse points of view, for most of which Dryden felt both sympathy and reservation. "The first speaker, Crites, defends the ancients; Eugenius, believes in progress in arts defends the superiority of the Elizabethan English drama, Lisideius prefers French drama to English and Elizabethan drama to that of the early Restoration period; and Neander, who most nearly is Dryden himself among the speakers, finally defends the English as opposed to the French, gives a glowing account of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare, but defends the recent use of rime in plays.

The ball is set rolling with a mention about the dignity of the last age. "They have debauched the true old poetry" so far that Nature, which is the soul of it, is not in any of their writings. To this, Eugenius replies that he will yield to none in his reverence for the great Greeks and Romans but he cannot think so contemptibly of the age in which he lives, or so dishonourably of his own country, as not to judge that they equal the ancients in most kind of poesy, and in some surpass them. He is able to carry conviction with his auditors in the observation that the English poesy has been considerably improved by the happiness of some writers still living, who first taught to mould thoughts into easy and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression and to make the rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it.

Crites is requested to present the case of the ancients and he at once proceeds to remark that Dramatic Poesy had time enough, reckoning from Thespis (who first invented it) to Aristophanes, to be born, to grow up and to flourish in maturity. He observes:

"All the rules by which we practice the drama to this day were delivered to us from the observations which Aristotle made of those poets who either lived before him, or were his contemporaries. Of that book which Aristotle has left us (Poetics) Horace's *Art of Poetry*, in an excellent comment, and, I believe, restores to us that second book of his concerning Comedy, which is wanting in him. Out of these two have been extracted the famous rules - the three unities – namely of time, place and action, the unity of time the comprehend in twenty-four hours, the compass of a natural day and the reason of it is obvious to every one that the time of the feigned action, or fable of the play, should be proportioned as near as can be to the duration of that time in which it is represented. For the second unity, that of place, the ancients meant by it that the scene ought to be continued through the play, in the same place where it was laid, for the stage on which it is represented being but one and the same place, it is unnatural to conceive it many-and those far distant from one another. As for the third unity, which is that of action the ancients meant that the poet is to aim at one great and complete action, to the carrying on of which all things in his play, even the very obstacles, are to be subservient. For two actions equally labored will destroy the unity of the poem; not but that there may be many actions in a play, as Ben Jonson has observed in his Discoveries; but they must be all subservient to the great one."

Eugenius, who supports the ancients replies that "we own all the help we have from them (the ancients) and want neither veneration nor gratitude, while we acknowledge that, to

overcome them, we must make use of the advantages we have received from them ; but to these assistances we have joined our own industry. We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of nature; and having the life before us, besides the experience dof all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed. For dnatural causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection".

This general observation is followed by a reference to the immaturity of the old comedy in Greece and the four integral parts of the play prescribed by Aristotle

(a) *Protasis* or entrance of characters
(b) *Epitasis* or working up of the plot
(c) *Catastasis* or the height and full growth of the play;
(d) Catastrophe or the French *le denouement*, that is, discovery or unraveling of the plot.

In their comedies, the Romans generally borrowed their plots from the Greek poets ; and theirs was commonly as little girl stolen or wandered from her parents, brought back unknown to the city, then falling into the hands of some young fellow, who by the help of his servant, cheats his father-ultimately one or other sees a little box or cabinet which was carried away with her , and so discovers her to her friends, if some god do not prevent it, be coming down in a machine, and taking the thanks of it to himself.

The unity of place, however it might be practiced by them, was never any of their rules. We neither find it in Aristotle, Horace, or any who have written of it, till in our age the French pots first made it a precept on the stage. The unity of time, even Terence himself who was the best and most regular of them, has neglected.

2.4 LISIDEIUS ON THE FRENCH STAGE:

Lisideius remarks about the greatness of the French over the English plays :

"If the question had been started who had writ best, the French or English, forty years age, I should have adjudged the honour to my own nation: but since that time we have been so long together bad Englishmen, that we have not leisure to be good poets. Beaumont, Fletcher and Jonson were just then leaving the world; as if in an age of so much horror, wit, and those milder studies of humanity, had no further business among us. But the Muses, who ever follow peace, went to plant in another country; it was then, that the great cardinal Richelieu began to take them into his protection ; and that, by his encouragement Corneille, and some other Frenchmen reformed their theatre."

He continues to praise the French writers saying that they have not over burdened themselves with too many plots. He says that the French writers use their plots with better judgment then the English writers. He gives an example saying that the French writers avoid a tumult on the stage where as the English turn the stages into battle-grounds. The English dramatists also portray a ridiculous war scene by portraying an army with a drum and Five men behind it. He says that the English tragedies portray ridiculous scenes with unnecessary action. He observes that certain parts of actions should be represented on the stage and

certain parts are to be related he commands that the English writers do not know the difference between the two.

2.5 NEANDER'S OBSERVATIONS:

After listening to Lisideius, Neander, while agreeing with some of the better qualities of the French writers observes that we cannot place the French writers above the English. The French poetry does not have the soul poesy and it is only "the beauties of a statue, but not of a man ". It is not animated and it does not have the humour and passion of the English stage. He says that Lisideius is biased in his criticism of the English comedies and tragedies. He makes a comparison between Corneille and Fletcher and Johnson. He says that the French also have derived their plays from Spanish Novels. He gives an answer to the comments of the Lisideius in a powerful way.

He says that the French plots are barren and they lack the variety and copiousness of the English. He also comments that English comedies portray more variety of emotions and they are more natural then the French plays. The French plays have unity but no coherence. The English plays are lovely and natural in tone and representation of life. The French plays are dominated by a single character where as the English play writes give equal importance to all the characters. He observes that the audiences should not be left unsatisfied and the English play wrights know how to present emotions in a balanced way on the stage. He established that the English have borrowed nothing from the French and their plots "are weaved in English Looms". He concludes that the English plays have more variety of plots and characters and they are as regular as theirs. Asked by Eugenius, Neander, who is none but Dryden himself praises the greatness of Shakespeare, Beaumont,and Fletcher and Jonson.

2.6 NEANDER ON SHAKESPEARE

To begin then with Shakespeare; he was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the Images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, butluckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Thosewho accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: hewas naturally learn'd; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; helook'd inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is every where alike; werehe so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of Mankind. He ismany times flat, insipid; his Comick wit degenerating into clenches; his seriousswelling into Bombast. But he is alwayes great, when some great occasion ispresented to him: no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did notthen raise himself as high above the rest of the Poets,Quantum lent a solent, inter viberna cupressi.

The consideration of this made Mr. Hales of Eaton say, That there was nosubject of which any Poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treatedof in Shakespeare; and however others are now generally prefer'd before him,yet the Age wherein he liv'd, which had contemporaries with him, Fletcher and Johnson never equall'd them to him in their esteem: And in the last Kings Court, when Ben's reputation was at highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the Courtiers, set our Shakespeare far above him.

2.7 NEANDER ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

Beaumont and Fletcher of whom I am next to speak, had with the advantageof Shakespeare's wit, which was their precedent, great natural gifts, improv'd bystudy. Beaumont especially being so accurate a judge of Playes, that Ben.

Jonson while he liv'd, submitted all his Writings to his Censure, and 'tis thought,us'd his judgement in correcting, if not contriving all his Plots. What value he had for him, appears by the Verses he writ to him; and therefore I need speak no farther of it. The first Play which brought Fletcher and him in esteem was their Philaster: for before that, they had written two or three very unsuccessfully:as the like is reported of Ben. Jonson, before he writ Every Man in his Humour.

Their Plots were generally more regular then Shakespeare's, especially those which were made before Beaumont's death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of Gentlemen much better; whose wilde debaucheries, and quickness of wit in reparties, no Poet can ever paint as they have done. This Humour of which Ben. Jonson deriv'd from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, Love. I am apt to believe the English Language in them arriv'd to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous then necessary. Their Playes are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the Stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonsons: the reason is, because there is a certain gayety in their Comedies, and Pathos in their more serious Playes, which suits generally with all mens humours. Shakespeares language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben. Jonson's wit comes short of theirs.

2.8 NEANDER ON JONSON (1550-1589)

As for Jonson, to whose Character I am now arriv'd, if we look upon him while he was himself, (for his last Playes were but his dotages) I think him the most learned and judicious Writer which any Theater ever had. He was a most severe Judge of himself as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and Language, and Humour also in some measure we had before him; but something of Art was wanting to the Drama till he came. He manag'd his strength to more advantage then any who preceded him. You seldome find him making Love in any of his Scenes, or endeavouring to move the Passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper Sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent Mechanick people. He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latine, and he borrow'd boldly from them: there is scarce a Poet or Historian among the Roman Authours of those times whom he has not translated in Sejanus and Catiline. But he has done his Robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any Law. He invades Authours like a Monarch, and what would be theft in other Poets, is onely victory in him. With the spoils of these Writers he so represents old Rome to us, in its Rites, Ceremonies and Customs, that if one of their Poets had written either of his Tragedies, we had seen less of it then in him. If there was any fault in his Language, 'twas that he weav'd it too closely and laboriously in his serious Playes; perhaps too, he did a little to much Romanize our Tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latine as he found them: wherein though he learnedly followed the Idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours. If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge

him the more correct Poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or Father of our Dramatick Poets; Johnson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude of him, as he has given us the most correct Playes, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his Discoveries, we have as many and profitable Rules for perfecting the Stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us.
Neander / Dryden rebukes against the critics, who attack the use of rhyme both in tragedy and comedy. Since nobody speaks in rhyme in real life, he supports the use of blank verse in drama and says that the use of rhyme is serious plays is justifiable than the blank verse.

2.9 SUMMARY:

In this Ciceronian dialogue Dryden makes a comparative study of the state of English drama. Eugenius takes the side of the modern English dramatists by criticizing the faults of the classical playwrights, who did not themselves observe the unity of place. But Crites defends the ancienta and points out that they invited the principles of dramatic art enunciated by Aristotle and Horace. Crites opposes rhyme in plays and argues that through the moderns excel in science; the ancient age was the true age of poetry. Lisideius defends the French playwrights and attacks the English tendency to mix genres. He defines a play as a just and lively image of human and the change of fortune to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind. Neander favours the moderns, respects the ancients, critical about the rigid rules of dramas and he favours rhyme if it is in proper place like in grand subject matter. Neander, a spokesperson of Dryden argues that tragic comedy is the best form for a play; because it is the closest to life in which emotions are heightened by both mirth and sadness. He also finds subplots as an integral part to enrich a play.

2.10 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Dryden take up writing this essay?
2. Comment on the conditions of Criticism during Dryden's age?
3. What is the structure of the Dryden plan it in such a way?
4. Summarise the ideas of Crites.
5. How does Lisideius defend the French drama?
6. What is the role played by Eugenius?
7.Summarise the views of Neander.
8. What does Neander say about Shakespeare and Ben Jonson?
9. What does Lisideius say about the English comedies and tragedies?
10. Summarise the views of speakers about the three unities.

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Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*

Introduction: Alexander Pope (21 May 1688 – 30 May 1744) was an English critic, translator, satirist, and poet of Augustan Age. He is a principle figurehead of the Neo-Classical Age. His famous works are *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, and *An Essay on Criticism*, as well as for his translation of Homer. He is considered a master of the heroic couplet.

An Essay on Criticism: It is the first long poem written by Alexander Pope. The twenty three year old Pope composed it in 1707. Later, it was published in May 1711. The poem was written in heroic couplet. The work was heavily influenced byQuintillian, Aristotle' *Poetics*, Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and Nicolas Boileau's *L'Art Poetique*. After Shakespeare, Pope is the second-most quoted writer in the English language per The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. *An Essay on Criticism* is chief contributor for this achievement of Pope. The most famous English quotes like "To err is human, to forgive is divine;" "A little learning is a dnag'rous thing;" "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

The poem is in three parts. Addison considered the poem a Master-Piece. It was following one of the observations of the Addison the poem was divided into three parts in 1736.

1. Part I – Line 1 – Line 201

2. Part II – Line 202 – Line 560

3. Part III – Line 561 – 744.

1. **Part I - "Judging ill:"** The first part highlights the unwanted harm the foolish censure of criticism does to the art of writing. The opening lines of the poem are

   "Tis hard to say if greater want of skill
   Appear in writing or in judging ill." (1-2)

   So, Pope appeals the critics to be careful and humble in his criticism. An honest critic shall not have envy. Understanding is an inherent quality of an honest critic

   Wit is an essential feature of a honest or good critic. Pope says that

   "For Wit and Judgment often are at strife.
   "Tho' meant each other's Aid, like Man and Wife." (80-83)

   Wit means the intelligence and imagination of the critic. The rules of imagination have to be discovered from the classical learning and nature. Nature means the cosmic order in the life. Pope defines the Nature in the following words,

   Those rules of the old discover'd, not devis'd,
   Are Nature still, but Nature Methodiz'd;
   Nature, like Liberty, is but restrain'd
   By the same Laws which first herself ordain'd. (88-91)
2. **Part II – The Errs:** The second part elaborates the entire human psychological aspects of

critics like pride, envy, sectarianism, and personal poetic tastes. A good critic must defeat these psychological draw backs. The critic must understand the work as a whole rather than its partial parts like ornament, conceit, style, or meter etc. Therefore, Pope warns the critics not to be slaves to fragmentary rules and conventions but study the essential truths of the works.

Part III: Morals of Criticism: Pope directs the critics to identify and separate the irredeemable dull writers from the true wit writers. The critic must either judge the truth or be silent if he lacks the senses. A moral critic must be subtle in teaching. He says that

> In all you speak, let Truth and Candor shine…
> Be silent always when you doubt your Sense;
> And speak, tho'sure, with seeming Diffidence (566-7)

Conclusion: Alexander Pope is the first significant poet cum critic to direct the criticism. *The Essay on Criticism* resonate the classical sentiment for moralistic truth.

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S *PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE* (1709-1784)

OBJECTIVES

After going through the lesson, you will

- understand Johnson as a neo-classical critic
- assess Johnson's adoration towards Shakespeare as a poet of nature
- appreciate Johnson as a true critic

STRUCTURE

3.1 THE AGE OF JOHNSON

As observed by A.Bosker in the "Preface" to *Literary Criticism in the Age of Johnson, "*the literature of the age of Johnson reflects the conflict between the two main factors in artistic creation, unimpassioned reason on the one side, emotion and imagination on the other.

Reason had been the dominating force ever since the middle of the seventeenth century and under its powerful sway, emotional and imaginative elements had been repressed, the old spontaneity of the Elizabethans had fled the domain of art, and the artistic expression of the deep personal feelings had come to be looked upon with distrust. But the old romantic spirit, which had never become extinct, began to assert itself and gradually restored the essential elements of the poetic art to their proper places, so that the last decades of the eighteenth century saw the dawn of a new era, free from the restraints of common sense. To this evolution in imaginative art, the critical literature of the period offers a close parallel; in both, the reaction is merely a phase of a far-reaching intellectual movement, a general revolt against the cold intellectualism of the Augustan Ages. Thus the age of Johnson witnessed the co-existence of two main types of criticism, one representing the old, and the other illustrative of the new outlook. These two critical currents do not always move within definite bounds. Like every period of transition, the time of Johnson is characterized by a good deal of vacillation and compromise, the two prevalent influences often overlap and interpenetrate".

3.2 DR.SAMUEL JOHNSON AS A CRITIC

It was the weight of Johnson which gave to neo-classicism a new lease of life and prolonged the struggle between the old and the new ideals in the criticism of the age. But nothing will be farther from truth than the belief that Johnson was tied wholly to the neo-classical system and all its precepts. He was too sturdy a man to accept the cult passively and indiscriminately. He applied the light of his reason and strong common sense to the body of rules and precepts, rejected what was merely customary and accidental and held fast to the essential rules with the characteristic tenacity of his mind. He was anxious to prescribe and enforce certain postulates with the zeal of a scientist clinging to the universal and immutable laws of Nature and much of his criticism, theoretical and practical, was guided and coloured by the principles thus selected. At the same time he was not wholly impervious to the new tendencies current in his age, even though he was naturally distrustful of innovations in any field of life, much more so in the domain of literature, which he believed, ha arrived at the highest point of progress and perfection in his age.

Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* is the most masterly piece of Johnson's literary criticism. Johnson brings out the realistic qualities of Shakespeare's dramas, the universality of his characters and wild intricacy of the plots. According to Johnson, the greatness of Shakespeare lies in the fact that he is the poet of Nature. He is the poet who holds up to the reader a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are the genuine products of common humanity. They form a separate world. They act and speak as common people do in the society. His characters are not individual but commonly a species.

Johnson's *Preface* is a critical document on Shakespeare. He not only explains the merits of Shakespeare but also talks about his demerits as observed by other critics. He shows his love for the great poet. His assessment is more complex and sophisticated. Johnson says that Shakespeare is above all writers and he is the 'poet of nature'. The phrase 'poet of nature' carries his aesthetic and moral implications. Shakespeare holds up to his reader's faithful mirror of manners and of life; Johnson praised Pope as a critic of Shakespeare. Pope has said "every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual as those in itself".

As Johnson himself observes:

"Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine rogeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find.

His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of *Shakespeare*, it is commonly a species."

Shakespeare offers a realistic and convincing portrayal of human nature. His characterization is not extravagant and exaggerated. He offers the reader the correct ideas of human nature. The speakers in his plays are men who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken of acted on that particular occasion. Shakespeare does not disguise the natural passions and incidents. He keeps the level of his dialogues with real life.

The agency may be supernatural. The dialogue reflects reality. Shakespeare "approximates the remote and familiarises the wonderful ". Shakespeare previews the future events and gives them a shape.

3.3 THE DEFECTS OF SHAKESPEARE

The following are observed as the defects of Shakespeare

1. Shakespeare sacrifices virtue to convenience
2. The plots are often so loosely packed.
3. In many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected.
4. In his comic scenes he is seldom very successful.
5. In tragedy, his performance is worse and his labour is more.
6. His set speeches are commonly cold.
7. He has no regard for unity of time and plays.

3.4 JOHNSON'S CRITIQUE

Shakespeare's drama is the mirror of life. Some critics like Denis and Rymer think that the Roman characters in his plays are not Roman. Voltaire complained that the kings in Shakespeare's plays did not behave completely as kings. Denis was displeased because Menenias a Roman senator behaved like a buffoon. Voltaire was displeased because the Danish usurper (Claudius) in Hamlet had been represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always made nature predominate over accident. These are the petty cavils of the petty minds.

Shakespeare wanted to bring out the brutality and faults of men; they may be Romans or Danish. "a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and conditions as a painter, satisfied with the figure neglects the drapery".

3.4.1 Tragedies and Comedies of Shakespeare

Shakespeare's dramas are not purely tragedies or comedies. They are the compositions of a distinct kind. Shakespeare has been condemned for his mingling of the comic and tragic elements in his plays. His plays depict real human nature with its equal share of good and evil, joy and sorrow mingled in various degrees and endless combinations. His plays show the way of the world in which the laws of one man is the gain of another. Johnson makes a stout defense of Shakespeare's mingling of tragic and comic elements. The 18th century critics regarded a play as a convincing imitation of real events and real people. Shakespeare's plays also exhibit the real state of sublunary nature of good and evil, joy and sorrow. Being a powerful dramatist Shakespeare mingles the sorrowfulness with the laughter to achieve the two elements from the reader at the same time. His mingling of these two elements in the same play is contrary to the rules of dramatic writing. Shakespeare pays attention to the reality than for the rules. The object of literature is to give instruction, by pleasing the reader.

A play in which the comic and tragic have been mingled is capable of conveying the instruction more powerfully. The mingling of these two elements does not diminish or weaken the changes of passion that the dramatist aims at. Furthermore variety on the whole contributes to pleasure.

The plays of Shakespeare are divided into comedies, histories and tragedies artificially by the players who have no definite ideas. A comedy has been generally regarded as a play with a happy conclusion, Irrespective of its distressing incidents in the course of its plot. The plays which depend on the catastrophe become "tragedies today and comedies tomorrow".

Tragedy in those times required only a calamitous conclusion. The common criticism of that age was satisfied with the form of tragedy. His composition is the same. He combined seriousness and merriment. We laugh or mourn at his command.

Shakespeare wrote his plays in accordance with his natural disposition. He did not know the rules of dramatic writing. Rymer opined that Shakespeare's natural disposition laid in the direction of comedy. Johnson agrees with the view in writing tragedy Shakespeare had to toil hard. But in his comedies he was so natural and spontaneous. Comedy was congenial to his nature. In his tragedies Johnson feels something wanting. He says that his comedies give us pleasure by the thoughts and the language. His tragedy is concentrated on the incidents and actions. His tragedy is the result of his skill; his comedy is the product of the instinct. Shakespeare doesn't aim at a distinct moral purpose Johnson brings out the merits and the demerits of Shakespeare from the neo classical point of view. He strictly follows the neo classical standards of a drama while passing his judgment on Shakespeare.

3.4.2 An Analysis of the Defects of Shakespeare

Shakespeare's first defect is that he sacrifices virtue to convenience. He is more careful to please than to instruct. He makes no fair distribution of good and evil. He carries his characters indifferently through right or wrong, at the end dismisses them without further attention leaving them to be operated by chance. This fault is so grievous because it is always a writer's duty to make the world morally better.

Shakespeare doesn't develop his plots properly. They are often loosely formed and carelessly pursued. He violates chronology. He shows no regard to distinction of time or place. We find Hector quoting Aristotle in *Trolius and Cressida*. He was not the only violator of chronology for Sidney also violated these rules in his Arcadia.

Shakespeare's comic scenes are seldom very successful when representing witty exchange between characters. His jests are commonly indecent and their pleasantry licentious. It is not easy to determine whether he represented the real conversation of his time.

Shakespeare is condemned severely by Johnson for his inefficiency in portraying the tragic scenes. Johnson says, "The off spring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness and obscurity". Johnson followed the rules of Neo classical school of critics and his judgement lacks wisdom and clear-sightedness.

Shakespeare is often verbose. His narration shows an undue pomp of diction and unnecessary verbiage and repetition. Johnson seems exaggerated in encountering the demerits

of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is not so unconscious of his pomposity. He wrote what he saw in life and everyday London. People spoke high cultured and very poetic language and Shakespeare represented it in his dramas.

Shakespeare set speeches were cold and weak. Whenever he tries to show his own store of knowledge, he merely arouses the reader's pity or resentment.

"some times the languages is intricate even when the thought is not subtle; or the line is bulky though the image is not great".

The feelings aroused by him in the reader suddenly lose their intensity and become feeble. What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He could never resist a quibble; he follows a quibble at all costs. "A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller he follows it at all adventures. It is sure to lead him out of his way and sure to engulf him in the mire". "A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career or stoop from his elevation". "A quibble is for him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to loss lit". Johnson brings out the weakness of Shakespeare for a quibble in a very rhetoric manner.

3.5 JOHNSON'S DEFENSE

Johnson defends Shakespeare even for his violation of the unities. Johnson opines that his violation is not a defect at all. Many dramatists and critics followed the laws of the unities unity of time, place and action. It is considered that the total be no change of place and the whole action should take place at one particular place. The unity of action the play must be totally tragic or completely comic there should be no mingling of these two elements.

Shakespeare has already violated the unity of action, because he has combined the two elements to bring the 'real effect of life'.

Except in his 'history' plays, Shakespeare has preserved the unity of action Shakespeare's plays have the inner design of the study as laid down by Aristotle it contains a beginning, a middle and an end. Johnson observes a logical connection between one incident and the other. For him, the conclusion follows naturally. We must observe his technique of writing. He says, "There are perhaps come incidents that might be spared". The same Johnson has condemned Shakespeare for the quality of his plots and incidents. He strictly adheres to the conventions of the Neo classical school. He wants to eat the cake and at the same time he wants it two. He doesn't like the demerits of Shakespeare but at the same time he cannot control himself without praising Shakespeare.

Shakespeare has completely violated the three unities. These unities have been held in high esteem since the time of Corneille. It is believed that the three unities make the plot of the drama plausible and credible.

Shakespeare's story has generally a beginning, a middle and an end as required by Aristotle. His incidents are logically connected, and his conclusions follow naturally. The unities are believed to make the plot of the drama plausible and credible. An extended action, the frequent changes of the place, and the lack of the unity of time strain the spectators. But at the same time, if the reader or the spectator is imaginative, he can understand the change in

the place. The spectators will be naturally aware of their senses and of the stage that it is a only a stage and that the players are the only players. Because of the looseness in the unity of action the reader attains the alienation effect. They know that they are neither in Rome nor in Pontus. The spectator can easily imagine the lapse of months or years between one act and another. But it doesn't mean that the spectators totally incredulous of the various happenings on the stage. They get involved in the action. When they witness a miserable for the moment. The credulity of the audience is limited.

The stage brings reality of life to our minds. Comedy is to be watched and tragedy is to be perused. Johnson feels that comedy is more powerful than tragedy through the visual media; but tragedy is also somewhat more powerful only when we read it in the pages a book. A spectator like a reader enjoys and accepts the changes of scene and the passage of time. So it is known that the unities of time and place are essential.

Shakespeare gives much importance to 'incidents' action in his plays. Johnson wants a poet to represent human nature accurately and vividly; at the same time he wants the writer to provide a moral instruction for the reader. The chief end of literature is to amuse and instruct. Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare seems to be free from personal prejudices. In his exposition of editorial principles Johnson shows a superb historical understanding. Johnson realized the fact that Shakespeare belonged to a particular age.

"But the greater part of his excellence was the product of his own genius. He found the *English* stage in a state of the utmost rudeness; no essays either in tragedy or comedy had appeared, from which it could be discovered to what degree of delight either one or other might be carried. Neither character nor dialogue were yet understood. *Shakespeare* may be truly said to have introduced them both amongst us, and in some of his happier scenes to have carried them both to the utmost height".

Johnson strictly observed the language, style and expression of Shakespeare. He has impartially exposed the weaknesses, merits and demerits of Shakespeare according to the Neo classical standards lack. His technic is completely neo classical. The neo classical attitude is seen in

(1) his objectivity of assessment
(2) his emphasis on literature as a faithful picture of human life and character.
(3) the importance he gives to the didactic element in literature.
(4) his incapacity to appreciate the higher qualities of poetry.
(5) his procedure in pointing out the merits and demerits of Shakespeare.

Johnson elevates Shakespeare from the other poets. He shows no distinction of time or place; instead he defends it. Johnson is 'judicial' in his method. His robust honesty gives the Preface a noble place among other critical pronouncements on Shakespeare.

3.6 SUMMARY

Samuel Johnson presents a comprehensive picture of Shakespeare as an artist above all others. He sifts each and every aspect of Shakespeare right from his plots and characters to dialogues and other issues like 'treatment of love'. He criticizes and also supports Shakespeare from his individual and neo-classical standpoints.

3.7 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Johnson praise Shakespeare?
2. What is the difference between Shakespeare and other playwrights?
3. What are the defects of Shakespeaare as observed by other critics?
4. What are the defects observed by Johnson with reference to Shakespeare's tragedies?
5. How does Johnson defend Shakespeare?

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WORDSWORTH'S *PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS*

OBJECTIVES

After going through the lesson, you will be able to understand

- Nature of romantic criticism
- Wordsworth's observations about nature of poetry, imagination, poetic diction etc.,
- Coleridge's views on Wordsworth's ideas

STRUCTURE

4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF CRITICISM

Aristotle, Horace and Quintilian continued to be the undisputed masters in the realm of literature and criticism. The neo-classical emphasis, in addition to the unquestionable principle of mimesis fell also on the end that art was supposed to serve-the Horatian prescription that it should aim at delight and instruction. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, we witness the beginnings of an orientation of attitudes and values questioning the basis of the imitative-rationalist aesthetic and paving the way for the Romantic view of life and art.

The term 'romantic' was in stray use in England, France and Germany, earlier, but it acquired a definite connotation about the year 1800, mainly in the discussions furnished by Madame de Stael and A.W. Schlegel.

In the second half of the 18th century there was a widespread demand for political freedom, manifesting itself conspicuously in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. This love of freedom and longing for independence from the tyranny of authority exhibited itself in the sphere of human intellect, and free-thinking came into vogue in England as well as on the continent. It was in this spirit of free enquiry and re-assessment that the rules prescribed by Aristotle and Horace, Boileau and Le Bossu were re-examined and their insufficiencies discovered.

4.2 WHAT IS ROMANTICISM?

Romanticism is generally treated under the head 'the Romantic Movement' or 'Romantic Revival'. The stress was mainly on the freedom of individual self-expression. The ordered rationality of the preceding age (the Augustan Period) was viewed as mechanical, impersonal and artificial. Most of the Romantic poets saw themselves as free spirits expressing their own imaginative truth. These replaced the decorous imitation of classical models upon which neo-classicists like Dryden, Pope and Johnson placed much value.

Romanticism places the greatest emphasis on individuality and the subjective dimension of human experience. This stress on individuality implies the autonomy of every individual and the consequent variety and difference. Rene Wellek indentifies certain common features which define Romanticism. In his view, it is a particular view of imagination, a particular attitude towards nature and a particular style of writing.

"Imagination", in his view, "is a mysterious creative faculty of which all arts including literature are, in a way, an expression and which, in the end, determines man's relationship with external reality". To these common characteristics, we should also add the historical fact that we generally associate the rise of Romanticism with the nineteenth century Europe.

That, however, does not imply that Romanticism was something altogether new. In fact the Romantic impulse has always existed side by side with the classical impulse which places more emphasis on external reality and views art as a "reflection on this reality".

4.3 FEATURES OF ROMANTIC CRITICISM

Romantic Criticism places the whole emphasis on the inner dimension of the individual artist. It rejects the mimetic conclusion that art is imitation or at best, an interpretation or that poetry is a matter of wit, which makes up agreeable pictures and pleasant visions by combining different ideas. Art is not imitation or interpretation; it is not the presentation of a basic universal norm or the denominator of a type but creation in the most significant sense. Poetry is the expression of the inner man and if at all it reflects external nature it is external nature modified by imagination. The cause of poetry is not, as Aristotle thought, 'formal', determined by what the poet imitates, nor is the cause of poetry, as the pragmatic critics believe, 'final', determined by the ends that poetry is supposed to serve. The cause of poetry is 'efficient', determined by the inner impulse and the creative imagination of the poet. Imagination, Inspiration, and Emotion became the principles of integration in art.

Freedom is the keynote of romantic criticism, which exhibits originality in conception and approach. For centuries, it had become customary to define poetry as imitation or as invention after the fashion of Aristotle or Horace. The neo-classicists had considerably narrowed down the meaning of these ancient terms and consequently their view of literature had become stereotyped. Those who sponsored the romantic criticism attempted new definitions of poetry conceived in the spirit of freedom, which now permeated all spheres of human existence. Emotion and imagination were enfranchised and acquired new authority in the domain of art. Wordsworth defined poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. And Shelley as 'the expression of the imagination'. Coleridge describes poetry as

'the blossom and the fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language', and lays down immediate communication of pleasure as its main end.

Just as there is novelty in the literature of the romantic revival, likewise there is striking freshness in the opinions of the critics of the romantic school. The old rules are now ignored if not completely discarded; the old classification of literary forms does not hold good, since there is considerable freedom in the use of literary genres and patterns. Whatever has the imprint of creative imagination and gives adequate expression to sincere feelings is now deemed good literature and, on the contrary, writings cast in conventional moulds and using the rigid diction of the earlier century are ruled out of court.

4.4 WORDSWORTH'S *PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS*

Like Dryden, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold and Mr. Eliot, Wordsworth has furnished profound reflections on the nature of poetic creation. His position as a pioneer and leader of the romantic revival is universally acknowledged. The same attitude of mind, which moulded his poetry, also gave colour and specific character to his criticism. Originality is the hall-mark of Wordsworth's critical writings. They are justly regarded as the manifesto of a new movement in English critical thought.

Wordsworth's 'Preface' was largely an attempt to create a favourable climate for the new kind of poetry offered in the *Lyrical Ballads.* The stress is on spontaneity and on the expression of the poet's personality. Emotions are the raw material. The poet is a man speaking to men but is special in certain respects. The language of poems should, as far as possible, be close to the language of the common man.

The *Lyrical Ballads* was a volume of poems which was first composed anonymously by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. The two had met in 1795 and there was a mutual recognition of "genius". Both the poets believed that verse, stripped of high literary contrivance and written in the language of the lower and middle classes could express the fundamentals of human nature.

The first volume of the book (1798) was published with a short 'Foreword' in which Wordsworth stated very briefly the main points of his argument. The second edition was published in 1800 with many new poems added, and a much longer and more detailed Preface. It was revised and expanded in 1802 with significant additions about the definition of the poet and the universality and value of poetry.

"The Preface" is a revolutionary critical statement from "a poet deeply imbued with the sense of a mission to free poetry from a hackneyed and artificial style of writing and take it nearer to life as it is actually lived and make it an authentic expression of sincere feeling and mode of experience". Without undoing the past or forsaking the healthy elements of his tradition, Wordsworth is affecting a break and thus inaugurating a new era in poetry.

"The Preface" can be discussed under four heads:

(i) What is poetry?
(ii) What are the defining characteristics of a poet?
(iii) The value of poetry and
(iv) The question of poetic diction.

4.5 NATURE OF POETRY

Wordsworth's theory of poetry makes emotions the prime source of poetic creation. "All good poetry" according to Wordsworth, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". Later in the *Preface* (1800) he elaborates the idea thus:"I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings:it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility : the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which was before th subject of contemplation is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on".

As Wordsworth wrote in his "Essay Supplementary to the Preface' (of the 1815 edition of his poems), poetry is 'the reflection of the wisdom of the heart and the grandeur of the imagination'. Such poetry touches the deepest chords in man and has a humanizing effect. Wordsworth elaborates:

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

In his *Preface to Poems* (1815), Wordsworth gives an epitome of his thoughts on poetic creation. He has mentioned six causes that lead to poetic creation. He has mentioned six causes that lead to poetic composition: (1) Observation and description, (2) Sensibility, (3) Reflection, (4) Imagination and fancy, (5) Invention, and (6) Judgment. Among the requirements of the poet, next to sensibility, he lays emphasis on fancy and imagination.

Fancy is distinguished from imagination as the weaker and less comprehensive faculty of the mind. "The imagination is that intellectual lens through the medium of which the poetical server sees the objects of his observation modified both in form and colour".

Commenting on the style of poetry Wordsworth says –

"My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such ; but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in metre seem to lay claim to be prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry.

4.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF A POET

Wordsworth identifies three main characteristics of a poet. First, he is "exceptionally sensitive and endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness with a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind". This enables him not only to feel that which happens to him personally but also to experience vicariously that which may happen to others. Secondly, he "speaks to other men as a man" 'that is to say, "poetry is not mere self-indulgence" and that the poet is a social being with a responsibility. A great poet ought to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure and permanent. Wordsworth later on developed this into a doctrine: 'Every great poet is a teacher. I wish either to be considered a teacher or as nothing'. This is not crude didacticism but a way of describing the humanizing influence of poetry. Thirdly, the poet is endowed with an extraordinarily strong imagination so that he is affected by absent things as if they were present.

Wordsworth himself possessed a very strong imagination so that the beauteous forms seen by him once were ever present to his mind's eye and could induce appropriate feelings and states of mind.

He says

"nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them ". The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions.

Wordsworth asserts that with the growth of science, poetry will be needed more than we need it now:

If the labours of the man of science should ever create a material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep than no more than at present, he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of objects of science itself.

Wordsworth does not regard science as the enemy of poetry but complementary to it.

4.7 ROLE OF IMAGINATION

In the famous Kantian typology, it is the synthetic power which determines sense a *priori* in respect of its form. In common language it bridges the gap between sensation and thought. By itself sensation gives us a world which is chaotic and by itself thought cannot

impose an order upon this chaos. To bridge the gulf we require what Coleridge called 'the shaping spirit of imagination'.

Although imagination is not so central a concept in Wordsworth's theoretical pronouncements, he, in his 'preface' of 1815, accords to it the same place as do the other Romantics:

Imagination in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws.

This is a clear refutation of the mechanical view of imagination held by the neo-classicists of the eighteenth century.

Wordsworth then proceeds to illustrate the operation of imagination by the use of the word 'hang' in Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton, and by the use of certain other words in his own poetry.

..The imagination also shapes and creates…by innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity and dissolving and separating unity into unity and dissolving and separating unity into number,..alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers.

Imagination is such a central concept in the Romantic theory of art that its mode of actual operation in poetry needs to be examined in greater detail. Wordsworth's poetry supplies us with an ideal illustration of how imagination works in the process of creation. Fortunately for us, he has himself chosen, in his "Preface' of 1815, the poems "There Was a Boy' and 'Resolution and Independence' that he would use to explain the working of the imagination.

4.8 COLERIDGE ON WORDSWORTH

An important subject of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* is an exposition and evalutation of Wordsworth's poetry. To him Wordsworth was the greatest poet of the age.

According to Coleridge, Wordsworth was fully justified in his criticism of the artificiality and unnaturalness of a poetic diction which had become stagnant and hindered rather than helped capture the exact curve of a creative writer's experience but he disagrees with Wordsworth's view that the language of poetry should be 'the language of natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings'.

First, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not except in such a sense, as hath never by any one (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and lastly,that as far as, and in that degree in which it is practicable, yet as a rule it is useless if not injurious, and, therefore,either need not, or ought not to be practiced.

Coleridge also points to the contradictions, which exist in the ideas expressed in the *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads.* On one hand, Wordsworth would recommend for poetic use

the very language of men and on the other hand, he would deny any essential difference between the language of poetry and that of prose; and again, he would dilate on the utility of metre and the way it affects the use of language in poetry.

To Wordsworth, literary art is not a jugglery of words but the manipulation of language for the exalted purpose of safeguarding and promoting healthy cultural values. This role of poetry had become particularly urgent in modern times when, as a result of the abstract materialism and the process of mechanization, life and matter have been divested of all value.

Discussing Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction in Chapter XVII, Coleridge records his general agreement with what Wordsworth has said in the Appendix to the *Preface*, namely, that the strong passions of the early poets flowed voluntarily in lines rich in metaphors and other figures of speech that emerged spontaneously, but later poetry, depleted of those strong emotions, still tried to retain the adornments which had become hollow and devoid of natural justification. At the same time it is urged that this plain fact is over-emphasized by Wordsworth, in order to en-kindle and feed controversy.

After this partial agreement, Coleridge turns round to challenge Wordsworth's view in a pointed manner. His three-fold objection to Wordsworth's views on the use of common language in poetry is (a) These views are applicable only to some kinds of poetry. (b) Even to these classes they are not applicable, except in such a sense, as has never by anyone been denied or doubted. (c) As a rule they are useless if not injurious and, therefore, either need not or ought not to be practiced.

To disprove this belief of Wordsworth, Coleridge asserts that there is nothing uncommonly fascinating in the personages figuring in Wordsworth's poems.

In further support of his contention, Coleridge then mentions Aristotle's well-known dictum that poetry is ideal rather than particular as it portrays generic attributes. He refers to the characters in Wordsworth's poems, *Michael*, *The Brother*, *The Thorn*, *The Idiot Boy* etc, and shows by analysis that these are not specific characters from rural life. He points to Wordsworth's lapses in these poems, particularly in *The Idiot Boy*, which furnishes a morbid picture of idiocy rather than motherly affection.

Coleridge's examination of Wordsworth's views on poetic diction and metre is continued further in the XVIII chapter of the *Biographia*, wherein the second major proposition of Wordsworth, namely, there is no essential difference between prose and the language of metrical composition, is challenged.

When we compare Wordsworth with Coleridge, the superiority of the latter in depth of thought and sufficiency of viewpoint is easily seen. Coleridge was endowed with rare powers of mind. He could instinctively penetrate to the very core of a matter and his disquisitions are comprehensive and profound. For instance, Wordsworth, while writing on fancy and imagination, only points out the broad distinction between the two, fancy being feebler and more ephemeral than imagination. Without going into the philosophical niceties, he describes imagination as a lens through which the poet must view the whole world.

In fact, Wordsworth's main concern was with the poet's keen emotive perception and its communication. Imagination enters into his views only secondarily. In his examination of

Wordsworth's theory of diction and metre, more than once Coleridge has said that Wordsworth has viewed the problem only in relation to certain practical requirements and has never tried to throw light on relevant points in an independent philosophical manner. Really, Wordsworth lacked that metaphysical manner. Really, Wordsworth lacked that metaphysical depth which Coleridge so pre-eminently possessed.

Wordsworth's stature as a critic may not be as high as Coleridge's, but he has a prominent place in the history of English literary thought. As Rene Wellek has said, 'his position is transitional'. He was challenging what Herbert Read has called the 'wit-writing' of the 18th century, that is to say, he advocated a new theory – both about 'content' and 'form of poetry'.

4.9 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the agreement between Wordsworth and Coleridge?
2. What is the nature of a 'poet' according to Wordsworth?
3. What are the divisions of the text 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'?
4. What is 'poetry' according to Wordsworth?
5. hat are the qualities of 'poetic diction'? and why does Coleridge oppose Wordsworth?

4.10 SUMMARY

We hope that this lesson has provided you with the necessary details about Wordsworth's ideas about the art of writing poetry. For a better understanding we advise you to go through the original critical text and compare it with Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Wordsworth's views about poetry can be better understood when you read a great number of poems with his views in mind.

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S
BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA XIV

OBJECTIVES

The written monuments of Coleridge's critical work is contained in 24 chapter of Biographic Literaria (1815-17).In this critical disquision, Coleridge consents himself not only with the practice of criticism, but also, with its theory. In his practical approach to criticism, we get the glimpse of Coleridge the poet; whereas in theoretical discussion, Coleridge the Philosopher came to the center stage. In chapter XIV (14) of Biographic Literaria, Coleridge's view on nature and function of poetry in discussed in philosophical terms .The poet within Coleridge discusses the difference between poetry and prose, and the immediate function of poetry, whereas the philosopher discusses the difference between poetry and poem. He was the first English writer to insist that every work of art is, by its very nature, an organic whole. At the first step he rules out the assumption, which, from Horace onwards, had wrought such havoc in critism, that the object of poetry is to instruct; or, as a less extreme from of the heresy had asserted, to make men morally better.

STRUCTURE

1.1 BIOGRAPHY OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) was an English poet, critic, and philosopher who was, along with his friend William Wordsworth, one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in England and one of the Lake Poets. He is probably best known for his poems The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Kubla Khan, as well as his major prose work Biographia Literaria.

1.1.1 Early life and education

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on 21 October 1772 in the rural town of Ottery St Mary, Devonshire. He was the youngest of ten children, and his father, the Reverend John Coleridge, was a well respected vicar. Coleridge suffered from constant ridicule by his older brother Frank, partially due to jealousy, as Samuel was often praised and favoured by his parents. To escape this abuse, he frequently sought refuge at a local library, which led him to discover his passion for poetry.

After the death of his father in 1781, contrary to his desires, he was sent to Christ's Hospital. The school was originally founded in the 16th century in Greyfriars, London and Hertford. [Now a boarding school in West Sussex]. The school was notorious for its unwelcoming atmosphere and strict regimen under The Rev. James Bowyer, many years Head Master of the grammar school, which fostered thoughts of guilt and depression in young Samuel's maturing mind.

However, Coleridge seems to have appreciated his teacher, as he wrote in detailed recollections of his schooldays in Biographia Literaria:

" I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe master...At the same time that we were studying the Greek Tragic Poets, he made us read Shakspeare and Milton as lessons: and they were the lessons too, which required most time and trouble to bring up, so as to escape his censure. I learnt from him, that Poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes.

In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our school education) he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? your Nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose! . Be this as it may, there was one custom of our master's, which I cannot pass over in silence, because I think it . worthy of imitation. He would often permit our theme exercises, to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over.

Then placing the whole number abreast on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day.

Throughout life, Coleridge idealized his father as pious and innocent, while his relationship with his mother was more problematic. His childhood was characterized by attention-seeking, which has been linked to his dependent personality as an adult. He was rarely allowed to return home during the school term, and this distance from his family at such a turbulent time proved emotionally damaging. He later wrote of his loneliness at school in the poem Frost at Midnight: "With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt/Of my sweet birthplace"

From 1791 until 1794 Coleridge attended Jesus College, Cambridge. In 1792 he won the Browne Gold Medal for an Ode that he wrote on the slave trade. In November, 1793, he left the college and enlisted in the Royal Dragoons, perhaps because of debt or because the girl that he loved, Mary Evans, had rejected him. Afterwards He was rumored to have a bout with severe depression. His brothers arranged for his discharge a few months later (ironically because of supposed homosexuality) and he was readmitted to Jesus College, though he would never receive a degree from Cambridge.

1.1.2 Pantisocracy and marriage

Coleridge in 1795, age 27.At the university he was introduced to political and theological ideas then considered radical, including those of the poet Robert Southey.

Coleridge joined Southey in a plan, soon abandoned, to found a utopian commune like society, called pantisocracy, in the wilderness of Pennsylvania. In 1795 the two friends married sisters Sarah and Edith Fricker, but Coleridge's marriage proved unhappy. He grew to detest his wife, whom he only married because of social constraints, and eventually divorced her. In 1795 Coleridge met poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. They became immediate friends.

Around 1796, Coleridge started taking Laudanum as a pain-reliever (see Coleridge and Opium). His suffering, caused by many ailments, including toothache and facial neuralgia, is mentioned in his own notebook as well as that of Dorothy Wordsworth. There was no stigma associated with taking opium at the time, but also little understanding of the dangers of addiction.

The years 1797 and 1798, during which he lived in Nether Stowey, Somerset, and Wordsworth, having visited him and being enchanted by the surroundings, rented Alfoxton Park, a little over three miles (5 km) away, were among the most fruitful of Coleridge's life.

Besides the Rime of The Ancient Mariner, he composed the symbolic poem Kubla Khan, written Coleridge himself claimed as a result of an opium dream, in "a kind of a reverie"; and the first part of the narrative poem Christabel. The writing of Kubla Khan was said to have been interrupted by the arrival of a Person from Porlock - an event that has been embellished upon in such varied contexts as science fiction and Nabokov's Lolita. During this period he also produced his much-praised "conversation" poems This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, Frost at Midnight, and The Nightingale.

A statue of the Ancient Mariner at Watchet Harbour, Somerset, England, unveiled in September 2003 as a tribute to Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Ah ! well a-day ! what evil looks
Had I from old and young !
Instead of the cross, the Albatross

1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth published a joint volume of poetry, Lyrical Ballads, which proved to be the starting point for the English romantic movement. Though the productive Wordsworth contributed more poems to the volume, Coleridge's first version of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was the longest poem and drew more immediate attention than anything else.

In the spring of 1798, Coleridge temporarily took over for Rev. Joshua Toulmin at Taunton's Mary Street Unitarian Chapel while Rev. Toulmin grieved over the drowning death of his daughter Jane. Poetically commenting on the strength of Rev. Toulmin, Coleridge wrote in a 1798 letter to John Prior Estlin,

In the autumn of 1798, Coleridge and Wordsworth left for a stay in Germany; Coleridge soon went his own way and spent much of his time in university towns. During this

period he became interested in German philosophy, especially the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant, and in the literary criticism of the 18th century dramatist Gotthold Lessing.

Coleridge studied German and, after his return to England, translated the dramatic trilogy Wallenstein by the German Classical poet Friedrich Schiller into English.

In 1799, Coleridge and Wordsworth stayed at Thomas Hutchinson's farm on the Tees at Sockburn, near Darlington. There both of them fell in love, Coleridge with Sara Hutchinson ('Asra'), and Wordsworth with her sister Mary, whom he married in 1802.

It was at Sockburn that Coleridge wrote his ballad-poem 'Love', addressed to Sara. The knight mentioned is the mailed figure on the Conyers tomb in ruined Sockburn church.

The figure has a wyvern at his feet, a reference to the Sockburn worm slain by Sir John Conyers (and a possible source for Lewis Carroll's Jabberwock). The worm was supposedly buried under the rock in the nearby pasture; this was the 'greystone' of Coleridge's first draft, later transformed into a 'mount'. The poem was a direct inspiration for John Keats' famous poem 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' The Conyers falchion is traditionally presented to incoming Bishops of Durham, as they ride across the bridge at Croft.

1.1.3 Formative Influences

Coleridge's greatest intellectual debts were first to William Godwin's Political Justice, especially during his Pantisocratic period, and to David Hartley's Observations on Man, which is the source of the psychology which we find in "Frost at Midnight." Hartley argued that we become aware of sensory events as impressions, and that "ideas" are derived by noticing similarities and differences between impressions and then by naming them.

Connections resulting from the coincidence of impressions create linkages, so that the occurrence of one impression triggers those links and calls up the memory of those ideas with which it is associated (See Dorothy Emmet, "Coleridge and Philosophy").

Coleridge was critical of the literary taste of his contemporaries, and a literary conservative insofar as he was afraid that the lack of taste in the ever growing masses of literate people would mean a continued desecration of literature itself.

In 1800 he returned to England and shortly thereafter settled with his family and friends at Keswick in the Lake District of Cumberland to be near Grasmere, where Wordsworth had moved. Soon, however, he was beset by marital problems, illnesses, increased opium dependency, tensions with Wordsworth, and a lack of confidence in his poetic powers, all of which fueled the composition of Dejection: An Ode and an intensification of his philosophical studies.

In 1804 he traveled to Sicily and Malta, working for a time as Acting Public Secretary of Malta under the Commissioner, Alexander Ball. He gave this up and returned to England in 1806. Dorothy Wordsworth was shocked at his condition upon his return. From 1807 to 1808, Coleridge returned to Malta and then traveled in Sicily and Italy, in the hope that leaving Britain's damp climate would improve his health and thus enable him to reduce his consumption of opium. Thomas de Quincey alleges in his Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets that it was during this period that Coleridge became a full-blown opium addict,

using the drug as a substitute for the lost vigour and creativity of his youth. It has been suggested, however, that this reflects de Quincey's own experiences more than Coleridge's.

His opium addiction (he was using as much as two quarts of laudanum a week) now began to take over his life: he separated from his wife in 1808, quarreled with Wordsworth in 1810, lost part of his annuity in 1811, put himself under the care of Dr. Daniel in 1814.

In 1809 Coleridge instigated his second attempt to become a newspaper publisher with the publication of the journal entitled The Friend. The Friend was a weekly publication that, in Coleridge's typically ambitious style, was written, edited, and published almost entirely single-handedly. Given that Coleridge tended to be highly disorganized and had no head for business meant that The Friend was doomed from the start. Coleridge financed the journal by selling over five hundred subscriptions, over two dozen of which were sold to members of parliament. The Friend was an eclectic publication that drew upon every corner of Coleridge's remarkably diverse knowledge of Law, Philosophy, Morals, Politics, History, and Literary criticism. And although it was often turgid, rambling, and inaccessible to most readers, The Friend ran for 25 issues and was republished in book form a number of times. Years after its initial publication The Friend became a highly influential work and its effect was felt on writers and philosophers from J.S. Mill to Emerson.

Between 1810 and 1820 this "giant among dwarfs", as he was often considered by his contemporaries, gave a series of lectures in London and Bristol those on Shakespeare renewed interest in the playwright as a model for contemporary writers. Much of Coleridge's reputation as a literary critic is founded on the lectures that he undertook in the winter of 1810-11 which were sponsored by the Philosophical Institution and given at Scot's Corporation Hall off Fetter Lane, Fleet Street. These lectures were heralded in the Prospectus as "A Course of Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry." Coleridge's ill-health, addiction problems, and somewhat unstable personality meant that all his lectures were plagued with problems of delays and a general irregularity of quality from one lecture to the next. Furthermore, Coleridge's mind was extremely dynamic and his personality was erratic. As a result of these factors, Coleridge often failed to prepare anything but the loosest of notes for his lectures and regularly entered into extremely long digressions which his audiences found it difficult to follow. However, it was the lecture on Hamlet given on 2 January 1812 that was considered the best and has influenced Hamlet studies ever since.

Before Coleridge Hamlet was often denigrated and belittled by critics from Voltaire to Dr. Johnson But Coleridge rescued Hamlet and his thoughts on the play are often still published as supplements to the text.

In August 1814, Coleridge was approached by Lord Byron's publisher, John Murray, about the possibility of translating Goethe's infamous occult classic Faust (1808). Coleridge was regarded by many as the greatest living writer on the demonic and he accepted the commission, only to abandon work on it after six weeks. Until recently scholars have accepted that Coleridge never returned to the project, despite Goethe's own belief in the 1820s that Coleridge had in fact completed a long translation of the work. In September 2007, Oxford University Press sparked a heated scholarly controversy by publishing an English translation of Goethe's work which purported to be Coleridge's long lost masterpiece. The text in question first appeared anonymously in 1821.

In 1817 Coleridge, with his addiction worsening, his spirits depressed, and his family alienated, took residence in the home of the physician James Gillman, at 3 The Grove, Highgate, London, England. In Gillman's home he finished his major prose work, the Biographia Literaria (1815), a volume composed of 23 chapters of autobiographical notes and dissertations on various subjects, including some incisive literary theory and criticism. He composed much poetry here and had many inspirations a few of them from opium overdose.

Perhaps because he conceived such grand projects, he had difficulty carrying them through to completion, and he berated himself for his "indolence." It is unclear whether his growing use of opium was a symptom or a cause of his growing depression.

He published other writings while he was living at the Gillman home, notably Sibylline Leaves (1820), Aids to Reflection (1823), and Church and State (1826). He died of a lung disorder including some heart failure from the opium that he was taking in High gate on 25 July 1834.

1.2 LATER LIFE OF S.T. COLERIDGE : POETRY

Coleridge is probably best known for his long poems, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel. Even those who have never read the Rime have come under its influence: its words have given the English language the metaphor of an albatross around one's neck, the quotation of "water, water everywhere, ne any drop to drink (almost always rendered as "but not a drop to drink")", and the phrase "a sadder and a wiser man (again, usually rendered as "sadder but wiser man")". Christabel is known for its musical rhythm, language, and its Gothic tale.

Kubla Khan, or, A Vision in a Dream, A Fragment, although shorter, is also widely known. Both Kubla Khan and Christabel have an additional "romantic" aura because they were never finished. Stopford Brooke characterised both poems as having no rival due to their "exquisite metrical movement" and "imaginative phrasing."

Coleridge's shorter, meditative "conversation poems," however, proved to be the most influential of his work. These include both quiet poems like This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison and Frost at Midnight and also strongly emotional poems like Dejection and The Pains of Sleep. Wordsworth immediately adopted the model of these poems, and used it to compose several of his major poems. Via Wordsworth, the conversation poem became a standard vehicle for English poetic expression, and perhaps the most common approach among modern poets.The Eolian Harp, Speaking symbolically in terms of harp and breeze, Coleridge's implication is that each being is but a single part of the world-soul or over-spirit that emanates from the One. It is interesting to note that Coleridge for the moment feels he has ventured too far, for he then retracts "these shapings of the unregenerate mind," and concludes the poem vowing to forsake "vain philsophy's aye-babbling spring."

It is important to understand that despite not enjoying the name recognition that Wordsworth or Shelley have had, Coleridge is one of the most important voices in English poetry. His poems directly and deeply influenced all the major poets of the age. He was known by his contemporaries as a meticulous craftsman who was more rigorous in his careful reworking of his poems than any other poet, and Southey and Wordsworth were dependent on his professional advice. His influence on Wordsworth is particularly important because many critics have credited Coleridge with the very idea of ‘Conversational Poetry.” The idea

of utilizing common, everyday language to express profound poetic images and ideas for which Wordsworth became so famous may have originated almost entirely in Coleridge's mind. It is difficult to imagine Wordsworth's great poems The Excursion or The Prelude ever having been written without the direct influence of Coleridge's originality.

And as important as Coleridge was to poetry as a poet, he was equally important to poetry as a critic. Coleridge's philosophy of poetry which he developed over many years has been deeply influential in the field of literary criticism. This influence can be seen in such critics as A.O.Lovejoy and I.A. Richards. (More needs to be added here)

1.2.1 Coleridge and the influence of the Gothic

Gothic novels like Polidori's The Vampire, Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Mrs Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, and Matthew Lewis's The Monk were the best-sellers of the end of the eighteenth century, and thrilled many young women (who were often strictly forbidden to read them). Jane Austen satirised the style mercilessly in Northanger Abbey.

Coleridge wrote reviews of Mrs Radcliffe's books and of The Mad Monk among others. He comments in his reviews:

" The horrible and the preternatural have usually seized on the popular taste, at the rise and decline of literature. Most powerful stimulants, they can never be required except by the torpor of an unawakened, or the languor of an exhausted, appetite... We trust, however, that satiety will banish what good sense should have prevented; and that, wearied with fiends, incomprehensible characters, with shrieks, murders, and subterraneous dungeons, the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured. "

However, Coleridge used mysterious and demonic elements in poems such as The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798), Christabel and Kubla Khan (published 1816 but known in manuscript form before then) and certainly influenced other poets and writers of the time.

Poems like this both drew inspiration from and helped to inflame the craze for Gothic romance. Mary Shelley, who knew Coleridge well, mentions The Rime of the Ancient Mariner twice directly in Frankenstein, and some of the descriptions in the novel echo it indirectly. Although William Godwin, her father, disagreed with Coleridge on some important issues, he respected his opinions and Coleridge often visited the Godwins. Mary Shelley later recalled hiding behind the sofa and hearing his voice chanting The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

1.3 ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA (1817)

In this significant critical treatise Coleridge turns his attention to practical criticism. He provides a critical analysis of Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonais' and 'the Rape of Lucrece' to describe the promises and specific symptoms of poetic power'. He identifies sweetness of versification in Shakespeare and observes that there must be music in the soul of the poet. From his perception, the poet should possess the ability to deal with a subject remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer. He emphasizes on the use of images to organize the poet's passion as a third quality. He considers energy of thought

as the fourth quality. It is only in Shakespeare one finds the unity of creative power and intellectual energy.

Coleridge discusses the aspects of difference between Wordsworth and the poets of the 15th and 16th centuries . Coleridge points out that the poets of the past have avoided the subjects of novelty. Excellence in treating the subjects is the trail and test of the artist's merit. To Coleridge, the essence of art is in polished phrases, melodious cadences and gentlemanly vocabulary. Coleridge disagreed with the common man's idea of the use of common man's language. He believed that the poetic diction is the rare species of communication. This originates in the contemplation of poet's consciousness. To examine the practice and use of commonwords in Wordsworth's poems, Coleridge studies some of the pomes such as 'The Brothers', ' Michael', 'Ruth', 'The Mad Mother'. Disagreeing with Wordsworth's perception that when rustic language is purified it loses its intended purpose, Coleridge says that What Wordsworth has in mind is not language of the rustics.

In chapter XVIII, Coleridge analytically discusses the idea of Wordsworth that there cannot be difference between prose and metrical composition. Though poetry contains prosaic passages, there cannot be acceptable modes of expression.These would be inappropriate in poetry. Poetry holds its own distinctive characteristics. Meter, language, excitement, frequency and intensity, vividness of description are some of the characteristics of poetry. Wordsworth was for conversational naturalness sustained in verse and metrically dignified. This is appropriately found in Spenser, Chaucer and George Herbert. He examines the fallacies of Wordsworth's poetry in chapter XXII. Coleridge identifies inconsistency in the poetry of Wordsworth. In the prosaic quality of his poems, there is a minute description and observation of the objects and the insertion of excessive details . In this aspect, Wordsworth do not depend on enough imagination.

Coleridge then identifies many excellencies in Wordsworth's poetry. Wordsworth's poetry is in purity and austerity of diction. There is an appropriateness of the words. The thought and sentiment that sprang from poet's meditative observation maintained correspondent weight. They are as Fresh, natural and spontaneous as the manifestation of nature. There is a perfect truth of nature unfurled in the images of his poetry. There is a meditative pathos, union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility. Sympathy of man with man is described. Wordsworth detected the superscription of the creator with guilt or calamity. Wordsworth's gift of imagination is in the strictest and highest sense of excellence. With this perceptive observation Coleridge offers insights into the density of Wordsworth's poetry and excels in his critical acumen on par with Dryden and Jhonson.

1.3.1 Coleridge's Idea of Imagination

Coleridge's collection of prose is brilliantly a discursive form. But he do not have a substantial collection of prose like William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, De Quincey etc. In the age of great critics he consolidated his position as second to none.His philosophical speculations have clarified and regulated his aesthetic judgements. He has rediscovered Shakespeare and was influenced by German critics. Shakespeare's universalisation and the transcendent power of characterization are realized in the criticism offered by S.T. Coleridge.

In Coleridge's criticism imagination and critical activity acquired a systematic activity of the mind and spirit. He read the works of Schelgel and Immanuel Kant. He has a

unique quality of imagination. He has the power to synthesize the diverse ideas into an organic whole.

In chapter V-IX of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge traces the growth of mind through various stages. In chapter XII he lays down the propositions for ideal realism. All this is to expound the nature and genesis of the imagination. For him, Imagination is of primary and secondary nature. It is the prime agent of human perception. It is repetition of the finite mind. It is an eternal act of creation in the infinite I am. The secondary imagination co exists with the conscious will. It differs from primary imagination and unifies diversified objects.

Contrary to the imagination, fancy has fixities and definities. It is blended and modified with the empirical phenomenon of the will. The very perception of 'imagination' and 'fancy' is related to the ideas of Germans. Immanuel Kant defies the faculty of thinking in relation to the power possessed by us from the ideas of Plato, Descartes etc. Primary imagination, secondary imagination and Reason stand in ascending series. The Platonic sense of knowledge is equivalent to immediate sensory of intuition. Imagination is a primary creative activity and willed activity. It is spirit of self realizing intuition. Primary imagination is a human creative act which is a participation in the living act.

Secondary imagination reworks on the perceptual products of primary imagination. Symbols and ideas such 'self', 'the absolute', 'the world' and 'god nature' symbolize the aspects of higher life and invite the participation of man. The fine arts, according to Coleridge belong to the world of impressions. They operate on the images of sight and sound. A poet masters the essence of nature and a higher sense of soul of man. Man's mind is scattered throughout the images of the nature. To have genius is to live in the universal. A man of genius finds himself reflected into the mystery of being.

In the conception of Coleridge, there is a union in the meaning of art and the nature. The coalescence and the reconciliation is between the conscious and unconscious, subject and object. In his poetry of art it is middle quality between a thought and a thing. The theory of imagination of Coleridge and Wordsworth is a description of their own best poetry in its formal, structural and metaphoric aspect. They agreed in their ideas about their association of the imagination with the vast and infinite.

1.4 BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA : CHAPTER XIV (STUDY OF THE TEXT) AND TEXT

Most of the admirers of Coleridge discovered Coleridge, as he discovered himself in Shakespeare's Hamlet.- Gifted with comprehensive mind, he synthesized all the forms of knowledge into his organic theory of poetry. In his original response to theory of Poetry, he has distinguished between fancy and imagination. In his idea of imagination there is unity of all the elements of this universe. There is fusion of disparate images. He is a master of applied criticism. He is prominent in theoretical and creative imagination. His ideas about poetic consciousness and the origin of poetic diction are of great interest to the modern criticism. He defines the idea of poem, poetry and imagination in chapter XIV. Under the supernatural influence, Poetry is Willing Suspension of Disbelief'. With this view Coleridge wrote 'The Ancient Mariner', 'The Dark Ladio' and 'The Christabel'. To him, Poetic diction originates with a metaphysical purpose in the poet's consciousness. To him, the immediate concern of the poem is pleasure but not the Truth. To him 'imagination' is synthetic and magical power. It is balance and reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities.

Imagination fuses the idea and the image, the individual and the representative, the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects.

THE TEXT

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature.

The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

With this view I wrote the 'Ancient Mariner,' and was preparing among other poems, the 'Dark Ladie,' and the 'Christabel,' in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the 'Lyrical Ballads' were published; and were presented by him as an *experiment*, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest, which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not

included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of *real* life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a Iong time described as being; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong ability and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its *religious* fervour. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence, with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honoured more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a POEM; and secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind*, and in *essence*.

Coleridge's brief discussion of imagination (primary and secondary) and fancy in Chapter 13 of Biographia Literaria has been called, "perhaps the most famous single prose passage in all of English literature, yet ... also one of the most baffling."(1) The publication of the latest edition of Biographia a decade ago did not still the debate. Numerous attempts to interpret what Coleridge called his "immethodical ... miscellany"(2) show evidence of reading his poetic language too literally in his argument against literalism. His "seminal principle" of imagination (which many critics have found absent from his thought) is both a metaphysical distinction concerning God and a linguistic principle concerning language and metaphor. Here it will be argued that imagination is in fact the main focus of Coleridge's philosophical argument (in accordance with his claim at the end of Chapter 6); that Chapter 12, which many critics have discarded, is of particular significance; that the "seminal principle" of the imagination-fancy distinction is present in the "balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities;"(3) that this describes not a literal reconciliation but rather a tensive relationship; and that this principle contributes to the solutions of his three major philosophical dilemmas outlined in Volume 1. Lesson Writer

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S
BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA XV AND PART OF XVIII

STRUCTURE

1.1. BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA: CHAPTER XV (STUDY OF THE TEXT) AND TEXT

The specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakespeare's VENUS AND ADONIS, and RAPE of LUCRECE.

In the application of these principles to purposes of practical criticism, as employed in the 2, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power, as distinguished from general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will, rather than by the inspiration of a genial and productive nature. In this investigation, I could not, I thought, do better, than keep before me the earliest work of the greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced, our myriad-minded Shakespeare. I mean the VENUS AND ADONIS, and the LUCRECE; works which give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious proofs of the immaturity, of his genius. From these I abstracted the following marks, as characteristics of original poetic genius in general.

1. In the VENUS AND ADONIS, the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant. The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to a faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and not the result of an easily imitable mechanism, I regard as a highly favourable promise in the compositions of a young man. The man that hath not music in his soul can indeed never be a genuine poet. Imagery,(even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history),affecting incidents, just thoughts, interesting personal or domestic feelings, and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem, may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade, by a man of talent and much reading, who, as I once before observed, has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural poetic genius; the love of the arbitrary end for a possession of the peculiar means. But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learned. It is in these that "poeta nascitur non fit."

2. A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power. We may perhaps remember the tale of the statuary, who had acquired considerable reputation for the legs of his goddesses, though the rest of the statue accorded but indifferently with ideal beauty; till his wife, elated by her husband's praises, modestly acknowledged that she had been his constant model. In the VENUS AND ADONIS this proof of poetic power exists even to excess. It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervour of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. I think, I should have conjectured from these poems, that even then the great instinct, which impelled the poet to the drama, was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and, because unbroken, often minute; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized by any other poet, even Dante not excepted; to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look and gesture, which in his dramatic works he was entitled to expect from the players. His Venus and Adonis seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything. Hence it is, from the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader; from the rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images; and above all from the alienation, and, if I may hazard such an expression, the utter aloofness of the poet's own feelings, from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst; that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind, yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account. Instead of doing as Ariosto, and as, still more offensively, Wieland has done, instead of degrading and deforming passion into appetite, the trials of love into the struggles of concupiscence; Shakespeare has here represented the animal impulse itself, so as to preclude all sympathy with it, by dissipating the reader's notice among the thousand outward images, and now beautiful, now fanciful circumstances, which form its dresses and its scenery; or by diverting our attention from the main subject by those frequent witty or profound reflections, which the poet's ever active mind has deduced from, or connected with, the imagery and the incidents.

The reader is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and indistinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake, while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

3. It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit,

Which shoots its being through earth, sea, and air.

In the two following lines for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which would preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem:

Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow'd
Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve.

But with a small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into semblance of poetry if thus conveyed:

Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee
From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them.

I have given this as an illustration, by no means as an instance, of that particular excellence which I had in view, and in which Shakespeare even in his earliest, as in his latest, works surpasses all other poets. It is by this, that he still gives a dignity and a passion to the objects which he presents. Unaided by any previous excitement, they burst upon us at once in life and in power,

"Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye."

"Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come

* * * * * *

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
And Peace proclaims olives of endless age.

Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests, and tombs of brass are spent."

As of higher worth, so doubtless still more characteristic of poetic genius does the imagery become, when it moulds and colours itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind. For unrivalled instances of this excellence, the reader's own memory will refer him to the LEAR, OTHELLO, in short to which not of the "great, ever living, dead man's" dramatic works? Inopem em copia fecit. How true it is to nature, he has himself finely expressed in the instance of love in his 98th Sonnet.

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April drest in all its trim,

Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.

Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them, where they grew
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;

They were, tho' sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.

Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow, I with these did play!"

Scarcely less sure, or if a less valuable, not less indispensable mark

Gonimon men poiaetou———
———hostis rhaema gennaion lakoi,

will the imagery supply, when, with more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness:

With this, he breaketh from the sweet embrace
Of those fair arms, which bound him to her breast,
And homeward through the dark laund runs apace;

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky,
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

4. The last character I shall mention, which would prove indeed but little, except as taken conjointly with the former; yet without which the former could scarce exist in a high degree, and (even if this were possible) would give promises only of transitory flashes and a meteoric power; is depth, and energy of thought. No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakespeare's poems the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length in the drama they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams, that, at their first meeting within narrow and rocky banks, mutually strive to repel each other and intermix reluctantly and in tumult; but soon finding a wider channel and more yielding shores blend, and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice. The VENUS AND ADONIS did not perhaps allow the display of the deeper passions. But the story of Lucretia seems to favour and even demand their intensest workings. And yet we find in Shakespeare's management of the tale neither pathos, nor any other dramatic quality. There is the same minute and faithful imagery as in the former poem, in the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigour of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection; and lastly, with the same perfect dominion,

often domination, over the whole world of language. What then shall we say? even this; that Shakespeare, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration, possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer not rival.

While the former darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own ideal. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of Milton; while Shakespeare becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself. O what great men hast thou not produced, England, my country! Truly indeed

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue,
Which Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold,
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

Analysis of Chapter XV

1. In this chapter, Coleridge through his examination of two of Shakespeare's poems is seen as the practical critic doing, what he terms, "practical criticism"
2. However, in his comments on Shakespeare, Coleridge will further explain or reinforce some of his main ideas about the poetic process. Two stand out, both relating to the poet's mind.

(1) Coleridge contends that poetic genius is basically inborn. A poet's "imagination" "may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learned. It is in these that "poeta nascitur non fit [The poet is born not made]". [EXPRESSIVE]
(2) The poet must be a philosopher: "No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher".

Coleridge sets out to apply the basic principles of a genial criticism which he lays out in the previous chapter by examining the "specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis and Lucrece" , works that "give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious immaturity, of his genius" . Shakespeare is, he asserts, the "greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced". Coleridge's goal is to "discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power, as distinguished from general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will, rather than by the inspiration of a genial and productive nature". He lists the "characteristics of original poetic genius in general" as follows (I have numbered them slightly differently from his own classification):

1. The "perfect sweetness of versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant". Coleridge prefers that this "delight in richness and sweetness of sound" be "original", rather than the "result of an easily imitable mechanism" . Imagery, "affecting incidents; just thoughts; interesting personal or domestic feelings; and with these

the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem", he points out, "by incessant effort may be acquired as a trade by a man of talents and much reading". However, the "sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination" that "may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learned". 'Poeta nascitur, non fit.'

2. The "power of reducing multitude into unity of effect" .

3. The power of "modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling" .

4. The "choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself". In the case of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," it is as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasureable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervor of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. It is Shakespeare's "alienation" and "aloofness" from his subject matter, his impersonality, which Coleridge admires.

5. A "series and never broken chain of imagery, often minute; by the highest effort of 4 Richard L. W. Clarke LITS2002 Notes 06C the picturesque in words, of which words are capable" . Shakespeare's poetry is a "substitute for that visual language" which drama makes possible on stage and as a result of which "you seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything".

6. The "perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader" due to the "rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images". It is precisely this rapidity of thought which helps to divert our attention from morally questionable activities presented on stage: the reader is "forced into too much action to sympathise".

7. The presence of images that "become proofs of original passion" only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit. The image that is "characteristic of poetic genius" is that which "moulds and colors itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind" of the person speaking or a character represented in a work. All such images give a "dignity and passion to the objects" represented by a poet with the result that they "burst upon us at once in life and power".

8. "DEPTH, and ENERGY OF THOUGHT": "No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, motions, language" In short, Shakespeare's later, like his earlier, work reflects the following qualities, ones that can be found, hopefully, in any work produced by a genius: the same minute and faithful imagery, the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigor of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection; and lastly with the same perfect dominion, often domination, over the whole world of language.

Coleridge concludes that Shakespeare is no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; he first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class. The 4 basic criteria of genius or "symptoms of poetic power" (9 if one ignores the fact that some of these might overlap), as described by Coleridge, may be summed up as follows:

1. Evidence of "depth and energy of thought" i.e. a powerful intellect; C Profound philosophical insights; C The fact that the reader is kept constantly on his / her toes and ceaselessly forced to participate intellectually in the process of reading; C The ability to synthesise seeming opposites or contradictions 5 Richard L. W. Clarke LITS2002 Notes 06C and to see the larger picture, to create unity out of disparity;

2. Organic Unity: C The predominance of one particular "thought or feeling" / idea or theme; C The predominance of one particular "passion" / emotion;

3. Impersonality what matters is not whether what the writer describes actually was experienced by him / her, but whether what s/he describes is so universal that any reader can relate to it;

4. Command of language: C Diction (choice of words); C Detailled ("minute"), vivid ("you seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything"), and accurate ("faithful) imagery; C 'Sweetness' of versification (metre and rhyme).

1.2. BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA: CHAPTER XVIII (STUDY OF THE TEXT) AND TEXT

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose Origin and elements of metre Its necessary consequences, and the conditions thereby imposed on the metrical writer in the choice of his diction.

I conclude, therefore, that the attempt is impracticable; and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgment? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively, as that class would use, or at least understand; but likewise by following the order, in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate.

There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that surview, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza, on which I have chanced to open, in the Lyrical Ballads. It is one the most simple and the least peculiar in its language.

"In distant countries have I been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads, alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad highway, I met;
Along the broad highway he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
And in his arms a lamb he had."

The words here are doubtless such as are current in all ranks of life; and of course not less so in the hamlet and cottage than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the order, in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived, if the following less compact mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. "I have been in a many parts, far and near, and I don't know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road; a grown man I mean, that was neither sick nor hurt," etc., etc. But when I turn to the following stanza in The Thorn:

"At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes;
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows
And there, beside the Thorn, she sits,
When the blue day-light's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
Oh misery! Oh misery!
Oh woe is me! Oh misery!"

and compare this with the language of ordinary men; or with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in real life, from such a narrator, as is supposed in the note to the poem; compare it either in the succession of the images or of the sentences; I am reminded of the sublime prayer and hymn of praise, which Milton, in opposition to an established liturgy, presents as a fair specimen of common extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle! And I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

"The Vision and the Faculty divine."

One point then alone remains, but that the most important; its examination having been, indeed, my chief inducement for the preceding inquisition. "There neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." Such is Mr. Wordsworth's assertion. Now prose itself, at least in all argumentative and consecutive works, differs, and ought to differ, from the language of conversation; even as reading ought to differ from talking. Unless therefore the difference denied be that of the mere words, as materials common to all styles of writing, and not of the style itself in the universally

admitted sense of the term, it might be naturally presumed that there must exist a still greater between the ordinance of poetic composition and that of prose, than is expected to distinguish prose from ordinary conversation.

There are not, indeed, examples wanting in the history of literature, of apparent paradoxes that have summoned the public wonder as new and startling truths, but which, on examination, have shrunk into tame and harmless truisms; as the eyes of a cat, seen in the dark, have been mistaken for flames of fire. But Mr. Wordsworth is among the last men, to whom a delusion of this kind would be attributed by anyone, who had enjoyed the slightest opportunity of understanding his mind and character. Where an objection has been anticipated by such an author as natural, his answer to it must needs be interpreted in some sense which either is, or has been, or is capable of being controverted. My object then must be to discover some other meaning for the term "essential difference" in this place, exclusive of the in distinction and community of the words themselves. For whether there ought to exist a class of words in the English, in any degree resembling the poetic dialect of the Greek and Italian, is a question of very subordinate importance. The number of such words would be small indeed, in our language; and even in the Italian and Greek, they consist not so much of different words, as of slight differences in the forms of declining and conjugating the same words; forms, doubtless, which having been, at some period more or less remote, the common grammatic flexions of some tribe or province, had been accidentally appropriated to poetry by the general admiration of certain master intellects, the first established lights of inspiration, to whom that dialect happened to be native.

Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of individuation, the inmost principle of the possibility of anything, as that particular thing. It is equivalent to the idea of a thing, whenever we use the word, idea, with philosophic precision. Existence, on the other hand, is distinguished from essence, by the super induction of reality. Thus we speak of the essence, and essential properties of a circle; but we do not therefore assert, that anything, which really exists, is mathematically circular. Thus too, without any tautology we contend for the existence of the Supreme Being; that is, for a reality correspondent to the idea. There is, next, a secondary use of the word essence, in which it signifies the point or ground of contra-distinction between two modifications of the same substance or subject. Thus we should be allowed to say, that the style of architecture of Westminster Abbey is essentially different from that of St. Paul, even though both had been built with blocks cut into the same form, and from the same quarry. Only in this latter sense of the term must it have been denied by Mr. Wordsworth (for in this sense alone is it affirmed by the general opinion) that the language of poetry (that is the formal construction, or architecture, of the words and phrases) is essentially different from that of prose. Now the burden of the proof lies with the oppugner, not with the supporters of the common belief. Mr. Wordsworth, in consequence, assigns as the proof of his position, "that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself." He then quotes Gray's sonnet.

"In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.

These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more, because I weep in vain."

and adds the following remark: "It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value, is the lines printed in italics; it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word `fruitless' for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose."

An idealist defending his system by the fact, that when asleep we often believe ourselves awake, was well answered by his plain neighbour, "Ah, but when awake do we ever believe ourselves asleep?" Things identical must be convertible. The preceding passage seems to rest on a similar sophism. For the question is not, whether there may not occur in prose an order of words, which would be equally proper in a poem; nor whether there are not beautiful lines and sentences of frequent occurrence in good poems, which would be equally becoming as well as beautiful in good prose; for neither the one nor the other has ever been either denied or doubted by any one. The true question must be, whether there are not modes of expression, a construction, and an order of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and, vice versa, whether in the language of a serious poem there may not be an arrangement both of words and sentences, and a use and selection of (what are called) figures of speech, both as to their kind, their frequency, and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and alien in correct and manly prose. I contend, that in both cases this unfitness of each for the place of the other frequently will and ought to exist.

And first from the origin of metre. This I would trace to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion. It might be easily explained likewise in what manner this salutary antagonism is assisted by the very state, which it counteracts; and how this balance of antagonists became organized into metre (in the usual acceptation of that term), by a supervening act of the will and judgment, consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure. Assuming these principles, as the data of our argument, we deduce from them two legitimate conditions, which the critic is entitled to expect in every metrical work. First, that, as the elements of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement. Secondly, that as these elements are formed into metre artificially, by a voluntary act, with the design and for the purpose of blending delight with emotion, so the traces of present volition should throughout the metrical language be proportionately discernible. Now these two conditions must be reconciled and co- present. There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose. Again, this union can be manifested only in a frequency of forms and figures of speech, (originally the offspring of passion, but now the adopted children of power), greater than would be desired or endured, where the emotion is not

voluntarily encouraged and kept up for the sake of that pleasure, which such emotion, so tempered and mastered by the will, is found capable of communicating. It not only dictates, but of itself tends to produce a more frequent employment of picturesque and vivifying language, than would be natural in any other case, in which there did not exist, as there does in the present, a previous and well understood, though tacit, compact between the poet and his reader, that the latter is entitled to expect, and the former bound to supply this species and degree of pleasurable excitement. We may in some measure apply to this union the answer of Polixenes, in the Winter's Tale, to Perdita's neglect of the streaked gilliflowers, because she had heard it said,

"There is an art, which, in their piedness, shares
With great creating nature.
POL Say there be;
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; so, o'er that art,
Which, you say, adds to nature, is an art,
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock;
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
Which does mend nature,—change it rather; but
The art itself is nature."

Secondly, I argue from the effects of metre. As far as metre acts in and for itself, it tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement of surprise, and by the quick reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence. As a medicated atmosphere, or as wine during animated conversation, they act powerfully, though themselves unnoticed. Where, therefore, correspondent food and appropriate matter are not provided for the attention and feelings thus roused there must needs be a disappointment felt; like that of leaping in the dark from the last step of a stair-case, when we had prepared our muscles for a leap of three or four.

The discussion on the powers of metre in the preface is highly ingenious and touches at all points on truth. But I cannot find any statement of its powers considered abstractly and separately. On the contrary Mr. Wordsworth seems always to estimate metre by the powers, which it exerts during, (and, as I think, in consequence of) its combination with other elements of poetry. Thus the previous difficulty is left unanswered, what the elements are, with which it must be combined, in order to produce its own effects to any pleasurable purpose. Double and tri-syllable rhymes, indeed, form a lower species of wit, and, attended to exclusively for their own sake, may become a source of momentary amusement; as in poor Smart's distich to the Welsh Squire who had promised him a hare:

"Tell me, thou son of great Cadwallader!
Hast sent the hare? or hast thou swallow'd her?"

But for any poetic purposes, metre resembles, (if the aptness of the simile may excuse its meanness), yeast, worthless or disagreeable by itself, but giving vivacity and spirit to the liquor with which it is proportionally combined.

The reference to THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD by no means satisfies my judgment. We all willingly throw ourselves back for awhile into the feelings of our childhood. This ballad, therefore, we read under such recollections of our own childish feelings, as would equally endear to us poems, which Mr. Wordsworth himself would regard as faulty in the opposite extreme of gaudy and technical ornament. Before the invention of printing, and in a still greater degree, before the introduction of writing, metre, especially alliterative metre, (whether alliterative at the beginning of the words, as in PIERCE PLOUMAN, or at the end, as in rhymes) possessed an independent value as assisting the recollection, and consequently the preservation, of any series of truths or incidents. But I am not convinced by the collation of facts, that THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD owes either its preservation, or its popularity, to its metrical form. Mr. Marshal's repository affords a number of tales in prose inferior in pathos and general merit, some of as old a date, and many as widely popular. TOM HICKATHRIFT, JACK THE GIANT-KILLER, GOODY TWO-SHOES, and LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD are formidable rivals. And that they have continued in prose, cannot be fairly explained by the assumption, that the comparative meanness of their thoughts and images precluded even the humblest forms of metre. The scene of GOODY TWO-SHOES in the church is perfectly susceptible of metrical narration; and, among the thaumata thaumastotata even of the present age, I do not recollect a more astonishing image than that of the "whole rookery, that flew out of the giant's beard," scared by the tremendous voice, with which this monster answered the challenge of the heroic TOM HICKATHRIFT!

If from these we turn to compositions universally, and independently of all early associations, beloved and admired; would the MARIA, THE MONK, or THE POOR MAN'S ASS of Sterne, be read with more delight, or have a better chance of immortality, had they without any change in the diction been composed in rhyme, than in their present state? If I am not grossly mistaken, the general reply would be in the negative. Nay, I will confess, that, in Mr. Wordsworth's own volumes, the ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS, SIMON LEE, ALICE FELL, BEGGARS, and THE SAILOR'S MOTHER, notwithstanding the beauties which are to be found in each of them where the poet interposes the music of his own thoughts, would have been more delightful to me in prose, told and managed, as by Mr. Wordsworth they would have been, in a moral essay or pedestrian tour.

Metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention, and therefore excites the question: Why is the attention to be thus stimulated? Now the question cannot be answered by the pleasure of the metre itself; for this we have shown to be conditional, and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions, to which the metrical form is superadded. Neither can I conceive any other answer that can be rationally given, short of this: I write in metre, because I am about to use a language different from that of prose.

Besides, where the language is not such, how interesting so ever the reflections are, that are capable of being drawn by a philosophic mind from the thoughts or incidents of the poem, the metre itself must often become feeble. Take the last three stanzas of THE SAILOR'S MOTHER, for instance. If I could for a moment abstract from the effect produced on the author's feelings, as a man, by the incident at the time of its real occurrence, I would dare appeal to his own judgment, whether in the metre itself he found a sufficient reason for their being written metrically?

And, thus continuing, she said,
"I had a Son, who many a day

Sailed on the seas; but he is dead;
In Denmark he was cast away;
And I have travelled far as Hull to see
What clothes he might have left, or other property.

The Bird and Cage they both were his
'Twas my Son's Bird; and neat and trim
He kept it: many voyages
This Singing-bird hath gone with him;
When last he sailed he left the Bird behind;
As it might be, perhaps, from bodings of his mind.

He to a Fellow-lodger's care
Had left it, to be watched and fed,
Till he came back again; and there
I found it when my Son was dead;
And now, God help me for my little wit!
I trail it with me, Sir! he took so much delight in it."

If disproportioning the emphasis we read these stanzas so as to make the rhymes perceptible, even tri-syllable rhymes could scarcely produce an equal sense of oddity and strangeness, as we feel here in finding rhymes at all in sentences so exclusively colloquial. I would further ask whether, but for that visionary state, into which the figure of the woman and the susceptibility of his own genius had placed the poet's imagination,(a state, which spreads its influence and colouring over all, that co-exists with the exciting cause, and in which

"The simplest, and the most familiar things
Gain a strange power of spreading awe around them,")

I would ask the poet whether he would not have felt an abrupt downfall in these verses from the preceding stanza?

"The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair:
She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate."

It must not be omitted, and is besides worthy of notice, that those stanzas furnish the only fair instance that I have been able to discover in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings, of an actual adoption, or true imitation, of the real and very language of low and rustic life, freed from provincialisms.

Thirdly, I deduce the position from all the causes elsewhere assigned, which render metre the proper form of poetry, and poetry imperfect and defective without metre. Metre, therefore, having been connected with poetry most often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined with metre must, though it be not itself essentially poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry, as an inter medium of affinity, a sort, (if I may dare borrow a well-known phrase from technical chemistry), of mordaunt between it and the

super-added metre. Now poetry, Mr. Wordsworth truly affirms, does always imply passion: which word must be here understood in its most general sense, as an excited state of the feelings and faculties. And as every passion has its proper pulse, so will it likewise have its characteristic modes of expression. But where there exists that degree of genius and talent which entitles a writer to aim at the honours of a poet, the very act of poetic composition itself is, and is allowed to imply and to produce, an unusual state of excitement, which of course justifies and demands a correspondent difference of language, as truly, though not perhaps in as marked a degree, as the excitement of love, fear, rage, or jealousy. The vividness of the descriptions or declamations in Donne or Dryden, is as much and as often derived from the force and fervour of the describer, as from the reflections, forms or incidents, which constitute their subject and materials. The wheels take fire from the mere rapidity of their motion. To what extent, and under what modifications, this may be admitted to act, I shall attempt to define in an after remark on Mr. Wordsworth's reply to this objection, or rather on his objection to this reply, as already anticipated in his preface.

Fourthly, and as intimately connected with this, if not the same argument in a more general form, I adduce the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment, and thus establishing the principle that all the parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts. This and the preceding arguments may be strengthened by the reflection, that the composition of a poem is among the imitative arts; and that imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or of the different throughout a base radically the same.

Lastly, I appeal to the practice of the best poets, of all countries and in all ages, as authorizing the opinion, (deduced from all the foregoing,) that in every import of the word essential, which would not here involve a mere truism, there may be, is, and ought to be an essential difference between the language of prose and of metrical composition.

In Mr. Wordsworth's criticism of Gray's Sonnet, the reader's sympathy with his praise or blame of the different parts is taken for granted rather perhaps too easily. He has not, at least, attempted to win or compel it by argumentative analysis. In my conception at least, the lines rejected as of no value do, with the exception of the two first, differ as much and as little from the language of common life, as those which he has printed in italics as possessing genuine excellence. Of the five lines thus honourably distinguished, two of them differ from prose even more widely, than the lines which either precede or follow, in the position of the words.

"A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire."

But were it otherwise, what would this prove, but a truth, of which no man ever doubted? videlicet, that there are sentences, which would be equally in their place both in verse and prose. Assuredly it does not prove the point, which alone requires proof; namely, that there are not passages, which would suit the one and not suit the other. The first line of this sonnet is distinguished from the ordinary language of men by the epithet to morning. For we will set aside, at present, the consideration, that the particular word "smiling" is hackneyed, and, as it involves a sort of personification, not quite congruous with the common and material attribute of "shining." And, doubtless, this adjunction of epithets for the purpose

of additional description, where no particular attention is demanded for the quality of the thing, would be noticed as giving a poetic cast to a man's conversation. Should the sportsman exclaim, "Come boys! the rosy morning calls you up:" he will be supposed to have some song in his head. But no one suspects this, when he says, "A wet morning shall not confine us to our beds." This then is either a defect in poetry, or it is not. Whoever should decide in the affirmative, I would request him to re-peruse any one poem, of any confessedly great poet from Homer to Milton, or from Aeschylus to Shakespeare; and to strike out, (in thought I mean), every instance of this kind. If the number of these fancied erasures did not startle him; or if he continued to deem the work improved by their total omission; he must advance reasons of no ordinary strength and evidence, reasons grounded in the essence of human nature. Otherwise, I should not hesitate to consider him as a man not so much proof against all authority, as dead to it.

The second line,

"And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;—"

has indeed almost as many faults as words. But then it is a bad line, not because the language is distinct from that of prose; but because it conveys incongruous images; because it confounds the cause and the effect; the real thing with the personified representative of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of good sense! That the "Phoebus" is hackneyed, and a school-boy image, is an accidental fault, dependent on the age in which the author wrote, and not deduced from the nature of the thing. That it is part of an exploded mythology, is an objection more deeply grounded. Yet when the torch of ancient learning was re-kindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by Christianity from all accredited machinery, and deprived of all acknowledged guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt, as a poetic language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature, which had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. Nay, even at this day what scholar of genial taste will not so far sympathize with them, as to read with pleasure in Petrarch, Chaucer, or Spenser, what he would perhaps condemn as puerile in a modern poet?

I remember no poet, whose writings would safelier stand the test of Mr. Wordsworth's theory, than Spenser. Yet will Mr. Wordsworth say, that the style of the following stanza is either undistinguished from prose, and the language of ordinary life? Or that it is vicious, and that the stanzas are blots in THE FAERY QUEEN?

"By this the northern wagoner had set
His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre,
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firme is fixt and sendeth light from farre
To all that in the wild deep wandering arre
And chearfull chaunticlere with his note shrill
Had warned once that Phoebus' fiery carre
In hast was climbing up the easterne hill,
Full envious that night so long his roome did fill."

"At last the golden orientall gate
Of greatest heaven gan to open fayre,
And Phoebus fresh, as brydegrome to his mate,
Came dauncing forth, shaking his deawie hayre,
And hurl'd his glist'ring beams through gloomy ayre:

Which when the wakeful elfe perceived, streightway
He started up, and did him selfe prepayre
In sun-bright armes and battailous array;
For with that pagan proud he combat will that day."

On the contrary to how many passages, both in hymn books and in blank verse poems, could I, (were it not invidious), direct the reader's attention, the style of which is most unpoetic, because, and only because, it is the style of prose? He will not suppose me capable of having in my mind such verses, as

"I put my hat upon my head
And walk'd into the Strand;
And there I met another man,
Whose hat was in his hand."

To such specimens it would indeed be a fair and full reply, that these lines are not bad, because they are unpoetic; but because they are empty of all sense and feeling; and that it were an idle attempt to prove that "an ape is not a Newton, when it is self-evident that he is not a man." But the sense shall be good and weighty, the language correct and dignified, the subject interesting and treated with feeling; and yet the style shall, notwithstanding all these merits, be justly blamable as prosaic, and solely because the words and the order of the words would find their appropriate place in prose, but are not suitable to metrical composition. The CIVIL WARS of Daniel is an instructive, and even interesting work; but take the following stanzas, (and from the hundred instances which abound I might probably have selected others far more striking):

"And to the end we may with better ease
Discern the true discourse, vouchsafe to shew
What were the times foregoing near to these,
That these we may with better profit know.
Tell how the world fell into this disease;
And how so great distemperature did grow;
So shall we see with what degrees it came;
How things at full do soon wax out of frame."

"Ten kings had from the Norman Conqu'ror reign'd
With intermix'd and variable fate,
When England to her greatest height attain'd
Of power, dominion, glory, wealth, and state;
After it had with much ado sustain'd
The violence of princes, with debate
For titles and the often mutinies
Of nobles for their ancient liberties."

"For first, the Norman, conqu'ring all by might,
By might was forc'd to keep what he had got;
Mixing our customs and the form of right
With foreign constitutions, he had brought;
Mast'ring the mighty, humbling the poorer wight,
By all severest means that could be wrought;

And, making the succession doubtful, rent
His new-got state, and left it turbulent."

Will it be contended on the one side, that these lines are mean and senseless? Or on the other, that they are not prosaic, and for that reason unpoetic? This poet's well-merited epithet is that of the "well-languaged Daniel;" but likewise, and by the consent of his contemporaries no less than of all succeeding critics, "the prosaic Daniel." Yet those, who thus designate this wise and amiable writer from the frequent incorrespondency of his diction to his metre in the majority of his compositions, not only deem them valuable and interesting on other accounts; but willingly admit, that there are to be found throughout his poems, and especially in his EPISTLES and in his HYMEN'S TRIUMPH, many and exquisite specimens of that style which, as the neutral ground of prose and verse, is common to both. A fine and almost faultless extract, eminent as for other beauties, so for its perfection in this species of diction, may be seen in Lamb's DRAMATIC SPECIMENS, a work of various interest from the nature of the selections themselves, (all from the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries), and deriving a high additional value from the notes, which are full of just and original criticism, expressed with all the freshness of originality.

Among the possible effects of practical adherence to a theory, that aims to identify the style of prose and verse, (if it does not indeed claim for the latter a yet nearer resemblance to the average style of men in the viva voce intercourse of real life) we might anticipate the following as not the least likely to occur. It will happen, as I have indeed before observed, that the metre itself, the sole acknowledged difference, will occasionally become metre to the eye only. The existence of prosaisms, and that they detract from the merit of a poem, must at length be conceded, when a number of successive lines can be rendered, even to the most delicate ear, unrecognizable as verse, or as having even been intended for verse, by simply transcribing them as prose; when if the poem be in blank verse, this can be effected without any alteration, or at most by merely restoring one or two words to their proper places, from which they have been transplanted for no assignable cause or reason but that of the author's convenience; but if it be in rhyme, by the mere exchange of the final word of each line for some other of the same meaning, equally appropriate, dignified and euphonic.

The answer or objection in the preface to the anticipated remark "that metre paves the way to other distinctions," is contained in the following words. "The distinction of rhyme and metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that produced by (what is usually called) poetic diction, arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices, upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case the reader is utterly at the mercy of the poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion." But is this a poet, of whom a poet is speaking? No surely! rather of a fool or madman: or at best of a vain or ignorant phantast! And might not brains so wild and so deficient make just the same havoc with rhymes and metres, as they are supposed to effect with modes and figures of speech? How is the reader at the mercy of such men? If he continue to read their nonsense, is it not his own fault? The ultimate end of criticism is much more to establish the principles of writing, than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written by others; if indeed it were possible that the two could be separated. But if it be asked, by what principles the poet is to regulate his own style, if he do not adhere closely to the sort and order of words which he hears in the market, wake, high-road, or plough-field? I reply; by principles, the ignorance or neglect of which would convict him of being no poet, but a silly or presumptuous usurper of the name.

By the principles of grammar, logic, psychology. In one word by such a knowledge of the facts, material and spiritual, that most appertain to his art, as, if it have been governed and applied by good sense, and rendered instinctive by habit, becomes the representative and reward of our past conscious reasonings, insights, and conclusions, and acquires the name of Taste. By what rule that does not leave the reader at the poet's mercy, and the poet at his own, is the latter to distinguish between the language suitable to suppressed, and the language, which is characteristic of indulged, anger? Or between that of rage and that of jealousy ? Is it obtained by wandering about in search of angry or jealous people in uncultivated society, in order to copy their words? Or not far rather by the power of imagination proceeding upon the all in each of human nature? By meditation, rather than by observation? And by the latter in consequence only of the former ? As eyes, for which the former has pre-determined their field of vision, and to which, as to its organ, it communicates a microscopic power? There is not, I firmly believe, a man now living, who has, from his own inward experience, a clearer intuition, than Mr. Wordsworth himself, that the last mentioned are the true sources of genial discrimination. Through the same process and by the same creative agency will the poet distinguish the degree and kind of the excitement produced by the very act of poetic composition. As intuitively will he know, what differences of style it at once inspires and justifies; what intermixture of conscious volition is natural to that state; and in what instances such figures and colours of speech degenerate into mere creatures of an arbitrary purpose, cold technical artifices of ornament or connection. For, even as truth is its own light and evidence, discovering at once itself and falsehood, so is it the prerogative of poetic genius to distinguish by parental instinct its proper offspring from the changelings, which the gnomes of vanity or the fairies of fashion may have laid in its cradle or called by its names. Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. It would be morphosis, not poiaesis. The rules of the Imagination are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The words to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit. A deceptive counterfeit of the superficial form and colours may be elaborated; but the marble peach feels cold and heavy, and children only put it to their mouths. We find no difficulty in admitting as excellent, and the legitimate language of poetic fervour self-impassioned, Donne's apostrophe to the Sun in the second stanza of his PROGRESS OF THE SOUL.

"Thee, eye of heaven! this great Soul envies not;
By thy male force is all, we have, begot.
In the first East thou now beginn'st to shine,
Suck'st early balm and island spices there,
And wilt anon in thy loose-rein'd career
At Tagus, Po, Seine, Thames, and Danow dine,
And see at night this western world of mine:
Yet hast thou not more nations seen than she,
Who before thee one day began to be,
And, thy frail light being quench'd,
shall long, long outlive thee."

Or the next stanza but one:

"Great Destiny, the commissary of God,
That hast mark'd out a path and period
For every thing! Who, where we offspring took,
Our ways and ends see'st at one instant: thou

Knot of all causes! Thou, whose changeless brow
Ne'er smiles nor frowns! O! vouchsafe thou to look,
And shew my story in thy eternal book," etc.

As little difficulty do we find in excluding from the honours of unaffected warmth and elevation the madness prepense of pseudopoesy, or the startling hysteric of weakness over-exerting itself, which bursts on the unprepared reader in sundry odes and apostrophes to abstract terms. Such are the Odes to jealousy, to Hope, to Oblivion, and the like, in Dodsley's collection and the magazines of that day, which seldom fail to remind me of an Oxford copy of verses on the two SUTTONS, commencing with

"Inoculation, heavenly maid! descend!"

It is not to be denied that men of undoubted talents, and even poets of true, though not of first-rate, genius, have from a mistaken theory deluded both themselves and others in the opposite extreme. I once read to a company of sensible and well-educated women the introductory period of Cowley's preface to his "Pindaric Odes," written in imitation of the style and manner of the odes of Pindar. "If," (says Cowley), "a man should undertake to translate Pindar, word for word, it would be thought that one madman had translated another as may appear, when he, that understands not the original, reads the verbal traduction of him into Latin prose, than which nothing seems more raving." I then proceeded with his own free version of the second Olympic, composed for the charitable purpose of rationalizing the Theban Eagle.

"Queen of all harmonious things,
Dancing words and speaking strings,
What god, what hero, wilt thou sing?
What happy man to equal glories bring?
Begin, begin thy noble choice,
And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.
Pisa does to Jove belong,
Jove and Pisa claim thy song.
The fair first-fruits of war, th' Olympic games,
Alcides, offer'd up to Jove;
Alcides, too, thy strings may move,
But, oh! what man to join with these can worthy prove?
Join Theron boldly to their sacred names;
Theron the next honour claims;
Theron to no man gives place,
Is first in Pisa's and in Virtue's race;
Theron there, and he alone,
Ev'n his own swift forefathers has outgone."

One of the company exclaimed, with the full assent of the rest, that if the original were madder than this, it must be incurably mad. I then translated the ode from the Greek, and as nearly as possible, word for word; and the impression was, that in the general movement of the periods, in the form of the connections and transitions, and in the sober majesty of lofty sense, it appeared to them to approach more nearly, than any other poetry they had heard, to the style of our Bible, in the prophetic books. The first strophe will suffice as a specimen:

"Ye harp-controlling hymns! (or) ye hymns the sovereigns of harps!
What God? what Hero?
What Man shall we celebrate?
Truly Pisa indeed is of Jove,
But the Olympiad (or the Olympic games) did Hercules establish,
The first-fruits of the spoils of war.
But Theron for the four-horsed car,
That bore victory to him,
It behoves us now to voice aloud:
The Just, the Hospitable,
The Bulwark of Agrigentum,
Of renowned fathers
The Flower, even him
Who preserves his native city erect and safe."

But are such rhetorical caprices condemnable only for their deviation from the language of real life? and are they by no other means to be precluded, but by the rejection of all distinctions between prose and verse, save that of metre? Surely good sense, and a moderate insight into the constitution of the human mind, would be amply sufficient to prove, that such language and such combinations are the native product neither of the fancy nor of the imagination; that their operation consists in the excitement of surprise by the juxta-position and apparent reconciliation of widely different or incompatible things. As when, for instance, the hills are made to reflect the image of a voice. Surely, no unusual taste is requisite to see clearly, that this compulsory juxtaposition is not produced by the presentation of impressive or delightful forms to the inward vision, nor by any sympathy with the modifying powers with which the genius of the poet had united and inspirited all the objects of his thought; that it is therefore a species of wit, a pure work of the will, and implies a leisure and self-possession both of thought and of feeling, incompatible with the steady fervour of a mind possessed and filled with the grandeur of its subject. To sum up the whole in one sentence. When a poem, or a part of a poem, shall be adduced, which is evidently vicious in the figures and centexture of its style, yet for the condemnation of which no reason can be assigned, except that it differs from the style in which men actually converse, then, and not till then, can I hold this theory to be either plausible, or practicable, or capable of furnishing either rule, guidance, or precaution, that might not, more easily and more safely, as well as more naturally, have been deduced in the author's own mind from considerations of grammar, logic, and the truth and nature of things, confirmed by the authority of works, whose fame is not of one country nor of one age.

Chapter XVIII Analysis

Coleridge makes a number of major points, including the following:
He agrees with William Wordsworth that poetic language needed to be reformed because the kind of poetic diction used by many poets in the eighteenth century had come to seem stale, artificial, and affected:

mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns [that is, fairly recent poets] .

Coleridge nevertheless objects to Wordsworth's claim that poetry should be written in the language actually spoken by real persons, especially real persons of the rustic or lower classes.

Wordsworth's own best poems are not written in a truly "rustic" or "low" style.

The language of poetry should imitate the language spoken by persons who possess both independence of mind and a certain level of education.

Only those who possess education or an "original sensibility" (or sensitivity and intelligence) are likely to truly appreciate the real attractions of rural life. Ironically, many actual rural persons are unlikely to be capable of this kind of appreciation.

Many rural people are only interested in conveying very simple ideas; educated persons seek to convey more complex*connections* between isolated things and ideas.

The proper language of poetry is more reflective than is usually found in the language of must rural people:

The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself.

In short, Coleridge cautions against any interpretation of Wordsworth's views that might seem to endorse the idea that poetry should be written in "low," common, entirely colloquial and commonplace language.

1.3. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Examine Coleridge's Biographia Literaria as the most important critical document in English Literary criticism?
2. Critically evaluate Coleridge's Theory of Imagination?
3. Examine Coleridge's evaluation of Wordsworth's Poetic diction?

1.4 SUGGESTED READINGS

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P.B.Shelley – A Defence of Poetry

Introduction: Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was one of the major English Romantic poets. He is renowned as Atheist Poet Harold Bloom calls him: “a superb craftsman, a lyric poet without rival, and surely one of the most advanced sceptical intellects ever to write a poem.” Among his best-known works are "Ozymandias" (1818), "Ode to the West Wind" (1819), "To a Skylark" (1820), and the political ballad “The Mask of Anarchy” (1819).

"**A Defence of Poetry**" is an essay by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, written in 1821. It was first published posthumously in 1840 in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* by Edward Moxon in London. It contains Shelley's famous claim that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world". The essay was written in response to his friend Thomas Love Peacock's article, “The Four Ages of Poetry" (1820). Peacock with his utilitarian attacked Romantic poets. To Peacock, Shelley wrote:

“Your anathemas against poetry itself excited me to a sacred rage I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you in honour of my mistress Urania.”

Shelley sought to show that poets make morality and establish the legal norms in a civil society thus creating the groundwork for the other branches in a community.

1. **Classification of Human Understanding:** In this essay Shelley Classifies human understanding into two. They are the rational and the imaginative. Of the two, he places imagination has the greater value. It is imagination and the ability to see connections beyond the rational that allow for empathy and moral growth. Shelley believes it is human nature to draw parallels and find harmonies in the world.
2. **The Faculty of Approximation:** The inbuilt faculty of the human beings to observe and associate with the beauty of order in the nature is called faculty of approximate. With this faculty a human can establish the relation between the highest pleasure and its cause. The poets are the people who has this faculty in excess. The faculty of approximation is nothing but imagination.
3. **The Poet:** The “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” They creators and protectors of moral and civil laws. He ascribes a dualistic nature of the divine to poetry; it is both as "God and the Mammon of the world."
4. **The Poetry:** Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be "the expression of the Imagination:" Poetry is man's real and outward expression of his imagination, and Poetry is an innate characteristic of man. A human being is that body with the imaginative soul. Shelley defines poetry that "a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." Shelley holds poetry as the highest form of art, superior to music, painting, and sculpture.
5. **Poetry is elusive Truth:** Poetry could not capture the elusive Truth of imagination. So, the truth captured in poetry is an imperfect truth.
6. **Didactic Poetry:** Shelley argues poetry is not just to induce delight and pleasure. Poetry not only induces delight and pleasure but also didactic. It inspires goodness in man.
7. **Immortal Poetry:** Poetry makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the

> world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interluminations of life, and veiling them or in language or in form sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide-- abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Conclusion: Shelley is deeper than other poets. He is philosophical writer. He succeeded in defending poetry.

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S *THE STUDY OF POETRY* (1822-1888)

OBJECTIVES:

After going through the lesson, you will

- Understand the background of Arnold as a critic
- Analyse the poetry of great poets
- Evaluate great poetry on the lines of Arnold.

STRUCTURE

Introduction
Arnold's Views about poetry
Poetry vs Philosophy and Religion
Historic and Personal Estimates
Arnold's Touchstone Method
Summary
Comprehension Check Questions
References

INTRODUCTION

David Daiches describes Matthew Arnold as 'the great modern critic'. The title is well-deserved, despite the criticism by Mr. T.S. Eliot. Arnold's genius has positive marks of greatness and he placed English literary criticism on a new footing. For thirty years, between 1830 and 1864, criticism in England had been groping in the wilderness. Matthew Arnold has voiced his own disappointment over its poverty and short comings, which became obvious when compared with the performance of the French critics in the same decades. By his own contributions, Matthew Arnold changed this sorry state of affairs. Not only that, he gave a new direction to criticism and since his times it has been progressing on the path prescribed by him.

The closing years of the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th century were characterised by strenuous activity and tremendous change. There was a great outburst of socio political revolution. The French revolution fired the imagination of the poets with a passion for liberty, equality, and fraternity. Literature reflected a spirit of bitter disillusionment. Out of this deepening shadow of misery there emerged the humanitarian vision. The humanitarian spirit of the age expressed a humane and sympathetic attitude towards the victims of an unjust social order. The socio political background helps us to understand Arnold's criticism. He asserts that for the poetry the idea is everything. The aim of poetry is to bring clear feeling and deeper enjoyment. He advocates objectivity and disinterestedness in criticism. He views literary criticism as a creative force contributing to the cause of culture and life. He thus establishes the connection between criticism and life. For Arnold, poetry is the criticism of life.

Discarding the romantic principles, he looked back to the Greek antiquity and looked for inspiration and guidance to Homer, to the tragic dramatists of the fifth century B.C and to Aristotle. Thus he heralded a Greek revival in England and proclaimed emphatically that great poetry could be written only on those ancient models. But, then, Matthew Arnold was also interested in Goethe whose sanity, classical urbanity, and love of the architectonic qualities in art made irresistible appeal to him. He was likewise interested in Sainte Beuve from whom he learnt the value of the author's life and personality as the indispensable basis for the criticism of literary works. Under the influence of Sainte Beuve, and also prompted by the impulse of his own temperament, he introduced a new ideal as well as a new method of criticism in England. Thus, he is at once with the ancients and as one of the pioneers of modern criticism. It has to be remembered that, since his own time, criticism in England has mainly adopted Matthew Arnold's mode and technique, and, by so doing, it has been brought into conformity with the general practice of European criticism. Matthew Arnold set before his countrymen the 'federal' ideal of criticism and his own practice did much to establish and develop that ideal.

ARNOLD'S VIEWS ABOUT POETRY

Poetry is criticism of life and the critic's duty is to examine poetry and at the same time life. As we have said, Matthew Arnold had a broad conception of criticism, embracing religion, culture, and education, as well as poetry. In this wider perspective the aim of criticism is "in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science to see the object as in itself it really is".

Coming more particularly to the business of literary criticism he has stated his views in greater details. In the opening essay of the first series of *Essays in Criticism,* entitled "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" he has laid down the main canons with considerable precision. It is clear from the very beginning that he was dissatisfied with contemporary English criticism which he found mediocre, vitiated, and dull in outlook. Instead, he advocated a kind of criticism which was broad-based and international in its scope. He visualized the progressive countries of Europe as one intellectual confederation and he deemed it necessary that laws of literature should have the sanction of the grand jury of the enlightened European nations. For him it was not enough to judge English poetry as something isolated and apart, but it should stand the test of comparison with the best that was to be found in French or German or Italian literature, to say nothing of Greek or Latin literature. He was thus able to break the insularity of English criticism and the catholic approach initiated by him lasted at least till bitterness grew among the European nations and they clashed in the First Great War.

POETRY VS. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

He says that poetry has a great future. Poetry alone possesses the power to provide an interpretation, of life to us, to console us when Religion and Philosophy fail. The aim and purpose of highest philosophy is to interpret life to us and sustain us .our traditional beliefs have been shaken. Our religion has attached itself to the fact, our time honoured dogmas are also gradually dissolving. For poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea, and the idea is the fact. Arnold feels that poetry deals with permanent ideas but not with relative ideas. He says that English poetry is a contributory stream of the river of the world poetry. Poetry is capable of higher uses. Without Poetry,

science is incomplete. Wordsworth defines poetry as the breath and final spirit of all knowledge. Arnold holds poetry in high esteem. Without poetry our religion and our philosophy are hollow.

HISTORIC AND PERSONAL ESTIMATES

Poetry must possess a very high order of excellence to fulfill such destinies. Arnold himself sets a high standard for poetry according to its high destinies. According to Arnold the highest type of poetry means the perfect blending of excellence in 'thought and art' (matter and manner). Art attains the perfection of man. He says that poetry is a criticism of life; here he doesn't mean condemnation of life but the interpretation of life. Poetry is an interpretation of life. In poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, unsound, and only half sound, true and untrue is of great importance.

The best poetry has a power of forming, sustaining and offering delight. A clearer and deeper sense of poetry is to draw strength and joy from it; it is the best kind of poetry. We have to guard ourselves against the fallacies of the Historic estimate and the Personal estimate. Historic estimate must be kept in view while reading the poets of the past; and the Personal estimate while reading the poets of the present. Both the fallacies are natural. Historic estimate often distorts our judgment; it leads us to accord an undeservingly proportionate prize, to one particular poet.

Arnold is a staunch supporter of perfect objectivity in criticism. If the poet is a real classic his work also belongs to the very best. However, we should read our classics with open eyes blinded with superstition. Negative criticism is not the only method to enable us to have clearer sense of what is truly excellent. Literary dilettantism somewhat helps us to trace the labour, the attempts, the weakness and the failures of genuine classic; and the negative criticism becomes literary dilettantism unless it has clear sense and deeper enjoyment.

The benefit of true classic poetry is to offer a clear feeling and a deeper sense of enjoyment. The historic estimate sometimes leads us to a dangerous abuse of language. If it cannot affect the opinions of the general public, it offers less dangers. Arnold then examines the design of the Epic. He distinguishes the genuine from the artificial Epics of literary ages. The Epic has an undeniable quality of its own. When we think about the Epic, it is natural we remind the name of Homer.

ARNOLD'S TOUCHSTONE METHOD:

Arnold's love of the classics provoked him to invent this critical method. He suggests a concrete method of discovering the excellences of poetry through the method of Touchstone lines. He says that we should have in our mind Dante, Shakespeare and Milton and should apply their lines as a Touchstone to other poetry to discover its hidden excellence. But in his '*Touch Stone method'*, Arnold unconsciously falls a victim to the fallacies of both Historic and Personal estimates against which he warns the readers. He compares Homer's *Iliad*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *Henry the Fourth* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* and observes that these lines are enough to bring its real essence.

The examples quoted may differ from one another. But their power and quality is the same. Critics have attempted to define the elements, which constitute the high quality of

poetry in abstract terms. But Arnold suggests them to follow the abstract examples and principles. Though there is difference in the form of Touch Stone lines they have the same highest poetical qualities.

Then Arnold discusses the characteristics of good poetry – the substance and matter, and the style and manner. They are interdependent and inter-connected.

Aristotle in *Poetics* says, "Poetry is more scientific and serious than History. Poetry must bind itself to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." Arnold casts a cursory glance at the early poetry of France and concludes that this poetry has not reached the highest status. But there appeared Chaucer, an English poet in the 14th century taking the elements of the French poetry – words, rhymes, metre and stanza, and fascinated his contemporaries. Chaucer's power of fascination is enduring. His poetical importance is real and it doesn't need the assistance of Historic estimate. His language may be difficult but his talent was stupendous.

Chaucer's superiority of poetry is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style. His superiority in substance (which is given by his large, free, simple, clear and kindly view of human nature) is undeniable. His representation of things is large, free and sound. (*Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*). His superiority of style and manner lies in "*his divine liquidness of diction and his divine fluidity of movement*." When we study his poetry we hear not mere words but the golden dew drops of nectar. It is no doubt that Chaucer is the father of splendid English poetry. He started a movement, he made an epoch and he established a tradition. The same tradition continued through Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and Keats. Then Arnold analyses the beauty of Chaucerian poetry.

Yet Arnold says that Chaucer's criticism of life, though large and free, lacks the high seriousness of a true classic. Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He lacks the excellence and high seriousness of Dante, Shakespeare and Homer. The critics place him in the highest rank of poets; but according to Arnold it is because of their critical fallacy.

Arnold criticizes Dryden and Pope from the standards of Romantic criticism. The age of Dryden believed itself to have provided and produced classics of its own and to have attained a glorious position beyond the reach of its pre-decessors. Addison has compared Dryden with Chaucer. But Arnold doubts the poetical qualities of Dryden and Pope. Arnold admits that both Dryden and Pope were men of talent. Wordsworth and Coleridge denied the position given to Dryden and Pope as the poets. Then Arnold discusses and evaluates the prose works of Dryden and Pope. Dryden fulfilled the need of a fit prose which England had felt after the Restoration. Dryden is the glorious founder of good prose, and Pope is the high priest of the age of prose and reason. The Poetry of both Dryden and Pope, though remarkable, lacks the accent of great poetry. Their poetry cannot be interpreted or regarded as a poetic criticism of life, or poetic application of life. Dryden and Pope are the classic masters of English prose. (26-31)

Arnold then extolls Gray as the poetical classic of that age. He demands a word of notice and his position is singular. He lived with the great poets and above all with the Greeks. Though he is the frailest and scantiest of classics, he is a Classic. After Gray, towards the end of the 18 th century, another great poet praised by Arnold is Robert Burns. (32-33)

As we come to the evaluation of Robert Burns, personal estimate begins to color our judgements. According to Arnold the real Burns is not represented by his English poems. We find real Burns in his Scottish poems. The world of Burns is not beautiful, instead it is repulsive and hard. It is like a world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners.

Burns has a tenderness for it. His world is often harsh, sordid and repulsive. Burns is praised by his admirers for bringing the human quality, independence and dignity of man into his poetry. There is also to be found the application of ideas to life in his poetry. But this alone is not enough. Some more supreme political success is required. His Poetry has the truth of matter and the truth of manner. In some of his poems we find infinite pathos, wit with shrewdness and flawless manner-but he cannot be called a Classic. Arnold compares Chaucer and Burns. He concludes that Chaucer's world is fairer, richer and more significant. (33-41).

Arnold observes that in judging the poetry of Byron, Wordsworth and Shelley, our estimations become dangerous because they are not only personal but personal with a passion. We enter into the burning grounds.

Arnold thinks that his evaluations of Chaucer, Dryden, Pope and Gray have sufficiently suggested the lines form the great Classics (of The Touch Stone lines) to determine the excellences of a poet. Our estimations must be real. The real estimations only bring us the benefits of clear feeling and deeper enjoyment. There is a deterioration in these literary standards with the rise of a multitude of common readers. Supremacy is insured to it. Arnold has the confidence that the really good and great literature will have great admirers so long, as long as life exists.

SUMMARY

Arnold's 'Study of Poetry' exhibits the observations of a great critic who is an admirer of the classical poets. His two estimates, namely Historic and Personal have their own merits as well as limitations. The 'touchstone' method too displays his analytical ability.

COMPREHENSION CHECK QUESTIONS

1. Why does Arnold talk about Dante and Vergil?
2. What is the state of English poetry according to Arnold?
3. Evaluate the statements made by Arnold about Chaucer?
4. Explain the two estimates 'historic'and 'personal'.
5. What is 'touchstone method' and what are its limitations?

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TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

By T. S. Eliot

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with the biography of T. S. Eliot
- To get the students acquainted with T. S. Eliot as a critic
- To sensitize the students to the significance of the essay
- To make the students appreciate the views of Eliot
- To encourage the students' critical analysis and evaluation of the essay

STRUCTURE

1.1 T. S. ELIOT'S BIOGRAPHY

Eliot, T. S. (26 Sept. 1888-4 Jan. 1965), poet, critic, and editor, was born Thomas Stearns Eliot in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of Henry Ware Eliot, president of the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company, and Charlotte Champe Stearns, a former teacher, an energetic social work volunteer at the Humanity Club of St. Louis, and an amateur poet with a taste for Emerson. Eliot was the youngest of seven children, born when his parents were prosperous and secure in their mid-forties (his father had recovered from an earlier business failure) and his siblings were half grown. Afflicted with a congenital double hernia, he was in the constant eye of his mother and five older sisters. His paternal grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, had been a protégé of William Ellery Channing, the dean of American Unitarianism.

William Eliot graduated from Harvard Divinity School, then moved toward the frontier. He founded the Unitarian church in St. Louis and soon became a pillar of the then southwestern city's religious and civic life. Because of William's ties to St. Louis, the Eliot family chose to remain in their urban Locust Street home long after the area had run down and their peers had moved to the suburbs. Left in the care of his Irish nurse, Annie Dunne, who sometimes took him to Catholic Mass, Eliot knew both the city's muddy streets and its exclusive drawing rooms. He attended Smith Academy in St. Louis until he was sixteen. During his last year at Smith he visited the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and was so taken with the fair's native villages that he wrote short stories about primitive life for the Smith Academy Record. In 1905 he departed for a year at Milton Academy outside of Boston, preparatory to following his older brother Henry to Harvard.

Eliot's attending Harvard seems to have been a foregone conclusion. His father and mother, jealously guarding their connection to Boston's Unitarian establishment, brought the

family back to the north shore every summer, and in 1896 built a substantial house at Eastern Point, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. As a boy, Eliot foraged for crabs and became an accomplished sailor, trading the Mississippi River in the warm months for the rocky shoals of Cape Ann.

Later he said that he gave up a sense of belonging to either region, that he always felt like a New Englander in the Southwest, and a Southwesterner in New England (preface to Edgar Ansel Mowrer, This American World [1928]).

Despite his feelings of alienation from both of the regions he called home, Eliot impressed many classmates with his social ease when he began his studies at Harvard in the fall of 1906.

Like his brother Henry before him, Eliot lived his freshman year in a fashionable private dormitory in a posh neighborhood around Mt. Auburn Street known as the "Gold Coast." He joined a number of clubs, including the literary Signet. And he began a romantic attachment to Emily Hale, a refined Bostonian who once played Mrs. Elton opposite his Mr. Woodhouse in an amateur production of Emma. Among his teachers, Eliot was drawn to the forceful moralizing of Irving Babbitt and the stylish skepticism of George Santayana, both of whom reinforced his distaste for the reform-minded, progressive university shaped by Eliot's cousin, Charles William Eliot. His attitudes, however, did not prevent him from taking advantage of the elective system that President Eliot had introduced. As a freshman, his courses were so eclectic that he soon wound up on academic probation. He recovered and persisted, attaining a B.A. in an elective program best described as comparative literature in three years, and an M.A. in English literature in the fourth.

In December 1908 a book Eliot found in the Harvard Union library changed his life: Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1895) introduced him to the poetry of Jules Laforgue, and Laforgue's combination of ironic elegance and psychological nuance gave his juvenile literary efforts a voice. By 1909-1910 his poetic vocation had been confirmed: he joined the board and was briefly secretary of Harvard's literary magazine, the Advocate, and he could recommend to his classmate William Tinckom-Fernandez the last word in French sophistication--the Vers Libre of Paul Fort and Francis Jammes. (Tinckom-Fernandez returned the favor by introducing Eliot to Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" and John Davidson's "Thirty Bob a Week," poems Eliot took to heart, and to the verse of Ezra Pound, which Eliot had no time for.) On the Advocate, Eliot started a lifelong friendship with Conrad Aiken.

In May 1910 a suspected case of scarlet fever almost prevented Eliot's graduation. By fall, though, he was well enough to undertake a postgraduate year in Paris. He lived at 151 bis rue St. Jacques, close to the Sorbonne, and struck up a warm friendship with a fellow lodger, Jean Verdenal, a medical student who later died in the battle of the Dardenelles and to whom Eliot dedicated "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." With Verdenal, he entered the intellectual life of France then swirling, Eliot later recalled, around the figures of Émile Durkheim, Paul Janet, Rémy de Gourmont, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Bergson. Eliot attended Bergson's lectures at the College de France and was temporarily converted to Bergson's philosophical interest in the progressive evolution of consciousness. In a manner characteristic of a lifetime of conflicting attitudes, though, Eliot also gravitated toward the politically conservative (indeed monarchistic), neoclassical, and Catholic writing of Charles Maurras. Warring opposites, these enthusiasms worked together to foster a professional

interest in philosophy and propelled Eliot back to a doctoral program at Harvard the next year.

In 1910 and 1911 Eliot copied into a leather notebook the poems that would establish his reputation: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," "La Figlia Che Piange," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." Combining some of the robustness of Robert Browning's monologues with the incantatory elegance of symbolist verse, and compacting Laforgue's poetry of alienation with the moral earnestness of what Eliot once called "Boston doubt," these poems explore the subtleties of the unconscious with a caustic wit. Their effect was both unique and compelling, and their assurance staggered his contemporaries who were privileged to read them in manuscript. Aiken, for example, marveled at "how sharp and complete and sui generis the whole thing was, from the outset. The wholeness is there, from the very beginning."

In the fall of 1911, though, Eliot was as preoccupied with ideas as with literature. A student in what has been called the golden age of Harvard philosophy, he worked amid a group that included Santayana, William James, the visiting Bertrand Russell, and Josiah Royce. Under Royce's direction, Eliot wrote a dissertation on Bergson's neoidealist critic F. H. Bradley and produced a searching philosophical critique of the psychology of consciousness. He also deepened his reading in anthropology and religion, and took almost as many courses in Sanskrit and Hindu thought as he did in philosophy. By 1914, when he left on a traveling fellowship to Europe, he had persuaded a number of Harvard's philosophers to regard him as a potential colleague.

Eliot spent the early summer of 1914 at a seminar in Marburg, Germany, with plans to study in the fall at Merton College, Oxford, with Harold Joachim, Bradley's colleague and successor. The impending war quickened his departure. In August he was in London with Aiken and by September Aiken had shown Eliot's manuscript poems to Pound, who, not easily impressed, was won over. Pound called on Eliot in late September and wrote to Harriet Monroe at Poetry magazine that Eliot had "actually trained himself and modernized himself on his own." The two initiated a collaboration that would change Anglo-American poetry, but not before Eliot put down deep English roots.

In early spring 1915 Eliot's old Milton Academy and Harvard friend Scofield Thayer, later editor of the Dial and then also at Oxford, introduced Eliot to Vivien Haigh-Wood, a dancer and a friend of Thayer's sister. Eliot was drawn instantly to Vivien's exceptional frankness and charmed by her family's Hampstead polish. Abandoning his habitual tentativeness with women, in June 1915 he married Vivien on impulse at the Hampstead Registry Office. His parents were shocked, and then, when they learned of Vivien's history of emotional and physical problems, profoundly disturbed. The marriage nearly caused a family break, but it also indelibly marked the beginning of Eliot's English life. Vivien refused to cross the Atlantic in wartime, and Eliot took his place in literary London. They were to have no children.

Eliot and his wife at first turned to Bertrand Russell, who shared with them both his London flat and his considerable social resources. Russell and Vivien, however, became briefly involved, and the arrangement soured. Meanwhile Eliot tried desperately to support himself by teaching school, supplemented by a heavy load of reviewing and extension lecturing. To placate his worried parents, he labored on with his Ph.D. thesis, "Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley." (Eliot finished it in April

1916, but did not receive his degree because he was reluctant to undertake the trip to Massachusetts required for his dissertation defense.) As yet one more stimulating but taxing activity, he became assistant editor of the avant-garde magazine the Egoist. Then in spring 1917 he found steady employment; his knowledge of languages qualified him for a job in the foreign section of Lloyds Bank, where he evaluated a broad range of continental documents.

The job gave him the security he needed to turn back to poetry, and in 1917 he received an enormous boost from the publication of his first book, Prufrock and Other Observations, printed by the Egoist with the silent financial support of Ezra and Dorothy Pound.

For a struggling young American, Eliot had acquired extraordinary access to the British intellectual set. With Russell's help he was invited to country-house weekends where visitors ranged from political figures like Herbert Henry Asquith to a constellation of Bloomsbury writers, artists, and philosophers. At the same time Pound facilitated his entry into the international avant-garde, where Eliot mixed with a group including the aging Irish poet William Butler Yeats, the English painter and novelist Wyndham Lewis, and the Italian Futurist writer Tamaso Marinetti. More accomplished than Pound in the manners of the drawing room, Eliot gained a reputation in the world of belles-lettres as an observer who could shrewdly judge both accepted and experimental art from a platform of apparently enormous learning. It did not hurt that he calculated his interventions carefully, publishing only what was of first quality and creating around himself an aura of mystery. In 1920 he collected a second slim volume of verse, Poems, and a volume of criticism, The Sacred Wood. Both displayed a winning combination of erudition and jazzy bravura, and both built upon the understated discipline of a decade of philosophical seriousness. Eliot was meanwhile proofreading the Egoist's serial publication of Joyce's Ulysses, and, with Pound's urging, starting to think of himself as part of an experimental movement in modern art and literature.

Yet the years of Eliot's literary maturation were accompanied by increasing family worries. Eliot's father died in January 1919, producing a paroxysm of guilt in the son who had hoped he would have time to heal the bad feelings caused by his marriage and emigration. At the same time Vivien's emotional and physical health deteriorated, and the financial and emotional strain of her condition took its toll. After an extended visit in the summer of 1921 from his mother and sister Marion, Eliot suffered a nervous collapse and, on his physician's advice, took a three month's rest cure, first on the coast at Margate and then at a sanitarium Russell's friend Lady Ottoline Morell recommended at Lausanne, Switzerland.

Whether because of the breakdown or the long needed rest it imposed, Eliot broke through a severe writer's block and completed a long poem he had been working on since 1919. Assembled out of dramatic vignettes based on Eliot's London life, The Waste Land's extraordinary intensity stems from a sudden fusing of diverse materials into a rhythmic whole of great skill and daring. Though it would be forced into the mold of an academic set piece on the order of Milton’s "Lycidas," The Waste Land was at first correctly perceived as a work of jazzlike syncopation--and, like 1920s jazz, essentially iconoclastic. A poem suffused with Eliot's horror of life, it was taken over by the postwar generation as a rallying cry for its sense of disillusionment. Pound, who helped pare and sharpen the poem when Eliot stopped in Paris on his way to and from Lausanne, praised it with a godparent's fervor. As important, Eliot's old friend Thayer, by then publisher of the Dial, decided even before he had seen the finished poem to make it the centerpiece of the magazine's attempt to establish American

letters in the vanguard of modern culture. To secure The Waste Land for the Dial, Thayer arranged in 1922 to award Eliot the magazine's annual prize of two thousand dollars and to trumpet The Waste Land's importance with an essay commissioned from the Dial's already influential Edmund Wilson. It did not hurt that 1922 also saw the long-heralded publication of Ulysses, or that in 1923 Eliot linked himself and Joyce with Einstein in the public mind in an essay entitled "Ulysses, Order and Myth." Meteorically, Eliot, Joyce, and, to a lesser extent, Pound were joined in a single glow--each nearly as notorious as Picasso.

The masterstroke of Eliot's career was to parlay the success of The Waste Land by means of an equally ambitious effort of a more traditional literary kind. With Jacques Riviere's La Nouvelle Revue Française in mind, in 1922 Eliot jumped at an offer from Lady Rothermere, wife of the publisher of the Daily Mail, to edit a high-profile literary journal. The first number of the Criterion appeared in October 1922. Like The Waste Land, it took the whole of European culture in its sights. The Criterion's editorial voice placed Eliot at the center of London writing.

Eliot, however, was too consumed by domestic anxiety to appreciate his success. In 1923 Vivien nearly died, and Eliot, in despair, came close to a second breakdown. The next two years were almost as bad, until a lucky chance allowed him to escape from the demands of his job at the bank. Geoffrey Faber, of the new publishing firm of Faber and Gwyer (later Faber and Faber), saw the advantages of Eliot's dual expertise in business and letters and recruited him as literary editor. At about the same time, Eliot reached out for religious support. Having long found his family's Unitarianism unsatisfying, he turned to the Anglican church. The seeds of his future faith can be found in The Hollow Men, though the poem was read as a sequel to *The Waste Land*'s philosophical despair when it appeared in Poems 1909-1925 (1925). In June 1927 few followers were prepared for Eliot's baptism into the Church of England. And so, within five years of his avant-garde success, Eliot provoked a second storm.

The furor grew in November 1927 when Eliot took British citizenship, and again in 1928 when he collected a group of politically conservative essays under the title of For Lancelot Andrewes, prefacing them with a declaration that he considered himself a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion." Eliot's poetry now addressed explicitly religious situations. In the late 1920s he published a series of shorter poems in Faber's Ariel series--short pieces issued in pamphlet form within striking modern covers.

These included "Journey of the Magi" (1927), "A Song for Simeon" (1928), "Animula" (1929), "Marina" (1930), and 'Triumphal March" (1931). Steeped in Eliot's contemporary study of Dante and the late Shakespeare, all of them meditate on spiritual growth and anticipate the longer and more celebrated Ash-Wednesday (1930). "Journey of the Magi" and "A Song for Simeon" are also exercises in Browningesque dramatic monologues, and speak to Eliot's desire, pronounced since 1922, to exchange the symbolist fluidity of the psychological lyric for a more traditional dramatic form.

Eliot spent much of the last half of his career writing one kind of drama or another, and attempting to reach (and bring together) a larger and more varied audience. As early as 1923 he had written parts of an experimental and striking jazz play, Sweeney Agonistes (never finished, it was published in fragments in 1932 and performed by actors in masks by London's Group Theatre in 1934). In early 1934 he composed a church pageant with accompanying choruses entitled The Rock, performed in May and June 1934 at Sadler's Wells. Almost immediately following these performances, Bishop Bell commissioned a

church drama having to do with Canterbury Cathedral, which, as Murder in the Cathedral, was performed in the Chapter House at Canterbury in June 1935 and was moved to the Mercury Theatre at Notting Hill Gate in November and eventually to the Old Vic. In the late 1930s, Eliot attempted to conflate a drama of spiritual crisis with a Noël Coward-inspired contemporary theater of social manners. Though Eliot based The Family Reunion on the plot of Aeschylus's Eumenides, he designed it to tell a story of Christian redemption. The play opened in the West End in March 1939 and closed to mixed reviews five weeks later. Eliot was disheartened, but after the war fashioned more popular (though less powerful) combinations of the same elements to much greater success. The Cocktail Party, modernizing Euripides's Alcestis with some of the insouciance of Noël Coward, with a cast that included Alec Guinness, opened to a warm critical reception at the Edinburgh Festival in August 1949 and enjoyed popular success starting on Broadway in January 1950. Eliot's last two plays were more labored and fared less well. The Confidential Clerk had a respectable run at the Lyric Theatre in London in September 1953, and The Elder Statesman premiered at the Edinburgh Festival in August 1958 and closed after a lukewarm run in London in the fall.

Eliot's reputation as a poet and man of letters, increasing incrementally from the mid-1920s, advanced and far outstripped his theatrical success. As early as 1926 he delivered the prestigious Clark Lectures at Cambridge University, followed in 1932-1933 by the Norton Lectures at Harvard, and just about every other honor the academy or the literary world had to offer. In 1948 Eliot received the Nobel Prize for literature during a fellowship stay at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study. By 1950 his authority had reached a level that seemed comparable in English writing to that of figures like Samuel Johnson or Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Ironically, after 1925 Eliot's marriage steadily deteriorated, turning his public success hollow. During the tenure of his Norton year at Harvard he separated from Vivien, but would not consider divorce because of his Anglican beliefs. For most of the 1930s he secluded himself from Vivien's often histrionic attempts to embarrass him into a reconciliation, and made an anguished attempt to order his life around his editorial duties at Faber's and the Criterion and around work at his Kensington church. He also reestablished communication with Emily Hale, especially after 1934, when she began summering with relatives in the Cotswolds. Out of his thinking of "what might have been," associated with their visit to an abandoned great house, Eliot composed "Burnt Norton," published as the last poem in his Collected Poems 1909-1935 (1936). With its combination of symbolist indirection and meditative gravity, "Burnt Norton" gave Eliot the model for another decade of major verse.

In 1938 Vivien was committed to Northumberland House, a mental hospital north of London. In 1939, with the war impending, the Criterion, which had occupied itself with the deepening political crisis of Europe, ceased publication. During the Blitz, Eliot served as an air-raid warden, but spent long weekends as a guest with friends near Guildford in the country. In these circumstances, he wrote three more poems, each more somber than the last, patterned on the voice and five-part structure of "Burnt Norton." "East Coker" was published at Easter 1940 and took its title from the village that Eliot's ancestor Andrew Eliot had departed from for America in the seventeenth century. (Eliot had visited East Coker in 1937.)

"The Dry Salvages," published in 1941, reverted to Eliot's experience as a boy on the Mississippi and sailing on the Massachussetts coast. Its title refers to a set of dangerously hidden rocks near Cape Ann. "Little Gidding" was published in 1942 and had a less private subject, suitable to its larger ambitions. Little Gidding, near Cambridge, had been the site of

an Anglican religious community that maintained a perilous existence for the first part of the English civil war. Paired with Eliot's experience walking the blazing streets of London during World War II, the community of Little Gidding inspired an extended meditation on the subject of the individual's duties in a world of human suffering. Its centre piece was a sustained homage to Dante written in a form of terza rima, dramatizing Eliot's meeting with a "familiar compound ghost" he associates with Yeats and Swift.

Four Quartets (1943), as the suite of four poems was entitled, for a period displaced *The Waste Land* as Eliot's most celebrated work. The British public especially responded to the topical references in the wartime poems and to the tone of Eliot's public meditation on a common disaster. Eliot's long time readers, however, were more reticent. Some, notably F. R. Leavis, praised the philosophical suppleness of Eliot syntax, but distrusted Eliot's swerve from the authenticity of a rigorously individual voice. And, as Eliot's conservative religious and political convictions began to seem less congenial in the post war world, other readers reacted with suspicion to his assertions of authority, obvious in Four Quartets and implicit in the earlier poetry. The result, fueled by intermittent rediscovery of Eliot's occasional anti-Semitic rhetoric, has been a progressive downward revision of his once towering reputation.

After the war, Eliot wrote no more major poetry, turning entirely to his plays and to literary essays, the most important of which revisited the French symbolists and the development of language in twentieth-century poetry. After Vivien died in January 1947, Eliot led a protected life as a flatmate of the critic John Hayward. In January 1957 he married Valerie Fletcher and attained a degree of contentedness that had eluded him all his life. He died in London and, according to his own instructions, his ashes were interred in the church of St. Michael's in East Coker. A commemorative plaque on the church wall bears his chosen epitaph--lines chosen from Four Quartets: "In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning."

1.2 T. S. ELIOT AS A CRITIC

Eliot said that the poet-critic must write “programmatic criticism” that is, criticism that expresses the poet’s own interests as a poet, quite different from historical scholarship, which stops at placing the poet in his background. Consciously intended or not, Eliot’s 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 (“novelty is better than repetition,” he said); 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. This point of view is “programmatic” in the sense that it disposes the reader to accept the revolutionary novelty of Eliot’s polyglot quotations and serious parodies of other poets’ styles in The Waste Land.

Eliot used the phrase “objective correlative” in the context of his own impersonal theory of poetry; it thus had an immense influence toward correcting the vagueness of late Victorian rhetoric by insisting on a correspondence of word and object. Two other essays, first published the year after The Sacred Wood, almost complete the Eliot critical canon: The Metaphysical Poets and “Andrew Marvell,” published in Selected Essays, 1917–32 (1932). In these essays he effects a new historical perspective on the hierarchy of English poetry, putting at the top Donne and other Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and lowering poets

of the 18th and 19th centuries. Eliot's second famous phrase appears here—"dissociation of sensibility," invented to explain the change that came over English poetry after Donne and Andrew Marvell. This change seems to him to consist in a loss of the union of thought and feeling. The phrase has been attacked, yet the historical fact that gave rise to it cannot be denied, and with the poetry of Eliot and Pound it had a strong influence in reviving interest in certain 17th-century poets.

The first, or programmatic, phase of Eliot's criticism ended with *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933)—his Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard. Shortly before this his interests had broadened into theology and sociology; three short books, or long essays, were the result: *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931), The Idea of a Christian Society (1939), and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). These book-essays, along with his Dante (1929), an indubitable masterpiece, broadened the base of literature into theology and philosophy: whether a work is poetry must be decided by literary standards; whether it is great poetry must be decided by standards higher than the literary.

Eliot's criticism and poetry are so interwoven that it is difficult to discuss them separately. The great essay on Dante appeared two years after 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. Ash Wednesday expresses the pangs and the strain involved in the acceptance of religious belief and religious discipline. This and subsequent poems were written in a more relaxed, musical, and meditative style than his earlier works, in which the dramatic element had been stronger than the lyrical. Ash Wednesday was not well received in an era that held that poetry, though autonomous, is strictly secular in its outlook; it was misinterpreted by some critics as an expression of personal disillusion.

1.3 INTRODUCTION, TEXT, SUMMARY, AND COMMENTARY

1.3.1 Tradition and the Individual Talent: Introduction

The essay was first published in *The Egoist* (1919) and later in Eliot's first book of criticism, *The Sacred Wood* (1920). According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Tradition means a belief, principle or way of acting which people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time, or all of these beliefs, etc. in a particular society or group. Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes 'Tradition' an 'inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom)'. Eliot commences the essay with the general attitude towards 'Tradition'. He points out that every nation and race has its creative and critical turn of mind, and emphasises the need for critical thinking. 'We might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing.' In 'Tradition and Individual Talent', Eliot introduces the idea of Tradition.

Interestingly enough, Eliot's contemporaries and commentators either derided the idea as irrelevant, conservative and backward-looking stance or appreciated the idea and read it in connection with Matthew Arnold's historical criticism of texts popularly known as 'touchstone' method. In this section we will first make an attempt to summarize Eliot's concept of tradition and then will seek to critique it for a comprehensive understanding of the texts.

At the very outset, in the essay, Eliot makes it clear that he is using the term tradition as an adjective to explain the relationship of a poem or a work to the works of dead poets and artists. He regrets that in our appreciation of authors we hardly include their connections with those living and dead. Also our critical apparatus is significantly limited to the language in which the work is produced. A work produced in a different language can be considered for a better appreciation of the work. In this connection, he notices "our tendency to insist those aspects" of a writer's work in which "he least resembles anyone else". Thus, our appreciation of the writer is derived from exhumation of the uniqueness of the work. In the process, the interpretation of the work focuses on identifying the writer's difference from his predecessors. Eliot critiques this tendency in literary appreciation and favours inclusion of work or parts of work of dead poets and predecessors.

Although Eliot attaches greater importance to the idea of tradition, he rejects the idea of tradition in the name of 'Blind or Timid Adherence' to successful compositions of the past.

By subscribing to the idea of tradition, Eliot does not mean sacrificing novelty nor does he mean slavish repetitions of stylistic and structural features. By the term 'Tradition', he comes up with something 'of much wider significance". By 'Tradition', he does not refer to a legacy of writers which can be handed down from a generation to another generation. It has nothing to do with the idea of inheritance; rather it regrets a great deal of endeavour. He further argues, "It involve. The historical sense and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past but its presence; This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional." By this statement, Eliot wants to emphasize that the writer or the poet must develop a sense of the pastness of the past and always seeks to examine the poem or the work in its relation to the works of the dead writers or the poets.

To substantiate his point of view, Eliot says, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and the artists." As he says this, he is perfectly aware of Matthew Arnold's notion of historical criticism and therefore distances himself from such the Arnoldian critical stance. He identifies his approach to literary appreciation "as a principle of aesthetics and thereby distinguishes it from Arnold's "Historical Criticism". Thus, Eliot offers an organic theory and practice of literary criticism. In this, he treats tradition not as a legacy but as an invention of anyone who is ready to create his or her literary pantheon, depending on his literary tastes and positions. This means that the development of the writer will depend on his or her ability to build such private spaces for continual negotiation and even struggle with illustrious antecedents, and strong influences. Harold Bloom terms the state of struggle as "The anxiety of influence", and he derides Eliot for suggesting a complex, an elusive relationship between the tradition and the individual, and goes on to develop his own theory of influence.

In this essay, T.S. Eliot makes the overall case that the individual talent of a given poet, or artist of any kind, must always be measured in relationship to a tradition of poets and artists. "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone," writes Eliot. "His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead." In fact, Eliot maintains that a contemporary poet or artist should actually strive to earn his or her way into this preceding tradition. New works must first take into account this tradition and build on it, and they will be judged critically in relation to this

tradition. Individual literary and artistic production, then, relies heavily on tradition. The poet or artist must have a keen awareness of and respect for the past. Even more, the poet has to work hard to engage with this tradition. The poet is not a passive recipient of tradition but actively engages with tradition to develop new work. Eliot's discussion of the relationship between tradition and individual talent prompts us to think about literary criticism as commentary on how the work relates to a traditional canon of other works like it or, at least, that have come before it.

1.3.2 Tradition and the Individual Talent: Full Text

From The Sacred Wood. 1921

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to "the tradition" or to "a tradition"; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is "traditional" or even "too traditional." Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure. If otherwise, it is vaguely approbative, with the implication, as to the work approved, of some pleasing archæological reconstruction. You can hardly make the word agreeable to English ears without this comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archæology.

Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius. We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are "more critical" than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous. Perhaps they are; but we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism. One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity.

Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but

with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics. It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art. And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value a test, it is true, which can only be slowly and cautiously applied, for we are none of us infallible judges of conformity. We say: it appears to conform, and is perhaps individual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus, nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period.

The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement. The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe the mind of his own country a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent

which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery.

But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

Someone said: "The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did." Precisely, and they are that which we know.

I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the metier of poetry. The objection is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawing-rooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I shall, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

II

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the susurrus of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. In the last article I tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of "personality," not being necessarily more interesting, or having "more to say," but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral,

and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. Canto XV of the Inferno (BrunettoLatini) is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which "came," which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to. The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of "sublimity" misses the mark. For it is not the "greatness," the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. It is no more intense, furthermore, than Canto XXVI, the voyage of Ulysses, which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmution of emotion: the murder of Agamemnon, or the agony of Othello, gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the Agamemnon, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator; in Othello to the emotion of the protagonist himself. But the difference between art and the event is always absolute; the combination which is the murder of Agamemnon is probably as complex as that which is the voyage of Ulysses. In either case there has been a fusion of elements. The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale, partly, perhaps, because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.

Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

I will quote a passage which is unfamiliar enough to be regarded with fresh attention in the light—or darkness—of these observations:

And now methinks I could e'en chide myself
For doating on her beauty, though her death
Shall be revenged after no common action.
Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
For thee? For thee does she undo herself?
Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute?
Why does yon fellow falsify highways,
And put his life between the judge's lips,
To refine such a thing—keeps horse and men
To beat their valours for her?

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness which is contrasted with it and which destroys it. This balance of contrasted emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it. This is, so to speak, the structural emotion, provided by the drama. But the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life.

One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him.

Consequently, we must believe that "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation.

These experiences are not "recollected," and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is "tranquil" only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him "personal."

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. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

III

This essay proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad. There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

1.3.3 Summary and analysis of the Essay

"Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) is an essay written by poet and literary critic T. S. Eliot. The essay was first published in *The Egoist* (1919) and later in Eliot's first book of criticism, *The Sacred Wood* (1920). One of Eliot's early essays, this essay typifies his critical stance and concerns; it has been called his most influential single essay. Divided into three parts, appearing in *The Egoist* in September and December, 1919, the essay insists upon taking tradition into account when formulating criticism—"aesthetic, not merely historical criticism."

Eliot opens the essay by revivifying the word "tradition" and arguing that criticism, for which the French were then noted more than the English, in his view "is as inevitable as breathing." The first principle of criticism that he asserts is to focus not solely upon what is unique in a poet but upon what he shares with "the dead poets, his ancestors." This sharing, when it is not the mere and unquestioning following of established poetic practice, involves the historical sense, a sense that the whole of literary Europe and of one's own country "has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."

A correlative principle is that no 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.

This essay is divided into three parts:
Part one: The Concept of "Tradition".
Part two: The Theory of Impersonal Poetry.
Part three: The Conclusion or Summing up.

Eliot presents his conception of tradition and the definition of the poet and poetry in relation to it. He wishes to correct the fact that "in English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence." Eliot posits that, though the English tradition generally upholds the belief that art progresses through change – a separation from tradition, literary advancements are instead recognised only when they conform to the tradition. Eliot, a classicist, felt that the true incorporation of tradition into literature was unrecognised, that tradition, a word that "seldom... appear 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 through 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.

The poet concludes: "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." Thus Eliot does not deny personality or emotion to the poet. Only, he must depersonalise his emotions.

There should be an extinction of his personality. This impersonality can be achieved only when poet surrenders himself completely to the work that is to be done. And the poet can know what is to be done, only if he acquires a sense of tradition, the historic sense, which makes him conscious, not only of the present, but also of the present moment of the past, not only of what is dead, but of what is already living.

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 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.

Harold Bloom presents a conception of tradition that differs from that of Eliot. Whereas Eliot believes that the great poet is faithful to his predecessors and evolves in a concordant manner, Bloom (according to his theory of "anxiety of influence") envisions the "strong poet" to engage in a much more aggressive and tumultuous rebellion against tradition.

In 1964, his last year, Eliot published in a reprint of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, a series of lectures he gave at Harvard University in 1932 and 1933, a new preface in which he called "Tradition and the Individual Talent" the most juvenile of his essays.

1.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Attempt an analytical essay on Eliot's view of tradition.
2. What is the relation between tradition and individual talent, according to T. S. Eliot?
3. What is T. S. Eliot's opinion about the interaction of the past and present, in literature?
4. What, do you think, is the importance of the essay?
5. What does T. S. Eliot say about tradition and innovation in literature?

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THE FOUR KINDS OF MEANING

- I. A. RICHARDS

OBJECTIVE

- To describe the main qualities of I.A. Richards as a critic
- To discuss the essay prescribed essay
- To evaluate I.A. Richard as a critic

STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

I. A. RichardsIvor Armstrong Richards (26 February 1893 in Sandbach, Cheshire – 7 September 1979 in Cambridge) was an influential English literary critic and rhetorician. His books, especially The Meaning of Meaning, Principles of Literary Criticism, Practical Criticism, and The Philosophy of Rhetoric, proved to be founding influences for the New Criticism. The concept of 'practical criticism' led in time to the practices of close reading, what is often through of as the beginning of modern literary criticism. Richards is regularly considered one of the founders of the contemporary study of literature in English.

1.2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

1.2.1 Beginnings

Richards began his career without formal training in literature at all; Richards studied philosophy ("moral sciences") at Cambridge University. This may have led to one of Richards' assertions for the shape of literary study in the 20th century -- that literary study cannot and should not be undertaken as a specialization in itself, but instead studied alongside a cognate field (philosophy, psychology, rhetoric, etc.).

Richards' earliest teaching appointments were in the equivalent of what might be called "adjunct faculty" positions; Magdalene College at Cambridge would not pay a salary to Richards to teach the new and untested field of English literature. Instead, Richards collected tuition directly from the students as they entered the classroom each week. In 1926 he married Dorothy Pilley Richards, whom he had met on a climbing holiday in Wales.

1.2.2 Contributions

Richards' life and influence can be divided into periods, which correspond roughly to his intellectual interests. In many of these achievements, Richards found a collaborator in C. K. Ogden.

In Foundations of Aesthetics (co-authored by Richards, Ogden & James Woods), Richards maps out the principles of aesthetic reception which lay at the root of Richards' literary theory (the principle of "harmony" or balance of competing psychological impulses).

Additionally, the structure of the work (surveying multiple, competing definitions of the term "aesthetic") prefigures his work on multiple definition in Coleridge on Imagination, in Basic Rules of Reason and in Mencius on the Mind.

In The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism, Richards and Odgen work out the triadic theory of semiotics which, in its dependence on psychological theories, prefigures the importance of psychology in Richards independently authored literary criticism. Additionally, many current semioticians (including Eco) salute this work as a vast improvement on the dyadic semiotics of Saussure.

Finally, in works like The General Basic English Dictionary and Times of India Guide to Basic English, Richards and Ogden developed their most internationally influential project the Basic English program for the development of an international language based with an 850-word vocabulary. Richards' own travels, especially to China, made him an effective advocate for this international program. At Harvard, he took the next step, integrating new media (television, especially) into his international pedagogy.

1.2.3 Theory

Richards is often labeled, or mislabeled, as the father of the New Criticism, largely because of the influence of his first two books of critical theory, The Principles of Literary Criticism and of Practical Criticism. Principles was a major critical breakthrough in having offered thirty-five insightful chapters regarding various topics relevant to literary criticism

inclusive of such topics as form, value, rhythm, coenesthesia, literary infectiousness, allusiveness, divergent readings, and belief. His next book, Practical Criticism, was just as influential as an empirical study of inferior literary response. Richards removed authorial and contextual information from thirteen poems, including one by Longfellow and four by decidedly marginal poets. Then he assigned their interpretation to undergraduates at Cambridge University in order to ascertain the most likely impediments to an adequate response. This approach had a startling impact at the time in demonstrating the depth and variety of misreading to be expected of otherwise intelligent college students as well as the population at large.

In using this method, Richards did not advance a new hermeneutic. Instead, he was doing something unprecedented in the field of literary studies: he was interrogating the interpretive process itself by analyzing the self-reported interpretive work of students. To that end, his work necessitated a closer interpretation of the literary text in and of itself and provided what seems a historical opening to the work done in English Education and Composition [Flower & Hayes] as they engage empirical studies. Connected with this effort were his seminal theories of metaphor, value, tone, stock response, incipient action, pseudo-statement, and ambiguity, the latter as expounded by William Empson, his former graduate student.

In his third book, Coleridge on Imagination, Richards summarized Coleridge's theory of poetry with an emphasis on the binarisms of fancy and imagination, connotation and denotation, the primary and secondary imagination, the projective and interpretive reading experience, etc. He explored in depth the coalescence of subject and object in poetry, the musical and mythical aspects of poetry, and the essence of words as fragments of the utterance of poetry. In his final book of criticism preceding World War II, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, Richards explored the various contexts of discourse, the interlamination of words, and, most important, the relationship between the tenor and vehicle of poetry--that is, the metaphor's image (its vehicle) and the otherwise inexpressible idea represented by this image (its tenor). In his later years Richards primarily resided in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as an English professor at Harvard University, and here he fell under the influence of the Russian formalist Roman Jacobson. Most of Richards' criticism in later years was in essays with a decidedly formalistic emphasis as an elaboration of his earlier theory of communication.

Richards was primarily invested in understanding literary interpretation from an individual psychological perspective. He read deeply in psychological theory of the day, finding the psychological contributions of Ward, Puffer, and Urban the most useful for his own work. While his impulse theory of consciousness as well as his theories of poetic interpretation and poetic language have been surpassed many decades ago, his initial effort to ground a theory of interpretation in both aesthetic theory and the theoretical language of psychology shaped 20th century literary studies into what it is today.

1.2.4 Influence

Richards served as mentor and teacher to other prominent critics, most notably William Empson and F.R. Leavis. Other critics primarily influenced by his writings also included Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate. Later critics who refined their formalist approach to New Criticism by actively rejecting his psychological emphasis included, besides Brooks and Tate, John Crowe Ransom, W.K. Wimsatt, R.P. Blackmur, and Murray Krieger. R.S. Crane of the Chicago school was also both indebted to Richards' theory and critical of its

psychological assumptions. They all admitted the value of his seminal ideas but sought to salvage what they considered his most useful assumptions from the theoretical excesses they felt he brought to bear in his criticism. Like his student Empson, Richards proved a difficult model for the New Critics, but his model of close reading provided the basis for their interpretive methodology.

1.3 CRITICISM OF FOUR KINDS OF MEANING

Humanism and Literary Theory

This discussion is based on Chapter One, "Theory Before Theory," in Peter Barry's Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory" (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

We began class by talking about what literature is, and how you know a piece of literature, as distinct from any other kind of writing. We then talked about what literature does, why one reads it, what one gets out of it; I made a list on the board of all the responses, and then began to talk about how "literature" moved from being something one read for pleasure to an academic field of study or type of knowledge.

Literary study began in Britain in 1840s, with the idea that the study of literature would "emancipate us from the notions and habits" of our own age, connecting us instead with what is "fixed and enduring"--the idea here is that literature holds timeless universal human truths (and hence can be read without regard to historical context of its production, and without regard to particular historical moment in which we read it and make meaning out of it).

The idea behind literary study was to secure middle-class values, to transmit them to all classes (working class as well as aristocracy) so that those values would indeed become universal. The problem with studying lit at the university level initially was problem of defining how one studies lit. If the study of literature develops taste, educates sympathies, enlarges the mind, makes one a better human--how are those things measured? How can they be studied and assessed? At the end of the nineteenth century, in both England and America, as academics began to push for university courses in English and American literature, these questions arose. How could the study of literature be defined and carried out in a manner that was disciplined and objective enough to give it status as an academic pursuit (and not just "chatter about Shelley," as one critic put it--or as statements about what one likes or doesn't like in lit.). This debate led, not only to the development of the first English departments, but to the development of the first types of literary theory, i.e., theories about how literature worked, what it did, and how it ought to be read and studied.

There are two main tracks in literary theory. One begins with I.A. Richards' notion of "practical criticism," which we might call "close reading." This theory insisted that the best, and indeed the only, way to study literature was to study the text itself in close detail, and to disregard anything outside the text itself, including the author's biography, the historical context in which the work appeared, how it related to other works both before, during, and after its appearance, and how critics and readers responded to the text. In short, this branch of criticism theorized the literary text as an isolated object, something to be studied in and of itself alone. This is the theory that says what literature students ought to do is read the words on the page, and nothing else.

The second track in literary theory looks at the text as a key to understanding questions and ideas beyond the text itself. (This tradition is traced through Phillip Sidney, Wordsworth, and Henry James, among others). Rather than centering on the text alone, this track asks "big picture" questions: How are literary texts structured? How are they different from non-literary texts (if indeed they are)? How do literary texts affect audiences/readers (i.e. what does literature DO to you)? Is there such a thing as a specifically "literary" language, and if so, what is it like? How does literature relate to other aspects of a culture, such as politics, or gender relations, or philosophy, or economics? Theorists in this track use the literary text as a kind of springboard to ask questions that are not solely concerned with "the words on the page."

Current literary theory comes from both tracks. We begin by acknowledging that "the words on the page" are the basis for any analysis of any piece of literature--the raw material from which any argument or ideas must necessarily come. But the analysis rarely stops with close reading; that close reading shows us something, not only about the construction of the text, but about the author, the reader, the social contexts of both, and about the methods of interpretation available to authors and readers.

Both tracks, up until about the late 1960s, shared certain fundamental assumptions about what literature was, how it worked, how we read it, and why reading literature was important. We can sum up these assumptions in ten major points.

1. Good literature is of timeless significance

2. The literary text contains its own meaning within itself.

3. (related to point 2): the best way to study the text is to study the words on the page, without any predefined agenda for what one wants to find there.

4. The text will reveal constants, universal truths, about human nature, because human nature itself is constant and unchanging. People are pretty much the same everywhere, in all ages and in all cultures.

5. The text can speak to the inner truths of each of us because our individuality, our "self," is something unique to each of us, something essential to our inner core. This inner essential self can and does transcend all external social forces (i.e. no matter what happens to me, I will always be me).

6. The purpose of literature is the enhancement of life and the propagation of humane values; on the other hand, literature should always be "disinterested," i.e. it should never have an overt agenda of trying to change someone (or it will become propaganda).

7. In a literary work, form and content are fused together, and are integral parts of each other.

8. A literary work is "sincere," meaning it is honest, true to experience and human nature, and thus can speak the truth about the human condition.

9. What is valuable in literature is that it shows us our true nature, and the true nature of society, without preaching (like point 6); it shows through drama, event, character, and conflict, rather than explaining, lecturing, or demonstrating.

10. What critics do is interpret the text (based largely on the words on the page) so that the reader can get more out of reading the text.

So far we're still on pretty familiar ground. What is going to be most striking, and most disturbing, about the kinds of literary theory you'll encounter this semester is how different most of them are from what you already know about how to read literature. The qualities of literature we've listed on the board--the timeless value, the secrets of human nature, the moral lessons literature teaches--all belong to a particular tradition in studying literature. Rather than just being "what one does" with literature, these ideas about the value of literature come from a particular perspective, which is generally called "liberal humanism" or just "humanism."

Liberal humanism started to lose its credibility in the late 1960s. What happened in the 1960s is pretty complicated, in terms of literary and social history. In a nutshell, literary critics responded to the social and political questions arising about race, gender, class, sexuality (etc.) by asking whether these timeless universal human truths found in lit. really were timeless and universal, or whether they weren't just as bound to race, class, gender, sexuality, and culture as everything else in the world. In other words, they started to ask questions like, is Shakespeare really "universal," or did he write as a white male in the 16th century? And if so, how did we come to read Shakespeare as "classic" and "timeless"? Not everything prior to the 1960s fell under the heading of "humanism," however. In fact, many writers throughout the 20th century have questioned one or more of the basic assumptions of humanism, as have several schools of criticism and theory. Marxist criticism and psychoanalytic, for example, which pay attention to how social class and sexuality (respectively) function in producing literature, authors, readers, and particular kinds of interpretations, have challenged humanist principles consistently. What changed in the 1960s was that humanism became labeled as such, as a particular perspective or kind of theory of literature, rather than simply "the truth" about literature and how one approaches it.

The theory "boom" that occurred in the 1970s threw all of the humanist assumptions into question. The theories we'll be looking at this semester will strike you as alien and unfamiliar precisely because they throw out all the familiar ways we've learned to think about literature and about ourselves. Just to start with: the theories we'll be reading have certain ideas in common. They include

1. The idea that things we have thought of as constant, including the notion of our own identity (gender identity, national identity, e.g.) are not stable and fixed, but rather are fluid, changing, unstable. Rather than being innate essences, these qualities of identity are "socially constructed." (A lot of the theories we'll be looking at are concerned with how such identities are constructed and how they come to look and feel so stable and constant). Most of the theories we'll look at throw out the idea of there being anything absolute, especially any absolute truth, and instead focus on how everything is constructed and provisional.

2. Theorists also throw out the idea of objectivity, arguing that everything one thinks or does is in some degree the product of one's past experiences, one's beliefs, one's ideology. Where liberal humanists deny this, and insist they can look at a literary text with no preconceived notions of what they'll find, they are only masking their own ideological commitment. This idea relates back to the first idea, that truth is all a matter of perspective; this leads to the idea that thought and truth are all "relative," rather than absolute.

3. The theorists we'll read agree that language is the most important factor in shaping all our conceptions about life, ourselves, literary texts, and the world. Rather than language reflecting the "real world," language actually creates and structures our perceptions of "reality." Furthermore, rather than being speakers of language, these theorists hold that we are products of language.

4. Because all truths are relative, all supposedly "essential" constants are fluid, and language determines reality, these theorists conclude that there is no such thing as definitive meaning. There is only ambiguity, fluid meaning, multiple meaning, especially in a literary text.

5. Again, because of this idea of relativism, there is no such thing as a "total" theory, one which explains every aspect of some event. (Though of course this critique can circle back against each of the five points I've just named, which have been presented as if they were absolute, fixed, definite, and total).

Don't worry if this doesn't make sense to you yet, if your head is spinning after all this. Understanding these ideas is what this course is all about, and I don't expect you to know what's going on before the course has even started. Don't worry too if you dislike all the ideas I've just gone over. Some people would point to the decline of the humanist perspective, and the rise of the modern theoretical perspective (with its insistence on relativism, ambiguity, multiplicity, etc.) as exactly what's wrong with the world today. (If only we could return to the old-fashioned values, and believe in absolute truth, value, and permanence, they say, everything would be or at least a lot better than it is now). That's one of the questions we'll be looking at as we study these anti-humanist theorists this semester.

1.4 THE FOUR KINDS OF MEANING

I.A. Richards was the first critic to bring to English criticism a scientific precision and objectivity. He was the first to distinguish between the two uses of language – the referential and the emotive. His well articulated theory is found in his Principles of Literary Criticism. The present extract is from his Practical Criticism which speaks about the four kinds of meaning. Richards is remembered for his modern way of teaching and studying literature. New criticism and the whole of modern tensional poetics derive their strength and inspiration from the seminal writings of Richards.

The Four Kinds of Meaning." Critical Theory Since Plato. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971. 826-830. Here, Richards takes up where Arnold leaves off his discussion of the necessity of objectivity on the part of the reader by tackling the linguistic obstacles to be found in the way of such objectivity. In Practical Criticism, Richards recounts how as a lecturer at Cambridge he became fascinated with the fact that responses to the same work could be so widely divergent, even on the part of the intelligent and highly educated. This stimulated him to give out poems to his students without titles or names on it which he then asked them to analyze. He collected their equally anonymous comments (what he called ‘protocols’) and then compared them in an effort to understand why sometimes their interpretations could be accurate and sometimes wrong. After pondering for a long while on the causes of these misunderstandings, he came up with the view that there are four different components by which the meaning of any use of language is communicated. As listeners and readers, he writes, the “total meaning we are engaged with is, almost always, a blend, a combination of several contributory meanings of different types”.

Richards begins the extract by pointing to the difficulty of all reading. The problem of making out the meaning is the starting point in criticism. The answers to 'what is a meaning?', 'What are we doing when we Endeavour to make it out?' are the master keys to all the problems of criticism. The all important fact for the study of literature or any other mode of communication is that there are several kinds of meaning. Whether we speak, write, listen, read, the 'Total meaning' is a blend of several contributory meanings of different types. Language – and pre eminently language as it is used in poetry has several tasks to perform simultaneously. Four kinds of functions or meanings as enlisted by I.A. Richards are the following: (1) Sense, (2) Feeling, (3) Tone and (4) Intention.

1.4.1 Sense

'We speak to say something and when we listen we expect something to be said. We use words to direct our hearers' attention upon some state of affairs, to present to them some items for consideration and to excite in them some thoughts about these items'. In short, what we speak to convey to our listeners for their consideration can be called 'sense'. This is the most important thing in all scientific utterances where verification is possible.

1.4.2 Feeling

The attitude towards what we convey is known as 'feeling'. In other words, we have bias or accentuation of interest towards what we say. We use language to express these feelings. Similarly, we have these feelings even when we receive. This happens even if the speaker is conscious of it or not. In exceptional cases, say in mathematics, no feeling enters. The speaker's attitude to the subject is known as 'feeling'.

1.4.3 Tone

The speaker has an attitude to his listener. 'He chooses or arranges his words differently as his audience varies, in automatic or deliberate recognition of his relation to them. The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of this relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing. Thus 'tone' refers to the attitude to the listener.

1.4.4 Intention

Finally apart from what he says (sense), his attitude to what he is talking about (feeling), and his attitude to his listener (tone), there is the speaker's intention, his aim (conscious or unconscious) - the effect he is endeavoring to promote.

The speaker's purpose modifies his speech. Frequently, the speaker's intention operates through and satisfies itself in a combination of other functions. 'It may govern the stress laid upon points in an argument. It controls the 'plot' in the larger sense of the word. It has special importance in dramatic and semi dramatic literature. Thus the influence of his intention upon the language he uses is additional to the other three influences.

If we survey the uses of language as a whole, predominance of one function over the other may be found. A man writing a scientific treatise will put the 'sense' of what he has to say first. For a writer popularizing some of the results and hypotheses of science, the principles governing his language are not so simple; his intention will inevitably interfere

with the other functions. In conversation, we get the clearest examples of the shifts of function, i.e. one function being taken over by another.

Towards the end of the essay, I.A. Richards says that it is much harder to obtain statements about poetry than expressions of feelings towards it and towards the author. Very many apparent statements turn out to be the indirect expressions of Feeling, Tone and Intention.

The intention may govern the "stress laid upon points in an argument for example, shape the arrangement" it "controls the plot and is at work whenever the author is 'hiding his hand'. Different uses of language emphasize some of these various components more than others according to their function, as a result of which "at times, now one now another of the functions become predominant". Scientific treatises, for example, would emphasize sense but downplay feeling. By contrast, these four constituent elements of meaning would be arranged differently in work designed to popularize scientific research rather be addressed solely to an academic elite. In political speeches, intentionality or purpose would normally predominate, etc. Richards is of the view that listeners and readers misunderstand the meaning of a particular statement when they emphasize that function or kind of meaning which is not meant to be predominant in that type of statement. This is especially true of poetry. He argues that the "statements" which appear in poetry are there "for the sake of their effects upon feelings, not for their own sake". Many, he argues, "if not most, of the statements in poetry are there as a means to the manipulation and expression of feelings and attitudes, not as contributions to anybody of doctrine of any type whatever". All in all, what occurs is a "subjugation of statement to emotive purposes". (Elsewhere, in another famous book of his called Science and Poetry [1926], he for this reason calls the claims made by poetry pseudo-statements.) Therefore, to "challenge their truth or to question whether they deserve serious attention as statements claiming truth, is to mistake their function". Hence, the confusion which surrounds what exactly Keats meant when he wrote mysteriously that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' or when another poet describes his soul as a 'ship in full sail.' In short, we must not look primarily for truth-claims in poetry but for what texts do to the reader, their impact on our emotions. (He deals with the effect of literature on the reader in greater detail in another famous book of his: Principles of Literary Criticism [1924]). Richards's student William Empson carried all this one step further when he wrote his own equally famous Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930) in which he explores the various ambiguities found in language, which contribute to misunderstandings. "Communication and the Artist", "Doctrine in Poetry"

1.5 I. A. RICHARDS ON THE "CHIEF DIFFICULTIES" OF READING

I.A. Richards was among the first to make a systematic study of how his students actually read poetry under the guidance of their own strategies and resources. He describes his methods in his famous book, Practical Criticism (1929), from which the following passages are taken. Richards simply gave his students many poems but with no adjunct materials, not even the titles or authors indicated, and asked them write commentaries about their processes of reading the poems. Though his experiments were focused on reading poetry, we can generalize to reading other sorts of literature as well.

After examining the responses of many of his very well prepared students, I. A. Richards decided there are several typical ways that their readings went astray. While his observations have an air of negative commentary which derives, no doubt, from a philosophy

that believes, since art is "communication," one should find the core meaning in it, and that anything other than this meaning is a "misreading," we can still learn much from his list of "chief difficulties" these readers encountered:

A. First must come the difficulty of making out the plain sense of poetry. The most disturbing and impressive fact brought out by this experiment is that a large proportion of average-to-good (and in some cases, certainly, devoted) readers of poetry frequently and repeatedly fail to understand it, both as a statement and as an expression. They fail to make out its prose sense, it's plain, overt meaning, as a set of ordinary intelligible, English sentences, taken quite apart from any further poetic significance. And equally, they misapprehend its feeling, its tone, and its intention. They would travesty it in a paraphrase. [Moreover] it is not confined to one class of readers; not only those whom we would suspect fall victims. Nor is it only the most abstruse poetry which so betrays us. In fact to set down, for once, the brutal truth, no immunity is possessed on any occasion, not by the most reputable scholar, from this or any of these critical dangers.

B. Parallel to, and not unconnected with, these difficulties of interpreting the meaning are the difficulties of sensuous apprehension. Words in sequence have a form to the mind's ear and the mind's tongue and larynx, even when silently read. They have a movement and may have a rhythm. The gulf is wide between a reader who naturally and immediately perceives this form and movement and another reader, who either ignores it or has to build it up laboriously with finger-counting, table tapping and the rest; this difference has most far-reaching effects.

C. Next may come those difficulties that are connected with the place of imagery, principally visual imagery, in poetic reading. They arise in part from the incurable fact that we differ immensely in our capacity to visualise, and to produce imagery of the other senses. Also, the importance of our imagery as a whole, as well as of some pet particular type of image, in our mental lives varies surprisingly. Some minds can do nothing and get nowhere without images; others seem to be able to do everything and get anywhere, reach any and every state of thought and feeling without making use of them. Poets on the whole (though by no men as all poets always) may be suspected of exceptional imaging capacity, and some readers are constitutionally prone to stress the place of imagery in reading, to pay great attention to it, and even to judge the value of the poetry by the images it excites in them. But images are erratic things; lively images aroused in one mind need have no similarity to the equally lively images stirred by the same line of poetry in another, and neither set need have anything to do with any images which may have existed in the poet's mind. Here is a troublesome source of critical deviations.

D. Thirdly, and more obviously, we have to note the powerful very persuasive influence of mnemonic irrelevancies. These are the misleading effects of the reader's being reminded of some personal scene or adventure, erratic associations, the interference of emotional reverberations from a past which may have nothing to do with the poem. Relevance is not an easy notion to define or to apply, though some instances of irrelevant intrusions are among the simplest of all accidents to diagnose.

E. More puzzling and more interesting are the critical traps that surround what may be called stock responses. These have their opportunity whenever a poem seems to, or does, involve views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind, so that what happens appears to be more of the reader's doing than the poet's. The button is pressed, and then the author's work is done, for immediately the record starts playing in quasi- (or total) independence of

the poem which is supposed to be its origin or instrument. Whenever this lamentable redistribution of the poet's and the reader's share in the labour of poetry occurs, or is in danger of occurring, we require to be especially on our guard. Every kind of injustice may be committed as well by those who just escape as by those who are caught.

F. Sentimentality is a peril that needs less comment here. It is a question of the due measure of response. This over-facility in certain emotional directions is the Scylla whose Charybdis.

G. Inhibition. This, as much as Sentimentality, is a positive phenomenon, though less studied until recent years and somewhat masked under the title of Hardness of Heart. But neither can well be considered in isolation.

H. Doctrinal adhesions presents another troublesome problem. Very much poetry religious poetry may be instanced seems to contain or imply views and beliefs, true or false, about the world. If this be so, what bearing has the truth-value of the views upon the worth of the poetry? Even if it be not so, if the beliefs are not really contained or implied, but only seem so to a non-poetical reading, what should be the bearing of the reader's conviction, if any, upon his estimate of the poetry? Has poetry anything to say; if no, why not, and if so, how? Difficulties at this point are a fertile source of confusion and erratic judgment.

I. Passing now to a different order of difficulties, the effects of technical presuppositions have to be noted. When something has once been done in a certain fashion we tend to expect similar things to be done in the future in the same fashion, and are disappointed or do not recognise them if they are done differently. Conversely, a technique which has shown its ineptitude for one purpose tends to become discredited for all. Both are cases of mistaking means for ends. Whenever we attempt to judge poetry from outside by technical details we are putting means before ends, and—such is our ignorance of cause and effect in poetry we shall be lucky if we do not make even worse blunders. We have to avoid judging pianists by their hair.

J. Finally, general critical preconceptions (prior demands made upon poetry as a result of theories conscious or unconscious about its nature and value), intervene endlessly, as the history of criticism shows only too well, between the reader and the poem. Like an unlucky dietetic formula they may cut him off from what his is starving for, even when it is at his very lips.

Richards is refreshing when, in the first observations, he says "no immunity" is possessed by the "reputable scholar" for we assume he is including himself in the group and thus is admitting he is also vulnerable to these problems. Much later in the book he makes this clear:

The wild interpretations of others must not be regarded as the antics of incompetents, but as dangers that we ourselves only narrowly escape, if, indeed, we do. We must see in the misreading of others the actualisation of possibilities threatened in the early stages of our own readings. The only proper attitude is to look upon a successful interpretation, a correct understanding, as a triumph against odds. We must cease to regard a misunderstanding as a mere unlucky accident. We must treat it as the normal and probable event.

How serious he was about including himself, however, could be debated! For further explorations of Richards and his approach, visit The Virtual Classroom at Cambridge University, which begins with an excellent explanation of how I. A. Richard's "practical

criticism" guides their approach. Try performing some of the readings they suggest!! Alan Purves not only demonstrates the importance of I. A. Richards to Rosenblatt's seminal work on Reader Response theory but also shows how she "reverses" his assumptions:

More important than her concern with the substance of the text is the way in which she turns Richards' ideas around. What is in the reader's head is not erroneous, but a necessary part of reading. It becomes a given of her definition of the reader.

Rosenblatt's reversal of Richards is, to my mind, one of the main contributions of her early work. The very act of interpretation is the relating of the text to a set of known structures in the reader's head. To be sure, there can be misinterpretations and misapplications of knowledge. But the fact of erroneous interpretations does not negate the basic principle that interpretation is driven both by the reader and by the text. The idea of the active use of prior knowledge in reading literature, a main theme of Literature as Exploration, is the point of the reader-response critics whom Rosenblatt anticipated by some thirty years. (Purvis)

1.6 I. A. RICHARDS PRACTICAL CRITICISM (1929)

(Richard L. W. Clarke Lits2306 Notes 11d 1)

The influence of Arnold on Richards and, in turn, Richards on the study of literature in the first half of the twentieth century at least is incalculable. Richards is the founding figure of what is today called ‘reader-response criticism’ in that for him the meaning of a poem is entirely tied up with the reader’s experience of and response to it. Like Arnold and others before him, he accepts that literature has an impact on the reader. What literature does to readers is very important. However, like Arnold, he is also concerned with what the reader does to a work, to be precise, the ways in which readers interpret works and as a result of which misunderstandings occur. Richards is of the view that a literary work has a single meaning (derived from what the speaker / writer put there) but that there are obstacles which stand between the reader and his / her grasp of this meaning. Today, by contrast to the views of Arnold and Richards, the view predominates among reader response theorists that meaning is not simply found in a work but is imposed upon it by the reader in the light of his personal inclinations and predispositions. Reading, in short, is not thought today to be an objective and passive process but an entirely subjective and creative affair.

1.7 I. A. RICHARD’S SELECT CRITICISM

Richards influence depends mainly on Practical Criticism (1929). He examines the factors responsible for misreading the poem. He exposes the reader’s dependency on factors like the name of the author and the history of the poem. Documenting the main difficulty in sensitizing criticism, Richards demonstrates the obstacles that cripple the reader’s response.

According to him they are: difficulty in making plain sense of poetry, the difficulty of sensuous apprehension of poetry, and the difficulty presented by imagery, principally by the visual imagery, mnemonic irrelevances, stock responses based on privately established judgments, sentimentality, inhibition, doctrinal adhesions, technical presuppositions and general critical perceptions. Richards believes in the validity of specific interpretations and their correctness. He is not enamored by the ideology of poetry. He interprets the poem placing it in the long western tradition of Plato and accepts the unity of mankind. He rejects aesthetics and reduces the work to mental state. Richards’s defense of poetry as emotive language that organizes our impulses is naïve today. One gets the feeling that the quality of

the poetic object is neglected by Richards. Eliot and Richards are associated as the pioneers of the movement of New Criticism. They are influential critics of 20th century. Richards is theoretical. He has provided foundations for the verbal analysis of poetry. His Principles and Practical Criticism emphasizes on experimentalism and dismisses early theories. He encourages unhistorical readings of the poems. Helen Gardiner raised serious objection to Richards experimentation. However, the method of interpretation introduced by Richards has become the dominant academic criticism across the world. As anti historical criticism it became New Criticism. Now it is almost forgotten Richards is one of the primary founding fathers of New criticism.

According to Richards "Originally language may have been almost pure emotion that is to say

1. A means of expression feelings about situation.
2. A means of expressing impersonal attitudes
3. A means of bringing about concerted action.

1.7.1 The context

Words also acquire a rich associative value through their use by different poets in different contexts. The context in which a word has been used is all important. "Words have different meanings in different contexts. Words are symbols or signs and they deliver their full meaning only in a particular context. They work in association and within a particular context. He writes : "A context is a set of entities (things or events) related in a certain way; these entities have each a character…;

Meaning is dependent on context, but the context may not always be apparent and easily perceptible. Literary compositions are characterized by rich complexity in which certain links are suppressed for concentration or effective and forceful expression. Frequent mention is therefore made of the 'missing context' and 'ambiguity.' In ordinary blemishes in writing, but in poetry or even in artistic prose they are a source of embellishment and a means of effective communication of meaning. The literary critic is expected to understand and expand the context so that the poem may become intelligible and its full value may be grasped.

1.7.2 Relation between 'Sense' and 'Feeling'

Words have different meanings in different contexts. Sense and feeling have a mutual dependence. "The sound of a word has much to do with the feeling it evokes."

1. First, it may arise from the meaning and be governed by it. The feeling is the result of grasping the meaning.

2. Secondly, the meaning arises from the feeling evoked. Thus the word 'gorgeous first generates a feeling from its sound.

3. Thirdly, sense and feeling may be related because of the context. A complete poem can influence a single word or phrase contained in it either through the feelings or through the sense. The feelings already occupying the mind limit the possibilities of the new words. This is because words are ambiguous in themselves and they acquire new meanings when they are charged with feelings. Hence

Richards argues that we need one careful reading to find the meaning and another to grasp the feeling.

1.7.3 Rhythm and Metre

The meaning of words is also determined by rhythm and metre. Rhythm results from the repetition of particular sounds and the expectancy this repetition arouses in the mind. Metre is a specialised form of rhythm. It is rhythm made more regular and cast into set and well-formed pattern. Both rhythm and metre are organic and integral parts of a poem, for they both determine the meaning of the words used by the poets. Richards' remarks in this connection are interesting and deserve to be quoted in their entirety "Rhythm, metre and meaning cannot be separated; they form together a single system. They are not separate entities but organically related. Therefore, a paraphrase or an over literal reading can never convey the total meaning of a poem."

1.7.4 METAPHORS

Successive readings are necessary to understand the poetic meaning. Poetic truth is different from scientific truth. It is a matter of emotional belief rather than intellectual belief. It is not a matter of versification, but of attitude and emotional reaction.

For the purpose of communication, the use of metaphoric language is all important.

"A metaphor is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use". Metaphors may be of two kinds :

(I) sense-metaphors, and
(2) emotive-metaphors.

In a sense-metaphor the shift is due to a similarity or analogy between the original object and the new one. In an emotive metaphor the shift is due to a similarity between the feelings the new situation and the normal situation arouse. The same word in different contexts may be a sense-metaphor or an emotive one.

1.7.5 CONCLUSION

I. A. Richards stresses on close textual and verbal study of a poem. His study of words as means of communication and his stress on their four-fold meaning and on the way in which meaning is determined by rhythm and meter are original and striking gone a long way towards shaping the course of literary criticism in the 20th century. His critical methods, verbal and structural analysis, interpretation and evaluation a work of arts starred the vogue of experimentation and analysis in literary criticism.

1.8 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Examine the elements of the Structure of language with reference to I. A. Richards 'Four Kinds of Meaning'?

- Examine Richards 'Practical Criticism' as a foundation for 'New Criticism'?

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Jerome Schiller. I.A. Richards Theory of Literature, New Heaven: Yale University, 1969.
- I. A.. Richards . The Philosophy of Rhetoric. New York, Oxford University Press. 1965.
- John, constable. I.A. Richards and his Critics: Selected Reviews and Critical articles, London, Routledge. 2001.

1.10 GLOSSARY

1 Adhesions : sticking together, bond
2 Adjunct : attachment, addition
3 Aesthetic : artistic
4 Allusion : Something that is said or written
5 Assertion : statement, declaration
6 Cognate : equivalent, similar
7 Connotation: implication, suggestion
8 conviction : assurance, confidence
9 Denotation : import sense
10 Divergent : different
11 Endeavour : An attempt to do something especially new or difficult
12 Enamored : in love with, captivated, charmed
13 Hermeneutic: The area of study that analyses and explains written text
14 Hypothesis : assumption suggestion
15 Infectiousness: disease can be passed easily from one to another person
16 Notion : opinion, concept, idea
17 Reception : response, reaction
18 Semiotic : The study of sign and symbols
19 Unprecedented : extraordinary unparalleled
20 Vulnerable : susceptible, defenseless

I.A. Richard's *Pseudo-Statement*

OBJECTIVE

It presents a definition of the term Pseudo-Statement. Nowhere in Science and Poetry (1926) does I.A. Richards provide an exact formal definition of Pseudo-Statement In spite of this, however, a relatively coherent formulation may be extracted from the following comment, which strikingly illustrates the way Richards conceives the term: "A Pseudo-Statement is a form of words which is justified entirely by its effect in releasing or organizing our impulses and attitudes; a statement, on the other hand, is justified by its truth, i.e. its correspondence, in a highly technical sense, with the fact to which it points."

STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From Plato to modern age, the debate of poetic language continues. Various critics and various poets express different attitudes. I.A. Richards has expressed elaborate views on poetry in his essay 'science and poetry'. In the end of this essay he discusses about scientific truth and poetic truth. He says that there is difference between scientific truth and poetic truth. A scientist makes 'true statements' while a poet makes 'Pseudo-statement.

I.A. Richard emphasizes 'the fundamental difference and opposition between 'pseudo statement' as they occur in poetry as 'statement' as they occur in science. The aim of a scientist is to point out to some fact. His statements are true in a technical sense. The aim of the poet is to evoke an emotion or attitude of mind.

A term used by I. A. Richards to distinguish 'scientific' from 'poetic' truth. By 'statement' Richards means a scientific expression of fact which is verifiable as such. A pseudo-statement, on the other hand, is found in poetry and is not necessarily verifiable or even logical. Such statements have the function of ordering and organizing the receptor's attitudes and feelings. The implications of this concept and distinction are that poetry tells the truth and its own truth in its own way by feigning. In other words, verisimilitude and a kind of truth can be attained and conveyed by emotive as well as referential language. The idea that poetry can convey a particular kind of knowledge not conveyable by any other means is of great antiquity.

1.2 I.A. RICHARD'S VIEW OF PSEUDO-STATEMENT

The term "pseudo- statement" has generally been taken to mean something derogatory about poetry. As Hotoph suggests, "Richards would have been better advised to call them pseudo- assertions or indeed to have dropped the word "Pseudo" altogether since by reason of its frequently pejorative connotation, this had led many who were unable to use Richards' contextual guidance, to think he was saying something derogatory about statement in poetry (Hotoph). Stanley Hyman, for instance, described the term "Pseudo-statement" as implicitly pejorative (The Armed Vision). Wimsalt and Beardsley claimed that for Richards. Pseudo-statement is a patronizing term by which he indicated the attractive nullity of poems(The Affective fallacy in Critiques and essays in criticism.1920-48, New Yark 1948).

Kenneth burke modified Richard's concept of poetry as Pseudo-statement, Richards' notion is that scientific statements refer to external objects, where as Pseudo-statement are evocative of attitudes. This idea is undoubtedly the source of brook's earlier distinction between informative and evocative literature. In the later period Burks expound the notion of Pseudo-statement with delightful abandon, much further than Richard intended. This has the effect of parodying Richards' principles by calling it "a mass of Pseudo-statement.

Richard stresses the essential distinction between the poetic and the mathematical approach evidently limits the frame work of possible consequences into which the Pseudo-statement is taken. For the scientific approach this frame work is unlimited. A scientific statement is falsified if any of the consequences of the statement conflict with acknowledged fact. It has been suggested by certain schools of logicians that a Pseudo-statement should be poetically approached in terms of a supposed universe of discourse, a world of make believe, of imagination, of recognized fictions common to the poet and his readers. A Pseudo-statement which fits into this system of assumptions would be regarded as "poetically false." "the acceptance which a Pseudo-statement receives is entirely governed by its effects upon our feelings and attitudes. Logic only comes in, if at all, in subordination, as a servant to our emotional response." In fact , poetic truth is so opposed to scientific truth that it is not desirable to use so similar a word to imply the two versions of truth- Richard deplores the malpractice which is unavoidable in the present circumstances. Thus, Richards indicates the fundamental disparity and opposition between "Pseudo-statements" as they occur in poetry and statements as they occur in science. Richard does not use the term 'Pseudo-statement' in a patronizing or pejorative sense. "A Pseudo-statement is not necessarily false in any sense. It is merely a form of words whose scientific truth or false is irrelevant to the purpose in hand".

While Richards admits that true statements are, on the whole. More serviceable to us than false ones, we can never contrive to order our emotions and attitudes by true statements alone. With the collapse of the Magical view of the word, civilization is exposed to grave new dangers. "countless Pseudo-statements- about God, about the soul, its rank and destiny- Pseudo-statements which are pivotal point in the organization of the mind, vital to its wellbeing, have suddenly become, for sincere, honest and informed minds, impossible to believe as for centuries they have been believed."

Richard has a passionate concern for the preservation of poetry and all our finer, more spiritual responses in an age dominated by the cult of scientific materialism. He finds reason to think that poetry has often arisen through fusion (or confusion) between the two forms of belief, the boundary between what is intellectually certified and what is not being much less sharply defined in former centuries and defined in another manner.

Finely, developed individuals cannot live by warmth, food, fight, drink and sex alone,. Man cannot live by bread alone, Sincere; honest informed and sensitive minds are bound to take note of the tremendous change in the world-picture. Even a considerable poet loke D.H. Lawrence may attempt to find relief by a reversion to primitive mentality. “Richards describes those who are least affected by the change, as being emotionally least removed from the animals.”

1.3 PSEUDO-STATEMENT AND THE MODERN TRADITION

Richards begins this essay from *Science and Poetry* (1926) with a direct, though challenging, and assertion: "The business of the poet is to give order and coherence, and so freedom, to a body of experience." The medium, as Valéry also noted, is words, and "words work in the poem in two main fashions. As sensory stimuli and (in the widest sense) symbols." Poems also seem to say things, to make statements, but what sort of statements, and how do we judge the validity of them? Richards proposes the concept of pseudo-statements. This is meant to help distinguish poetic statements from scientific ones, "where truth is ultimately a matter of verification as this is understood in the laboratory."

The acceptance which a pseudo-statement receives is entirely governed by its effects upon our feelings and attitudes. Logic only comes in, if at all, in subordination, as a servant to our emotional response. A pseudo-statement is "true" if it suits and serves some attitude or links together attitudes which on other grounds are desirable. This kind of "truth" is so opposed to scientific "truth" that it is a pity to use so similar a word, but at the present it is difficult to avoid the malpractice. (In a footnote, Richards helpfully comments, "A pseudo-statement, as I use the term, is not necessarily false in any sense. It is merely a form of words whose scientific truth or falsity is irrelevant to the purpose at hand.")

Whereas statements are judged by whether they are true or false, pseudo-statements are judged only by their "effect in releasing or organizing or impulses or attitudes." And it's clear that we don't, and perhaps we can't, "order our emotions and attitudes by true statements only." Pseudo-statements are essential to our lives, and the more so as traditional concepts, particularly religious ones, have come into question. Some of the "pseudo-statements which are pivotal points in the organization of the mind, vital to its well-being, have suddenly become impossible to believe as for centuries they have been believed."

One of the things we no longer believe in is a benevolent natural order. Nature has been neutralized. As a result, scientists "pay no *serious* attention to poetry. For most men the recognition of the neutrality of nature brings about a divorce from poetry. They are so used to having their responses propped up by beliefs, however vague, that when those shadowy supports are removed they are no longer able to respond. And the only impulses which seem strong enough to continue unflagging are commonly so crude that, to more finely developed individuals, they hardly seem worth having. Such people cannot live by warmth, food, fighting, drink, and sex alone.

We still, however, "hunger after a basis in belief." And thus we need to recognize the significance of unscientific assertions in bringing about a sense of wholeness to the personality. "In brief, the imaginative life is its own justification; and this fact must be faced. When it is faced, it is apparent that all the attitudes to other human beings and to the world in all its aspects, which have been serviceable to humanity, remain as they were, as valuable as ever.

1.4 A DETAILED NOTE ON LANGUAGE OF POETRY (Pseudo-Statement, Irony, Paradox, Ambiguity)

I.A. Richard emphasizes 'the fundamental difference and opposition between 'pseudo statement' as they occur in poetry as 'statement' as they occur in science. The aim of a scientist is to point out to some fact. His statements are true in a technical sense. The aim of the poet is to evoke an emotion or attitude of mind.

"A pseudo statement is true if it suits and serves some attitude or links together attitudes which on other grounds are desirable". A pseudo statement is a form of words which is justified entirely by its effect in releasing or organizing our impulses and attitude a statement on the other hand is justified by its truth, i.e. its correspondence in a highly technical sense with the fact to which it points.

1.4.1 Irony

Some modern critics emphasize the special kind of paradox and double in a poem. For them ironical over tones and paradoxical implications are fundamental to adequate poetic utterance. Robert Penn Warren Said 'A poem to be good, must earn itself.' According to him thee poem must not state its author's emotional convictions easily. It must come to terms with all alternatives that threaten those convictions by including them in the poetic statement.

> "Poetry does not in here in any particular element but depends upon the set of relationships the structure, which we call poem."

Whatever is available in human experience can be found in poetry. This does not mean than anything can be used in any poem. It does mean that any sort of material might appear functionally in a poem. The greatness of a poet depends upon the experience which he can master poetically.

We cannot make generalizations about the nature of the poetic structure. There is the tension between the rhythm of the poem and the rhythm of speech, between the formality of the rhythm and the informality of language, between the particular and the general, between ideas, between the elements involved in irony. This list is suggestive. The poet wins by utilizing the materials of the poem.

The poets have tried to prove what this material mean. The poet proves his vision by irony and structure. The poet indicates that his vision has been earned. This vision can survive reference to the complexities and contradictions of experience. And irony is one such device of reference.

A good and well organized poem sets up a complex of meaning in which the poet wins by the use of irony and paradox. It can be understood by very simple example. If the poet can laugh at himself. At the same time as he is being seriously passionate in love poem, he supposes the possible laugher of others and insures himself against parody. Thus a good poet disarm his opponents by anticipating their parody and mockery. His weapon for this are irony and paradox.

1.4.2 Poetry and Paradox

In lyrical poetry, ironic tensions can be found in the treatment of rhythm and imagery. But is can be found in all imaginative literature. The device of tension may be in the structure of a novel or play as well as in a poem. The device of tension may be in the recurrent images or adjective with which a character is described. It is more important in a poem as it constitute the differentiating qualities of a good poem. The arguments regarding this is put forward by Cleanth Brooks in his book 'The Well Wrought Urn'.

He says that language of poetry is not the language of paradox. Paradox is the language of sophistry hard, bright, and witty. It is not the language of soul. We may permit it in epigram and in satire. Paradox is intellectual rather than emotional. Yet in a sense paradox is inevitable in poetry. The language of scientist may be without paradox but the truth of a poet can be approached only in terms of paradox. Wordsworth likes simplicity in his poetry and yet his poems used paradox. Wordsworth is able to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday life and thus shows how even the prosaic can be poetic.

"It is s beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quite as a Nun
Breathless with adoration.

Coleridge also has the romantic preoccupation with wonder, putting the familiar world in a new light. Neo classical poets use paradox for much the same reason. See pope's from 'The Essay on Man'

"In doubt his mind or Body to prefer;
Born but to die and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much.
"That perpetual slight alteration of language,
words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations.

According to him, this occurs in poetry. It is perpetual. It cannot be kept out of the poetry. The poet works by analogy. Metaphors are necessary to express to express subtler emotions. Even the most direct and simple poet is forced into paradoxes. This is because of the nature of his instrument. There is difference between poetic and scientific discourse.

Science says things explicitly directly simply. Poetry expresses itself paradoxically ironically, indirectly, obliquely in language. It creates its own meaning as it moves. Poetry thus is a special way of using language. It presents attitudes which could not be developed by any other form of discourse.

1.4.3 Ambiguity

When there is doubt meaning it is known as ambiguity. In other words, ambiguity takes place when a word or statement has more than one meaning. Often in a situation or in a statement or in a word; meaning is not clear. There can be more than one meaning this is ambiguity.
'Ambiguity' is related with modern analytical criticism. Modern critic is concerned with the use of language irony and paradox etc. There are the special qualities of poetic discourse. A

modern analytic critic describes the work with minute accuracy. His concern is to see that the reader reads the work properly.

One of the pioneers of analytic criticism is William Empson. He developed Richard's concern with meaning into a descriptive technique. His work 'Seven Types of Ambiguity explores different levels of meaning. He classifies ambiguities as following.

In first type ambiguity the sorts of meaning is to be considered; the problems of pure sound and of Atmosphere. First type ambiguity arises when a detail is effective in several ways at once.

> e.g. by comparisons with several points of likeness, antitheses with several point of difference, Comparative adjectives, subdired metaphors and extra meaning suggested by rhythm.

In second the type ambiguity two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved into one.

> E.g. double grammar in Shakespeare sonnets, ambiguities in Chaucer the 18th century works; T.S. Eliot etc. are example of such.

The condition for third type ambiguity is that two apparently unconnected meaning are given simultaneously. There are puns from Milton, Marvell, Johnson, Pope, Herbert, Nash etc.

In the fourth type, the alternative meaning combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author.

E.g. You to your beauteous blessing add a curse
Being fond on praise, which makes your praise worse. (Shakespeare)

The fifth type is a fortunate confusion, as when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing or not holding it all in mind at once. Later metaphysical poets were approaching 19th century technique by this route. For example there is a simile which applies to nothing exactly, but lies half way between two things when the author is moving from one to the other.

Shakespeare does it frequently.

E.g. (Measure for measure)
"Our Nature do purse
Like Rats that ravyn down their proper Bane.
A thirsty evil and when we drink we die.

In the sixth type what is said is contradictory or irrelevant and the reader is forced to invent interpretations. According to the Authorized version, Moses told the Lord that

E.g. Thou hast not delivered thy people at all but
Delivering thou hast not delivered.

The seventh type is that full of contradictions marking a division in the author's mind. It is most ambiguous.
"Come what come May

1.5 CONCLUSION

T.S. Eliot said that 'the poet has not a personality to express, but a particular medium. The poet's medium is language. All the critics agree that poets use language differently from those who write simply to convey factual information. Different poets expressed different views about the uses of language. For Sidney, the content and language were equally important. For Wordsworth the state of the poet's mind was more important than his way of handling words. Pope saw the poet as a man primarily haunted by words. But the poetry is not merely a game of words. W.H. Auden describes two theories. Poetry is a magical means for inducing desirable emotions and repelling undesirable emotions. Poetry is a game of knowledge a bringing to consciousness by naming them, of emotions and their hidden relationships.

1.6 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1) Explain Pseudo- Statement and the Modern Tradition?
2) Discuss a Detailed note on Laguage of poetry?
3) Discuss I.A. Richards View of Pseudo- statement?

1.7 GLOSSARY

1 Adequate : ample sufficient
2 Ambiguity : vagueness vagueness
3 Antiquity : the distant past, ancient times
4 Conviction : assurance confidence
5 Epigram : saying, witticism
6 Feign : make believe, pretend
7 Impulse : urge, desire
8 paradox : contradiction, inconsistency
9 Patronizing : demeaning condescending
10 Verifiable : confirmable, supportable, and demonstrable
11 Verisimilitude: The quality of seeming to be true, Real
12 expound : talk about, explain

IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE

-- CLEANTH BROOKS

OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson you will be able to understand,

- Cleanth Brooks as a gigantic personality in English literature to the Reader.

- Brooks finds specific, concrete particulars a required form for poetry. In *Irony as a Principle of Structure*, Brooks claims irony is produced by the pressures of context.

- The relationship between the components of a poem (the words) and the production of meaning. Irony is a tension between multiple meanings of a word,meanings which are pressured by the presence of surrounding words and the situation in which they are said.

STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Cleanth Brooks (October 16, 1906 - May 10, 1994) was an influential American literary critic and professor. He is best known for his contributions to New Criticism in the mid-twentieth century and for revolutionizing the teaching of poetry in American higher education. His best-known works, *The Well Wrought Urn*: Studies in the Structure of Poetry (1947) and Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939), argue for the centrality of ambiguity and paradox as a way of understanding poetry. With his writing, Brooks helped to formulate formalist criticism, emphasizing “the interior life of a poem” (Leitch 2001) and codifying the principles of close reading.

Brooks was also the preeminent critic on Southern literature, writing classic texts on William Faulkner, and co-editor of the influential journal, The Southern Review (Leitch 2001).

1.2. THE EARLY YEARS

On October 16, 1906 in Murray, Kentucky, Brooks was born to a Methodist minister, the Reverend Cleanth Brooks Sr., and Bessie Lee Witherspoon Brooks (Leitch 2001). He was one of 3 children, Cleanth and William, natural born sons, and Murray Brooks, actually born Hewitt Witherspoon, whom Bessie Lee Witherspoon kidnapped from her brother Forrest Bedford Witherspoon as a young baby after the natural mother had died. She later was able to change his name to Murray Brooks and continued to raise him as her own causing quite a rift in her own family and alienating herself from Cleanth and William. Cleanth mentioned on more than one occasion that she so doted on Murray (Hewitt) that she no longer had a relationship with Cleanth and William. Attending McTyeire School, a private academy, he received a classical education and went on to study at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he received his B.A. in 1928 (Leitch 2001). In 1928, Brooks received his Master of Arts from Tulane University and went on to study at Exeter College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar. He received his B.A. (with honors) in 1931 and his Bachelor of Literature the following year. Brooks then returned to the United States and from 1932 to 1947 was a professor of English at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge (Singh 1991). In 1934, he married Edith Amy Blanchord. He was also very kind and loving to Murray's daughter Diana Rae Brooks.

1.2.1 The Vanderbilt years

During his studies at Vanderbilt, he met literary critics and future collaborators Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom, Andrew Lytle, and Donald Davidson (Singh 1991).

Studying with Ransom and Warren, Brooks became involved in two significant literary movements: the Southern Agrarians and the Fugitives (Singh 1991). Brooks admitted to reading the Southern Agrarian manifesto, I'll Take My Stand (1930) "over and over" (qtd. in Leitch 2001). While he never argued for the movement's conservative Southern traditions, he "learned a great deal" (qtd. in Leitch 2001) and found the Agrarian position valuable and "unobjectionable" (qtd. in Leitch 2001): "They asked that we consider what the good life is or ought to be" (qtd. in Leitch 2001).

The Fugitive Movement similarly influenced Brooks' approach to criticism. The Fugitives, a group of Southern poets consisting of such influential writers as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, and Robert Penn Warren, met Saturday evenings to read and discuss poetry written by members of the group (Singh 1991). The discussion was based on intensive readings and included considerations of a poem's form, structure, meter, rhyme scheme, and imagery (Singh 1991). This close reading formed the foundation on which the New Critical movement was based and helped shape Brooks' approach to criticism (Singh 1991).

1.3. ACADEMIC LIFE AND WORK

While attending the University of Oxford, Brooks continued his friendship with fellow Vanderbilt graduate and Rhodes Scholar, Robert Penn Warren (Leitch 2001). In 1934,

Warren joined the English department at Louisiana State, leading Brooks and Warren to collaborate on many works of criticism and pedagogy. In 1935, Brooks and Warren founded The Southern Review. Until 1942, they co-edited the journal, publishing works by many influential authors, including Eudora Welty, Kenneth Burke, and Ford Madox Ford. The journal was known for its criticism and creative writing, marking it as one of the leading journals of the time (Leitch 2001).

In addition, Brooks's and Warren's collaboration led to innovations in the teaching of poetry and literature. At Louisiana State, prompted by their students' inability to interpret poetry, the two put together a booklet that modeled close reading through examples (Leitch 2001). The booklet was a success and laid the foundation for a number of best-selling textbooks: An Approach to Literature (1936), Understanding Poetry (1938), Understanding Fiction (1943), Modern Rhetoric (1949), and, in collaboration with Robert Heilman, Understanding Drama (1945). Brooks' two most influential works also came out of the success of the booklet: Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939) and The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry (1947) (Leitch 2001).

From 1941 to 1975, Brooks held many academic positions and received a number of distinguished fellowships and honorary doctorates. In 1941, he worked as a visiting professor at the University of Texas, Austin. From 1947 to 1975, he was an English professor at Yale University, where he held the position of Gray Professor of Rhetoric and Gray Professor of Rhetoric Emeritus from 1960 until his retirement, except 1964 to 1966 (Singh 1991). His tenure at Yale was marked by ongoing research into Southern literature, which resulted in the publication of Brooks' studies of William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County (1963, 1978) (Leitch 2001). In 1948, he was a fellow of the Kenyon School of English. From 1951 to 1953, he was a fellow of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and was a visiting professor at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. During this time, he received the Guggenheim Fellowship and held it again in 1960. From 1963 to 1972, he was awarded honorary doctorates of literature from Upsala College, the University of Kentucky, the University of Exeter, Washington and Lee University, Saint Louis University, Tulane University, and Centenary College NJ (Singh 1991).

Brooks' other positions included working as a cultural attaché for the American embassy in London from 1964 to 1966. Further, he held memberships in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and the American Philosophical Society (Singh 1991).

1.4 BROOKS AND NEW CRITICISM

Brooks was the central figure of New Criticism, a movement that emphasized structural and textual analysis—close reading—over historical or biographical analysis.

Brooks advocates close reading because, as he states in The Well Wrought Urn, "by making the closest examination of what the poem says as a poem" (qtd. in Leitch 2001), a critic can effectively interpret and explicate the text. For him, the crux of New Criticism is that literary study be "concerned primarily with the work itself" (qtd. in Leitch 2001). In "The Formalist Critics," Brooks offers "some articles of faith" (qtd. in Leitch 2001) to which he subscribes. These articles exemplify the tenets of New Criticism:

That the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole. That in a successful work, format and content cannot be separated. That form is meaning. That literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic.

That the general and the universal are not seized upon by abstraction, but got at through the concrete and the particular. That literature is not a surrogate for religion. That, as Allen Tate says, "specific moral problems" are the subject matter of literature, but that the purpose of literature is not to point a moral. That the principles of criticism define the area relevant to literary criticism; they do not constitute a method for carrying out the criticism (qtd. in Leitch 2001).

New Criticism involves examining a poem's "technical elements, textual patterns, and incongruities" (Leitch 2001) with a kind of scientific rigor and precision. From I. A. Richards' The Principles of Literary Criticism and Practical Criticism, Brooks formulated guidelines for interpreting poetry (Leitch 2001). Brooks formulated these guidelines in reaction to ornamentalist theories of poetry, to the common practice of critics going outside the poem (to historical or biographical contexts), and his and Warren's frustration with trying to teach college students to analyze poetry and literature (Leitch 2001).

Brooks and Warren were teaching using textbooks "full of biographical facts and impressionistic criticism" (Singh 1991). The textbooks failed to show how poetic language differed from the language of an editorial or a work of non-fiction. From this frustration, Brooks and Warren published Understanding Poetry. In the book, the authors assert poetry should be taught as poetry, and the critic should resist reducing a poem to a simple paraphrase, explicating it through biographical or historical contexts, and interpreting it didactically (Singh 1991). For Brooks and Warren, paraphrase and biographical and historical background information is useful as a means of clarifying interpretation, but it should be used as means to an end (Singh 1991).

Brooks took this notion of paraphrase and developed it further in his classic The Well Wrought Urn. The book is a polemic against the tendency for critics to reduce a poem to a single narrative or didactic message. He describes summative, reductionist reading of poetry with a phrase still popular today: "The Heresy of Paraphrase" (Leitch 2001). In fact, he argued poetry serves no didactic purpose because producing some kind of statement would be counter to a poem's purpose. Brooks argues "through irony, paradox, ambiguity and other rhetorical and poetic devices of his or her art, the poet works constantly to resist any reduction of the poem to a paraphrasable core, favoring the presentation of conflicting facets of theme and patterns of resolved stresses" (Leitch 2001).

In addition to arguing against historical, biographical, and didactic readings of a poem, Brooks believed that a poem should not be criticized on the basis of its effect on the reader. In an essay called "The Formalist Critics," he says that "the formalist critic assumes an ideal reader: that is, instead of focusing on the varying spectrum of possible readings, he attempts to find a central point of reference from which he can focus upon the structure of the poem or novel" (qtd. in Rivkin, 24). While he admits that it is problematic to assume such a reference point, he sees it as the only viable option. Since the other options would be either to give any reading equal status with any other reading, or to establish a group of 'qualified' readers" and use those as a range of standard interpretations. In the first case, a correct or "standard" reading would become impossible; in the second case, an ideal reader has still

been assumed under the guise of multiple ideal readers (Rivkin 24). Thus, Brooks does not accept the idea of considering critics' emotional responses to works of literature as a legitimate approach to criticism. He says that "a detailed description of my emotional state on reading certain works has little to do with indicating to an interested reader what the work is and how the parts of it are related" (Rivkin 24). For Brooks, nearly everything a critic evaluates must come from within the text itself. This opinion is similar to that expressed by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley in their famous essay "The Affective Fallacy," in which they argue that a critic is "a teacher or explicator of meanings," not a reporter of "physiological experience" in the reader (qtd. in Adams, 1029, 1027).

1.5 REACTION TO NEW CRITICISM

Because New Criticism isolated the text and excluded historical and biographical contexts, critics argued as early as 1942 that Brooks' approach to criticism was flawed for being overly narrow and for "disabl[ing] any and all attempts to relate literary study to political, social, and cultural issues and debates" (1350). His reputation suffered in the seventies and eighties when critics highlighted the flaws of New Criticism. Brooks rebuffed the accusations that New Criticism has an "antihistorical thrust" (Leitch 2001) and a "neglect of context" (Leitch 2001). He insisted he was not excluding context because a poem possesses organic unity, and it is possible to derive a historical and biographical context from the language the poet uses (Singh 1991). He argues "A poem by Donne or Marvell does not depend for its success on outside knowledge that we bring to it; it is richly ambiguous yet harmoniously orchestrated, coherent in its own special aesthetic terms" (Leitch 2001).

Another flaw in New Criticism that critics exploited was its contradictory nature. Brooks writes, on the one hand, "the resistance which any good poem sets up against all attempts to paraphrase it" (qtd. in Leitch 2001)) is the result of the poet manipulating and warping language to create new meaning. On the other hand, he admonishes the unity and harmony in a poem's aesthetics. These seemingly contradictory forces in a poem create tension and paradoxical irony according to Brooks, but critics questioned whether irony leads to a poem's unity or undermines it (Leitch 2001). Poststructuralists in particular saw a poem's resistance and warped language as competing with its harmony and balance that Brooks celebrates (Leitch 2001).

R. S. Crane was particularly hostile to the views of Brooks and the other New Critics. In "The Critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks," Crane writes that under Brooks's view of a poem's unity being achieved through the irony and paradox of the opposing forces it contains, the world's most perfect example of such an ironic poem would be Albert Einstein's equation E=mc2, which equates matter and energy at a constant rate (Searle).

In his later years, Brooks criticized the poststructuralists for inviting subjectivity and relativism into their analysis, asserting "each critic played with the text's language unmindful of aesthetic relevance and formal design" (Leitch 2001). This approach to criticism, Brooks argued, "denied the authority of the work" (Leitch 2001).

1.6 INFLUENCE

Understanding Poetry was an unparalleled success and remains "a classic manual for the intellectual and imaginative skills required for the understanding of poetry" (Singh 1991). Further, critics praise Brooks and Warren for "introducing New Criticism with commendable

clarity" (Singh 1991) and for teaching students how to read and interpret poetry. Arthur Mizener commended Brooks and Warren for offering a new way of teaching poetry:

For us the real revolution in critical theory…was heralded by the publication, in 1938, of Understanding Poetry for many of us who were preparing ourselves to teach English is those years this book came as a kind of revelation. It made sense because it opened up for us a way of talking about an actual poem in an actual classroom, and because the technique of focusing upon a poem as language rather than as history or biography or morality, gave a whole new meaning to and justification for the teaching of poetry (qtd. in Singh 1991).

In an obituary for Brooks, John W. Stevenson of Converse College notes Brooks "redirect[ed] and revolutionize[d] the teaching of literature in American colleges and universities" (1994). Further, Stevenson admits Brooks was "the person who brought excitement and passion to the study of literature" (1994) and "whose work became the model for a whole profession" (1994).

Along with New Criticism, Brooks' studies of Faulkner, Southern literature, and T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land (appearing in Modern Poetry and the Tradition) remain classic texts. Mark Royden Winchell calls Brooks' text on Faulkner "the best book yet on the works of William Faulkner" (1996). Eliot himself commended Brooks in a letter for Brooks' critique of "The Waste Land" (Singh 1991). Further, Winchell praises Brooks for "help[ing] invent the modern literary quarterly" (1996) through the success of The Southern Review.

As testament to Brooks' influence, fellow critic and former teacher John Crowe Ransom calls Brooks "the most forceful and influential critic of poetry that we have" (qtd. in Singh 1991). Elsewhere, Ransom has even gone so far as to describe Brooks as a "spell binder" (qtd. in Singh 1991).

1.7 CRITICISM OF IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE

The structure of a piece of literature is similar to both a kite and a plant. These metaphors, given by Cleanth Brooks in his essay "Irony as a Principle of Structure," are just two examples proving the importance of organic units in a work. For example, in order for a kite to function properly, it must be composed of several parts including the tail. Whereas the tail of a kite seems to weigh the kite down, it paradoxically is a necessity that allows the kite to rise. A plant, too, is composed of several parts that allow the plant to grow as a whole. The leaves, roots, and stalk are all essential to the plant's growth. The same is true for a piece of fiction; every unit of the text is critical in finding the text's meaning, in assisting the text's growth, and in balancing the text's tensions. Brooks elucidates this organic unity of literature by focusing on the function of irony in its structure.

According to Brooks, the use of irony is an important element, just as the tail of the kite and the parts of a plant are. Irony is the "obvious warping of a statement by the context": it exists only because of the particular context in which a linguistic component resides.

This dramatic context or literary situation sets up a tone or a mood for the reader. The irony occurs as an image or other linguistic statement juxtaposes with this situation. As a result of this juxtaposition, instead of simply applying a standard meaning to this linguistic statement, the reader recognizes a variety of meanings to the statement. Contemplating the

complexity of meaning in an ironical statement leads to a heightened perception of how it is shaped by the context, as well as how it affects the whole work.

Brooks admits that the concept of irony may be overused by formalist readers. However, he believes that irony is an essential component of most texts. Instead of focusing on the meaning of a statement in isolation, it's important to compare it to the context in which it occurs. The isolated and individual meaning of a statement is not nearly as significant as its truth in context. The job of the critical reader, then, is to decide whether a statement "grows properly out of context," and how its truth is validated by the context. In other words, the reader must ask if a statement could mean anything other than the standard meaning. If so, then how does that particular meaning fit into the context? A statement becomes ironical when one has knowledge of a standard meaning but also recognizes and understands how that meaning becomes bent in the context, thereby creating a more complex expression of meaning. A statement may have one widely accepted truth when it stands alone, but once surrounded by other elements, it may express a modified and deeper truth.

For Brooks, the truths formed by irony are often the results of a tension in the text. He illustrates this textual dynamic using Wordsworth's "A Slumber did my Spirit Seal." In the first stanza, the narrator mourns the death of a woman by describing how she cannot "'feel / the touch of earthly years'". Even so, she seems to be caught up in the cycle of time as she is "'rolled round in earth's diurnal course'" in the second stanza. In addition, the speaker of the poem indicates that the woman has "'no motion,'" yet she is imagined "in violent motion" as she takes part in the earth's course. Tensions form in the poem as these statements seem to oppose each other. This opposition affects the meaning of the poem. Brooks admits that one may find it odd to describe Word worth’s poem as ironical since its diction and tone seem simple and straightforward. For some, even hinting at potential ironies may distort its meaning. Nonetheless, for Brooks the poem is indeed ironical as its language subtly expresses the complex feelings and perceptions of the speaker as he mourns his beloved.

Another poem that Brooks does find a great deal of irony in is Randall Jarrell's "Eighth Air Force." The images of war in this poem (the drunken sergeant, the murderers, the missions) are contrasted by domestic images (the puppy, the flowers, and the play) to create a more explicit ironic focus than that in the Wordsworth poem. While some of these images are horrifying and disturbing, they also "display a touching regard for the human values", thus creating a poignantly meaningful tension in the poem. While the statements conflict, they also work to balance the poem. The image of the puppy aids in this balance. Although the puppy is domesticated, it is a domesticated kind of wolf, living the metaphoric wolf's den of an army camp. In experiencing and evaluating the tension in these juxtaposed images, the reader can find the "ironical truth" of the poem: "man is a wolf to man".

Another example of irony that Brooks finds in Jarrell's poem is the Pontius Pilate metaphor. This metaphor functions to highlight how the speaker of the poem seems to take on many roles: he is one of the murderer-warriors, Pilate himself, the "savior" who would be condemned, and Pilate's wife. The irony emerges here in the variety of roles in which the speaker sees himself. Not only is the speaker the judged, but he is also the one doing the judging. Furthermore, he implies differing meanings when he notes that 'Men wash their hands in blood, as best they can'. However, these contrasting meanings are all relevant to the context and contribute to the holistic truth expressed by the poem. The various meanings that can be attributed to this line, as well as to others, serve as foundations and supporting structures to the overall meaning of the poem.

As supporting components of the poem, ironical elements deepen the level of meaning in literature. The tension created by these elements determines a more complex meaning that enables the literary "work to render accurately and dramatically the total situation" of the human experience. The truth that the reader thus experiences and understands is "many-sided, three dimensional". Experiencing this multifaceted meaning to the fullest is what a formalist like Cleanth Brooks pursues in his exploration of the ironical structures of literature.

1.8 CRITICISM

In Literature, the **paradox** is an anomalous juxtaposition of incongruous ideas for the sake of striking exposition or unexpected insight. It functions as a method of literary composition - and analysis - which involves examining apparently contradictory statements and drawing conclusions either to reconcile them or to explain their presence.

Literary or rhetorical paradoxes abound in the works of Oscar Wilde and G. K. Chesterton. Other literature deals with paradox of situation; Rabelais, Cervantes, Sterne, Borges, and Chesterton are recognized as masters of situational as well as verbal paradox.

Statements such as Wilde's "I can resist anything except temptation" and Chesterton's "spies do not look like spies" are examples of rhetorical paradox. Further back, Polonius' observation that "though this be madness, yet there is method isn't" is a memorable third.

Also, statements that are illogical and metaphoric may be called "paradoxes", for example "the pike flew to the tree to sing". The literal meaning is illogical, but there are many interpretations for this metaphor.

1.9 LANGUAGE OF PARADOX

Cleanth Brooks, an active member of the New Critical movement, outlines the use of reading poems through paradox as a method of critical interpretation. Paradox in poetry means that tension at the surface of a verse can lead to apparent contradictions and hypocrisies. His seminal essay, "The Language of Paradox," lays out Brooks' argument for the centrality of paradox by demonstrating that paradox is "the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry." The argument is based on the contention that referential language is too vague for the specific message a poet expresses; he must "make up his language as he goes."

This, Brooks argues, is because words are mutable and meaning shifts when words are placed in relation to one another. In the writing of poems, paradox is used as a method by which unlikely comparisons can be drawn and meaning can be extracted from poems both straightforward and enigmatic.

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

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

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

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

1.10 PARADOX AND IRONY

Although paradox and irony as New Critical tools for reading poetry are often conflated, they are independent poetical devices. Irony for Brooks is “the obvious warping of a statement by the context” whereas paradox is later glossed as “a special kind of qualification which involves the resolution of opposites.”

Irony functions as a presence in the text – the overriding context of the surrounding words that make up the poem. Only sentences such as 2 + 2 = 4 are free from irony; most other statements are prey to their immediate context and are altered by it (take, as an example, the following joke. "A woman walks into a bar and asks for a *double entendre*. The bartender gives it to her." This last statement, perfectly acceptable elsewhere, is transformed by its context in the joke to an innuendo). take their effect from it. Irony is the key to validating the poem because a test of any statement grows from the context validating a statement demands examining the statement in the context of the poem and determining whether it is appropriate to that context.

Paradox, however, is essential to the structure and being of the poem. In *The Well Wrought Urn* Brooks shows that paradox was so essential to poetic meaning that paradox was almost identical to poetry. According to literary theorist Leroy Searle, Brooks' use of paradox emphasized the indeterminate lines between form and content. "The form of the poem uniquely embodies its meaning" and the language of the poem "effects the reconciliation of opposites or contraries." While irony functions within the poem, paradox often refers to the meaning and structure of the poem and is thus inclusive of irony. This existence of opposites or contraries and the reconciliation thereof is poetry and the meaning of the poem.

1.10.1 Criticism

R.S. Crane, in his essay "The Critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks," argues strongly against Brooks' centrality of paradox. For one, Brooks believes that the very structure of poetry is paradox, and ignores the other subtleties of imagination and power that poets bring to their poems. Brooks simply believed that "'imagination' reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities." Brooks, in leaning on the crutch of paradox, only discusses the truth which poetry can reveal, and speaks nothing about the pleasure it can give. (231) Also, by defining poetry as uniquely having a structure of paradox, Brooks ignores the power of paradox in everyday conversation and discourse, including scientific discourse, which Brooks claimed was opposed to poetry. Crane claims that, using Brooks' definition of poetry, the most powerful paradoxical poem in modern history is Einstein's formula $E = mc^2$, which is a profound paradox in that matter and energy are the same thing. The argument for the centrality of paradox (and irony) becomes a *reductio ad absurdum* and is therefore void (or at least ineffective) for literary analysis.

1.10.2 Criticism in Interpreting the Poem

Alhough there are as many ways to "get into" a poem as there are readers of poetry, here are a few approaches which may prove useful when/if you're at a loss.

1. After a first reading, what overall emotional effect does the poem leave you with? Looking back at the poem, what images, sounds, and concepts in the poem seem tohave helped create that effect? Do other aspects of the poems confirm, complicate, or contradict those effects?

2. What particular images, phrases, or sounds/rhythms in the poem stand out for you? Ask yourself what they might be "doing" in the poem: What ideas and emotions do they suggest? Do they seem to form a pattern with other images/phrases, or sounds/rhythms? Does one aspect of the poem seem to contradict another? Can you fit your answers to these sorts of questions into any kind of overall sense of what the poem might mean?

3. Begin with the "story" the poem tells (of course, some poems tell more of a story than others!). What themes or meanings does this narrative suggest? How do the specific details of the story -- word choice, repetition, rhyme, images, etc. -- contribute to, complicate, or contradict the overall narrative?

1.11 CONCLUSION

Remember that the speaker of the poem should not always be equated with the poet. Sometimes poets create speakers quite different from themselves (see Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" for a good example), and the poems ask us (the readers) to form certain opinions about the speakers. Even when the speaker seems more closely patterned on the poet him/herself, we don't always have to believe everything the speaker says. (See Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," where many readers see the speaker as grief-stricken by the loss of her lover even though her words deny this grief on the surface.) Our realization that speakers are complex and not always completely reliable should play a part in interpreting some poems.

1.12 GLOSSARY

1. Admonish : caution, reprove
2. Aesthetic : artistic
3. Ambiguity : vagueness, uncertainty
4. Anomalous : Expected
5. Assert : declare, emphasize
6. Didactica : design to teach people
7. Explicating : clarify
8. Flawed : defective, faulty
9. Gigantic : gargantuan, Enormous, extremely large
10. Interpret : understand
11. Juxtapose : put side by side
12. Irony : sarcasm, satire
13. Metaphoric : emblematic, symbolic
14. Orchestrate : organize, coordinate
15. Paraphrase : interpret, summarize
16. Paradox : Inconsistency
17. Perception : opinion, insight
18. Preeminent : most excellent
19. Polemic : A speech or writing that argue strongly for or against
20. Rhetoric : expression
21. Revolutionize : Change , Develop
22. Varying : unreliable
23. Warp : distort deform

SUMMARY OF CLEANTH BROOKS' 'IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE

OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson you will be able to understand the main Four Concepts**:**

- The concept of METAPHOR
- The concept of ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP
- The concept of CONTEXT
- The concept of IRONY

STRUCTURE

1.1 EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE

In the essay 'Irony as a Principle of Structure', Cleanth Brooks argues that meanings of universal significance which literature encodes in texts are suggested through the device of irony which the poet shows in the structure of a poem.

This emphasis on structure as a device to convey meaning is important. In the ancient classical criticism Aristotle placed a great deal of importance on the structure of plot. It is through the element of structure that unity is created in a work of art through which ideas are expressed. The text as an '*autotelic*'(autonomous) artifact, something complete within in itself, written for its own sake, unified in its form and not dependent on its relation to the author's life or intent, history, or anything else. The formal and technical properties of work of art matter most.

Brooks therefore argues that the overall unity of parts creates ironic tensions. This underlying structure is invisible but is the actual structure of the poem and not the divisions of stanza.

1.2 PLANT ANALOGY TO EXPLAIN ORGANIC QUALITY OF POETRY

Brooks states that poetry has an organic quality which produces ironies and explains this by means of an analogy. He suggests poetry is like a plant, with a fixed and definite organization(like roots, stalk, leaf), a structure which is complete and useful.

1.2.1 Semantic Value of each word in the poem:

A poem, like a plant, relies on all its component parts for life; there is a fundamental arrangement within a poetic creation which depends upon interrelationships. Words are the individual building blocks of a poem, and like the cells of a plant, each must be considered individually as being important to the structure.

1.2.2 The Context out of which meaning evolves:

Each word is understood according to the words which surround it. It is the relationship between each of these words which creates a context out of which meaning evolves. Brooks terms the relationship between the component parts of a poem as the pressures of context. Just as the cells of a plant rely on adjoining cells for water, nutrients and energy, so in poems, words rely on surrounding words for their meaning. It is the structural, organic unity of the parts which allows for the production of meaning. This is brought about through the pressures of context.

1.2.3 Elements of Plot Vs Words:

The significance of words to the structure of poetry in Brooks' essay finds a counterpart – the importance of the elements of the plot. In order to be significant, a work must be a whole, that is, it must have a beginning, middle and an end, according to Aristotle.

These parts are akin to the words in a poem in Brooks' theory because in a likewise manner they display a unity. For example right from the beginning of the poem the meaning

of the whole depends on the deliberate placement of each of the elements of poem and the organic relationship between those parts.

1.2.4 Contextual Ironies(tension) a key to Meaning?

Brooks claims irony is produced by the pressure of context and proceeds to explain these pressures in a poem. These pressures define the relationship between the components of a poem which are the words that produce meaning. Irony is the tension between multiple meanings of a word (ambiguity in meaning caused by connotative aspect of language), meanings which are pressured by the presence of surrounding words and the situation in which they are said.

Brooks compares poetry to drama in order to describe how pressures of context produce irony: i.e., what is said is said in a particular situation and by a particular dramatic character. Because there is always a speaker who narrates a poem, and in a setting for that narration, words will never exist in isolation, and must be considered in relation to, as affected by, their context. For Brooks, context forces ironies, which are the key to meaning.

A successful poem has its structure dependent on the tensions produced by context. It is in these fusions that harmony exists and it is in the tensions that meaning exists.

1.3 CONTEXT AND PLANT ANALOGY

Therefore meaning is the product of contextual pressures in Brooks' view. Context which is really the relationship between the parts of the poem creates the unity of the poem through its pressures. The end(blossoms) of the action should grow naturally out of the beginning(roots) and middle (stalk) if we continue to understand the argument in terms of Brooks' plant metaphor that affirms the organic nature of poetry.

1.4 METAPHOR VS IRONY

Brooks finds specific, concrete particulars a must for the form of a poem. The particular become the units or metaphors and references. Brooks claims that metaphors, even as they risk obscuring larger themes, are absolutely necessary because direct statement lends to abstraction and threatens to take us out of poetry altogether whereas indirect statements appeal in a poem. Brooks finds poetry an effective vehicle for conveying meaning instead of concrete language the poetry creates metaphors which instead of giving us abstract thoughts leads us to ideas in an indirect manner. Poetry takes human beings as its subject (if for no other reason than because language which is its structural element is a human device. It attempts to make explanation of the human condition in terms of causes and effects of human actions.

Thus the elements of structure are metaphors and symbols which make the meaning in a poem according to Brooks. Irony and plot function similarly to create meaning through indirection; both refuse direct statement of abstract ideas. Both rely on an organic unity of parts to produce universal truths. So meaning is inherent to the structure of the artifact, Brooks begins the essay by stating that the modern poetic technique is a rediscovery of the metaphor. The metaphor is so extensively used by the poet that it is the particular through which he steps into the universal. The poet uses particular details to arrive at general

meanings. But these particulars must not be chosen arbitrarily. This establishes the importance of our conventional habits of language.

Now the question that can be raised is that the poet does not say things directly. It is as if he is taking a risk by not saying things directly but only through metaphoric language, indirectly.

Direct statements take the reader out of the zone of poetry. A metaphor says things partially and obscurely, yet it makes the text poetic rather than a direct statement which makes the text unpoetic. Therefore, metaphor means indirection, an principle. It is a principle of poetic writing, there is a vital relationship between, an organic relationship between particular images and statements.

This kind of a relationship between the idea and the metaphor is described by Cleanth Brooks as an 'organic relationship'. That is to say the poem is not a collection of poetic images and beautiful passages, but a meaningful relationship between object and idea.So by merely arranging many poetic images one after another do not result in a poem. Brooks says that all the elements of a poem are related to each other, not as blossoms lying next to each other in a banquet, but as blossoms related to other parts of a growing plant. The wholeness of the poem through its details is the flowering of the whole plant. Giving another example, Brooks says that a poem is like a drama. The total effect proceeds from all the elements in the drama. So also in a good poem the total effect proceeds from all the elements of the poem. There are no superfluous parts in a good poem.

Therefore the parts of the poem are related to each other organically and related to the total theme indirectly. From this we can conclude that context is very important. So it is not just the idea and the metaphor being related organically and the whole poem linked internally through all its elements, but the context in which the connection between the idea and the metaphor or analogy is made. What is said in a play, as in a poem, is said in a particular context and it is this context that gives the words their particular meaning. Here Brooks takes the example of two sentences from Shakespeare's ' King Lear'. The first line that he quotes is "Ripeness is all". Brooks says such a philosophical statement gathers import because of particular context in which the dramatist places it. So also when Lear repeats the world "Never" again and again five times, the same word said over and over again, having the same meaning, nevertheless becomes especially significant because the playwright places them in a context where the words gather richness of meaning. The context endows the particular word or image or statement with significance. Statements which are so charged with meaning become dramatic utterances. Images charged with incoming become symbols. This is how context makes an impact upon the meaning of words. In other words, the part or particular element of a poem is modified by the pressure of the context. For example, if you meet friend who has won a lottery prize and say "What a rain of fortune!" in the particular context of the situation, the words have a specific meaning. For example, when everything in a situation has gone wrong and the person says, "This is a fine state of affairs!" What he really means is quite the opposite of what is being said. The actual state of affairs is very bad. But by sarcastically saying, "This is a fine state of affairs!" and perhaps with the use of a particular tone of voice a ironic statement is uttered. Even if the tone is not changed in any particular way, the mere words "This is a fine state of affairs!" when everything is at its worst, results in heavy irony.

1.5 A DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT OF IRONY IN THE ESSAY

Irony takes many forms. In irony of situation, the result of an action is the reverse of what the actor expected. Macbeth murders his king hoping that in becoming king he will achieve great happiness. Actually, Macbeth never knows another moment of peace, and finally is beheaded for his murderous act. In dramatic irony, the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not. For example, the identity of the murderer in a crime thriller may be known to the audience long before the mystery is solved. In verbal irony, the contrast is between the literal meaning of what is said and what is meant. A character may refer to a plan as brilliant, while actually meaning that the person thinks the plan is foolish. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony.

Irony is of many kinds: tragic-irony, self-irony, playful, mocking as gentle irony. Irony may be defined as the conflict of two meanings which has a dramatic structure peculiar to itself: initially, one meaning, the appearance, presents itself as the obvious truth, but when the context of this meaning unfolds, in depth or in time, it surprisingly discloses a conflicting meaning, the reality, measured against which the first meaning now seems false or limited.

By encompassing this conflict in a single structure, irony resolves it into harmony or unity.

There are other statements which hold their meaning as it is, inspite of the context in which they occur. For example, “Two plus two is four”. In any situation this statement would mean the same. The sentence denotes a meaning; it has denotative value. On the other hand, can notations are important in poetry, even philosophical generalizations bear the pressure of the context. Their relevance, their rhetorical force and meaning cannot be divorced from the context in which they are embedded. This is the reason, why according to Brooks, modern critics tend to use the term irony so much when they discuss poetry. To Brooks irony is an important structuring principle which holds the meaning of the poem together. Reading a line in a poem in its proper context gives it its particular meaning, it’s ironic content. Again Brooks underlines the importance of the pressure exerted by context. To make the point, he gives one more example. The critic takes a line from Mathew Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’. The speaker says that the world “Which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams hath really neither joy nor love nor light.” Now this may seem a statement of truth for many readers and they would have no difficulty in grapping its meaning as they see it.

Brooks says that the most straightforward irony amounts to the obvious warping of a statement by the context. But since it is a principle of structure that makes poetic coherence possible, it must be capable of somewhat more subtlety. The pressures of the context may not always be obvious or crude, but still, says Brooks, we are dealing with the informing principle of irony.

In sum, ‘irony’ in the sense of “pressures of the context” is for Brooks the main way in which a literary object dynamically develops its own structure, its own “meaning, evaluations, and interpretations” without the need for aid from ordinary or ‘denotative’ language, history, biography, or other outside sources of meaning. However some other readers may consider it false. If we try to prove it we will only end up rising very perplexing philosophical questions. This will lead us away from the poem. For, the lines are justified in the poem in terms of its context. The speaker is standing with his beloved and looking out of the window at the sea. The moonlight has thrown a deceptively white sheet of colour over

everything. Listening to the roar of the waves as they ebb and flow the speaker makes this philosophical observation. This is the only way that the statement can be validated. The brunt of the statement cannot be validated by a committee of experts in sociology as physical scientists or philosophers.

Brooks raises the question how the statement can be validated. He answers it in the following way. He suggests that the reader remember the advice of T.S. Eliot who says that we should assume the question whether the statement seems to be that which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature and founded on the experience outlined within the poem. In other words, we have to raise the question if the statement grows properly out of the context which it is said, whether it is ironical and loaded with contextual meaning or whether it is merely sentimental, affected and shallow. Brooks says that Eliot's text is what I.A.

Richards describes as 'Poetry of Synthesis' this kind of a synthesis shows a stable context on which meaning plays in many ways. Irony and possibilities of meaning are depending on context. Context does not grow out of irony.

1.5.1 Irony or Plot: Structure as a Conduit for Universals

In his landmark essay *Irony as a Principle of Structure*, Cleanth Brooks argues that meaning of universal significance is related through the ironies inherent in the structure of a poem. This emphasis on structure as a conduit for meaning is reflective of the importance placed on the structure of plot in Aristotelian mimesis. In the *Poetics*, a "treatise on the productive science"(39) of creating epic and dramatic tragedy, plot is the element of structure that creates a unity through which ideas of universal significance are expressed. Brooks and Aristotle each purport a unity of parts which creates either ironic tensions or plot, and thereby determine a poems value as a conduit for universals.

Brooks insists that poetry has an organic quality which produces ironies. He suggests poetry is like a plant, with a fixed and definite organization (roots, stalk, leaf), a structure which is complete and useful. A poem, like a plant, relies on all its component parts for life; there is a fundamental arrangement within a poetic creation which depends upon interrelationships. Words are the individual building blocks of a poem, and like the cells of a plant, each must be considered individually as structurally significant. Each word is understood according to the words which surround it. It is the relationship between each of these words which creates a context out of which meaning evolves. Brooks terms the relationship between the component parts of a poem the pressures of context: just as the cells of a plant rely on adjoining cells for water, nutrients and energy, so in poems, words rely on surrounding words for their meaning. It is the structural, organic unity of the parts which allows for the production of meaning, in this case through the pressures of context.

1.6 BROOKS LISTS OUT A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR THE USE OF IRONY IN MODERN POETRY

- There is a general breakdown in belief and to the modern mind does not accept universal statements of truth.
- There is a depletion and corruption of language itself.
- The growing consumption of popular arts has corrupted both belief and taste.
- The modern poet is burdened with the task of rehabilitating a drained and tired language.

- The task of qualifying and modifying a language is burdened upon the poet.

Brooks contains the critic to remember that the modern poet is addressing a public who have already developed a taste for popular and commercial art. So by using irony the modern poet succeeds in bringing both clarity and passion into his evoke of art or the poem.

Here Brooks gives the example of Randall Jarell's poem 'English Air Force' as an example of success of this sort. This poem is full of many possible meanings. Each meaning is voted and no one meaning cancels out another meaning. This poem which is about the Air Force men holds apposing meanings in the context of the poem. On the one hand the poet talks about the essential justness of man and on the other he uses the image of Pontius Pilate who washes hands in blood:

"…Shall I say that man \ Is not as men he said a wolf to man?\ Men wash their hands, in blood, as best they can: \ I find no fault in this just man." The poem dramatizes the situation of the fighters during the ever so accurately, both as puppies and woolens as stanza show that the poem goes behind the eloquent presentation by the poet to the very matrix or source from where all our understanding and beliefs begin. This function is in Brooks opinion, what good poetry does.

Finding its proper symbol, defined and redefined by the participating metaphors, the theme becomes a part of the reality in which we live, an insight growing out of a concrete experience. Without making any abstract generalization the poem makes a statement of truth.

So we may conclude that statements in poetry qualified by the context in which they occur. In poetry, therefore statements get their viable by virtue of their context.

1.7 WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR INITIAL INTERPRETATION

Once you have a place to begin, a basic idea of something the poem might mean, it's time to go back through the poem and "test" your "hypothesis." (If you balk at such scientific terminology, look at this process as confirming or complicating your initial intuition).

Every image, word choice, and line break of the poem contributes to its overall effect and meaning. Therefore, your final interpretation should be able to account for as many aspects and parts of the poem as possible. See how many of the aspects and parts which you identify fit with your initial sense of what the poem means.

When you find images, ideas, etc., in the poem that seem to contradict your initial idea, don't despair! This is actually a good sign, indicating that you are working toward a more complex and rich reading of the poem. But what do you do when this happens? Usually, one of two things.

Sometimes, this conflicting "evidence" will lead you to question and dramatically change your initial interpretation. You should consider taking this step if too many aspects of the poem seem to contradict your idea too definitively. For example, in Rilke's "The Panther" (see Robert Bly's translation in particular), I would argue that an interpretation that initially sees the panther as dying at the end should be changed in this major way. One reason is that the sentence structure of the last line clearly indicates that it is the "shape," and not the panther, that dies. Another is that the poem doesn't anywhere suggest how or why he dies

(unless we surmise that he wastes away from lack of freedom). And finally, the rest of the poem seems to be lamenting the panther's captivity, stressing how confined and limited he is compared to his natural, unimprisoned state. By ending with the image of the panther forgetting his captivity for a split second, only to swiftly remember it and stifle his urge to jump, the poem further emphasizes the pathos of his unnatural, confined state. Interpreting the ending as his death would bring in a new sort of theme perhaps even a release from his miserable state.

In other cases, you may decide to adapt your initial interpretation less dramatically, retaining its major points, but changing minor ones so that the conflicting evidence is taken into account. For example, let's say you read William Carlos Williams' poem "Nantucket" as evoking that sense of promise and anticipation which we often feel when entering a hotel room on vacation:

The clean-smelling room, the downturned glass, and the freshly made bed all say they are waiting for you; they invite you to use and enjoy them. The white curtains frame the picture of flowers outside the window into a post-card-like image, making them seem even more beautiful.

But wait! What if you see the key as possibly symbolizing exclusion? Your initial interpretation didn't account for the key, and the idea of exclusion doesn't fit with the rest of your initial impression. However, you can account for the key differently, in a way which supports and even richens your initial interpretation:

This key is to the room the speaker is describing, and it represents temporary possession of that room. By giving the speaker the ability to lock and unlock the door (and, while excluding others, assure her own privacy), this key is yet another invitation to possess and use the fresh, clean room she sees before her.

1.8 HOW TO HANDLE THE FEAR THAT SOMEONE MIGHT DISAGREE WITH YOU

Usually this fear grows out of a lack of confidence in your ability to interpret a poem. In part, you can allay this fear by working through your interpretation carefully, reading the poem a number of times and revising your interpretation to account for the new things you notice each time you read it. You can also get better at interpreting poems that is, more adept at reading the "clues" in the poem and more creative at fitting your different ideas about a poem together by practicing and discussing your interpretations with others. And, by learning the way people usually talk about poetry, you can learn to present your ideas in a way which will give you credibility with your listeners/readers.

However, there will still always be people who disagree with you! And this is not necessarily a problem. In order to have your interpretation accepted by the community of people who dominate the reading and interpretation of poetry, you will have to conform to certain ways of reading a poem. Nevertheless, most poems allow for a variety of acceptable interpretations. A good example is William Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal":
A slumber did my spirit seal,

I had no human fears:

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,

With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Most critics agree on some basic points about this poem. For example, they see a basic contrast between the two stanzas: the first expresses the speaker's attitude while his beloved was alive, while the second expresses his attitude after she has died. They see his "slumber" not as a literal sleep, but as his lack of awareness that his beloved was mortal and that she would die (" . . . feel the touch of earthly years"). The second stanza, most critics agree, reveals the speaker's "awakened" perception that, after her death, his beloved is subsumed into the forces of nature. However, critics' interpretation of the speaker's attitude toward his beloved's reintegration into the natural world are sharply conflicting.

In Cleanth Brooks' interpretation of this poem, the speaker first feels his beloved is something immune from "the touch of earthly years," yet in the second stanza, she is touched and held by earthly time. The speaker is only awakened from his unnatural slumber by another metaphoric slumber that which which seals his beloved's spirit in death. Brooks claims that this "pattern of thrust and counterthrust" expresses the speaker's shock at his beloved's utter and horrible lifelessness and inertness. (You can find Brooks' interpretation in "Irony as a Principle of Structure," in Literary Opinion in America, ed. M.D. Sabel, New York: Harper & Row, l951.)

However, other critic disagree that the second stanza expresses the speaker's shock and horror at his beloved's fate. According to F.W. Bateson, this poem and especially the last two lines, expresses the speaker's sense of pantheistic magnificence. In other words, he is comforted by the idea that his beloved is now part of the beautiful, even holy, "course" of nature. (Bateson's interpretation is in his book English Poetry: A Critical Introduction, New York: Barnes and Noble, l950.)

Both critics make strong cases for their interpretations, arguing based on the images, ideas, words, and sounds/rhythms in the poem. Because every interpretation is, in some sense, an argument, you, like these critics, should explain/justify all aspects of your interpretation in some way. Still other critics use the context of Wordsworth's other poems to back up their interpretations for example, David Ferry, who basically agrees with Bateson about the pantheism of the second stanza, bases his reading on his sense that Wordsworth's other poems depict a constant search for some way to unify humans and nature. If you have this context for a particular poem, it can be a good guide when you're trying to decide between several interpretations which all seem justified based on the poem itself. And what about basing your interpretation on the poet's life? This is a trickier form of "evidence," and we'll talk more about it later on in the quarter. Certainly, well-respected critics do know and use facts about poets' lives to interpret poetry. However, beware of trying to figure out "what the poet meant." It is a fruitless task, even if you can actually ask the poet him/herself,

because no writer consciously intends everything his/her work can be interpreted to mean. Nonetheless, we can use our knowledge of poets' lives as overall guides for interpretation without trying to claim we know what the poet intended by every minute aspect of the poem.

For example, in reading "The Dark Night," it helps to know that the author, St. John of the Cross, was a Spanish mystic. This knowledge alerts us to other clues in the poem that the "lover" the speaker encounters is God rather than a human being. Such other clues could include the final lines, " . . . I went free,/ left all my cares behind/ among the lilies falling in and out of mind " (emphasis added). Combined with the knowledge that the poet is a saint and a mystic, these lines suggest that the speaker's encounter with the lover is not a literal, physical encounter, but rather a spiritual one which takes place in the mind or spirit, not the body.

1.9 SUMMARY OF *IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF THE STRUCTURE*

Modern Poetry rediscovered the unavoidable significance of metaphor. Brooks begins the essays by observing the special qualtiy of modern poetic techniques. To understand the relevant meaning of the poem one should completely understand the relevance of metaphor. Without asserting the comparison, Metaphor associates things or actions. The poet in order to move on to the general meaning of the poem should establish the details of the particularities of the poem. The particularities determine the universal meanings of the poem. Because the universal meaning is determined by the particularities of the poem.

Giving the example of Kile, Brooks considers that frame is the universal and tail is the particular. It is the particular (tail) that makes the kite fly. The universal meaning of the poem is decided by the particularities. The poet fails to attain the universality without understanding the particularities.

The poet conveys the meaning of the poem through metaphors. He reveals the meaning indirectly. Sometimes the meaning fails to reach the reader in this process. Yet the poet prefers the indirect communication of the meaning as he feels the direct communication destroys the value of poetry. It is from this perspective we consider metaphor as a principle of indirection. Metaphor weaves different images and statements. Placing different images together is related to the organic unity of the poem. Highlighting the organic unity Brooks says that it is the ultimate goal of any poem.

In a good poem the parts are related to each other and the theme organically. The poetic quality of the parts of the poem are decided by the context of the poem. It is the context that modifies the meaning of the poem. It is the context that brings significance to the symbols and statements. This obvious influence of the ‘context’ is addressed as ironical by Brooks. Skillful disposition of context produces the tone of irony. Brooks draws example from Gray’s ‘Elegy’. The manner in which the questions are fixed in the context are obviously rhetorical questions. More Poetry is ironical in its nature. Irony is obvious in the conventional forms of poetry like tragic irony, self irony, playful, amusing, mocking or gentle irony. Sometimes irony is present in unrecognised forms. According to Brooks, the statements devoid of irony are the statements that have no qualifying context. He gives the example of statements in mathematics.

Connotations are significant in poetry. The statements made in the poem bears the pressure of the context. The Philosophical statements made in a poem are bound to be under

the pressure of the context. Their relevance, acceptability, rhetorical force and meaning cannot be separated from the context in which they are fixed. Brooks examines Mathew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' and examines the statement of the Speaker as true or false. In this ensuing confusion the readers move away from the problems of the poem. It is at this juncture, one should observe the statement growing out of context or acknowledges the pressure of the context. If the study proves this relationship then the statement is ironical.

He also examines I.A. Richard's 'Poetry of Synthesis' as it displays heterogeneity of elements. It fuses disagreeing elements as harmonious balance. It acknowledges the pressure of the context with the stability of internal pressures. Further Brooks goes to examine Shakespeare's songs The song brings the theological implications close to irony. The song has untheological elements that disturb the Christian interpretation. It is mixture of pagan myth and Christian theology. The complexity of tone of the song makes its ironical.

Brooks observes that irony prevails in good poetry. Brooks examines Wordsworth's Lucy Poems. Wordsworth metaphorically compares the life of Lucy to a violet and a star.

Brooks says Wordsworth's comparison has a poetic purpose. Defining the situation the violet and the star balance each other. Brooks says like the poems of Donne, Wordsworth's poems do maintain relation between part and part. The poems of Wordsworth are simple and spontaneous. Emphasizing on the catch words of 19th century like 'simple' 'spontaneous' 'complex', 'ironical', Brooks speaks of the intrusion of the theory of composition in understanding a poem. The theory dictates how the poem has to be read.

Brooks examines the importance of irony in modern poetry for the following reasons: Modern poetry created breakdown common symbolism. There is general skepticism regarding the universals. Language itself became corrupt by advertisements, films and badly written fiction. Brooks affirms that the modern poet has succeeded in using his ironic techniques purposefully.

1.10 FOUR MAIN CONCEPTS

1.10.1 The concept of METAPHOR

The first concept is the concept of METAPHOR. He states that the poet can legitimately step out into the "universal" only by first going through the narrow door of the "particular". It means by using metaphor in modern poetry, the poet can deal with universal things in the world. Metaphor helps to give a more general and universal level of meaning. For instance:

"a red red rose"

Rose is a particular flower which gives fragrance but with the help of this, the poet suggests the universal thing that is love. According to Brooks a poet should take this kind of risk of saying something particularly and obscurely because he can not make direct statements. If a poet makes direct statements, poetry will be full of abstractions and threatens and it will not be poetry at all.

1.10.2 The concept of ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP

The second concept is the concept of ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP. Brooks says that metaphor implies a principle of organic relationship. To define this organic relationship, Brooks compares a poem with a plant. As a plant contains roots, stem, branches, flowers etc. but as a whole it is known as plant in the same way poetry consists of different elements like words, phrases, images, symbols, figures of speech, rhyme, rhythm, meter etc. All of these elements contribute in generating meaning of poem. All these parts are interdependent and all are connected to the same theme.

1.10.3 The concept of CONTEXT

The third concept is the concept of CONTEXT. Context means relationship of words with each other and with the main theme that poetry generates. All great poems have poetic qualities because of particular context. MEANING OF A PARTICULAR UTTERANCE BECOMES SOMETHING DIFFERENT JUST BECAUSE OF CONTEXT. The common word "NEVER" repeated five times in *King Lear* becomes one of the most poignant lines just because of specific context. The statements like "two plus two equals four" or "the square on the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the two sides" are equally true in any possible context while poetic statements give new meaning of unexpected references because of context and not in isolation.

1.10.4 The concept of IRONY

The fourth concept is the concept of IRONY. Brooks defines irony as 'the obvious wrapping of the statement by the context'. Irony is created because of the presser of the context. For instance:

"this is the fine state of affairs"

This statement means quite the opposite of what it purports to say literally. This is sarcasm, the most obvious kind of irony.

1.10.5 Importance of Irony

- Unimportant or non literary utterance gets a specific meaning through the use of irony.
- Utterances having some meaning are changed to different or contrary meaning like 'ripeness is all'.
-

1.10.6 Modes of Irony

- Tragic Irony
- Self Irony
- Playful
- Arch
- Mocking
- Gentle Irony

In this way Brooks talks about these four concepts in this essay and on the basis of these four concepts he says that in case of poetry:

"It is the tail that wags the dog

and

it is the tail that makes the kite fly"

Traditionally the dog wags the tail and traditionally we impose the abstract on the concrete but in case of poetry the abstract(meaning that we attain) has to be tamed by concrete(the coherent presentation of metaphorical or ironical words and statements). It meansaccording to Brooks TAIL refers to the use of metaphor and irony and DOG refers to the meaning that can be attained with the help of organic relationship of words and phrases in a specific context.

1.11CONCLUSION

Cleanth brooks argues in his essay *Irony as a Principle of Structure*, that irony serves as one of the major tools by which meaning can be embedded in a poetic text. Brooks repeatedly asserts the following in his work:

- The entirety of a poem must be considered in order to discover its meaning
- Irony often functions as a significant part of a poem's fundamental structure.

The essay points out that Brooks explains that unexpected contradictions in a text often function as the site of irony that can be used successfully in uncovering deeper layers of meaning in the poem. Reading poetry in the casual way that we approach language and speech in our daily lives is not conducive to a deep understanding of the text. According to Brooks' critical sensibility, the consideration of the complex contradictions and paradoxes that can emerge from even the most seemingly innocent pairing of conflicting images can be the key to the core meaning of the text.

1.12 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Examine the significance of ‘irony’ in modern criticism?
2. Critically evaluate Brooks view ‘irony as a principle of structure?
3. Examine the task of modern poet in contemporary poetry?
4. Discuss the main Four Concepts in Cleanth brooks essay *Irony as a Principle of Structure*

1.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Wellek and Warren . Theory of Literature. Harmondsworth . Penguin Books ltd. 1949.
- Wimsatt and Brooks. Literary Criticism: A Short History. Calcutta; Oxford Publishing house, 1966.

1.14 GLOSSARY

1. Abstract : conceptual theoretical
2. Artifact : work of art

3. conduit : means of expression
4. conducive : favorable, helpful
5. Embedded : fixed, surrounded
6. Encompassing : surrounding
7. Exert :apply, put forth
8. Isolation : remoteness, separation
9. Magnificence : brilliance splendor
10. Obscure : ambiguous, Difficult to understand
11. Pressure : force
12. Purport : claim, profess, assert
13. Significance : importance
14. Slumber : sleep
15. Superfluous : unnecessary, surplus to requirements

(301EG21)

MODEL QUESTION PAPER
M.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION
Third Semester
English
Paper I — Literary Criticism - 1

Time : Three hours **Maximum : 70 marks**

Answer ONE question from each Unit.
All questions carry equal marks.

1. (a) Discuss Plato's views on role of literature in Ideal State.

Or

(b) Discuss Aristotle's views on "Tragedy."

2. (a) How does Sidney refute the allegation against poetry being the mother of lies?

Or

(b) Discuss Dryden's "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy" as a survey of contemporary critical schools?

3. (a) Analytically discuss the merits and demerits of Shakespeare as given in Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare."

Or

(b) What are the ideas of William Wordsworth reflected in "Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads?"

4. (a) What is the meaning of 'Touchstone Method?' Examine the benefits of it.

Or

(b) Explain T.S. Eliot's Theory of Impersonality.

5. (a) What are the four kinds of meanings according to I.A. Richards?

Or

(b) What is the role of irony in the poetry according to Cleanth Brooks?