MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

SEMESTER-I

ENG-1.2: CLASSICAL AND NEO-CLASSICAL CRITICAL THEORIES
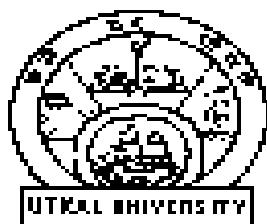
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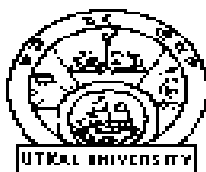
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ENG-1.2: Classical and Neo – Classical Critical Theories

Brief Syllabi

Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
1	CLASSICAL THEORY AND CRITICISM	1.	Criticism & Literature
		2.	Origin and development of criticism
		3.	A Historical Perspective
		4.	Major Critics of the Period – Plato
		5.	Socrates and life history

Block No.	Block No.	Unit No.	Unit
2	ARISTOTLE	6.	Aristotle – Life and Times
		7.	Poetics: Theory and analysis
		8.	A critical examination of the text – *Poetics*
		9.	Aristotle's legacy – Application in modern times - Aristotle timeline

Block No.	Block No.	Unit No.	Unit
3	LONGINUS	10.	Longinus – life and times
		11.	Longinus: Theory and Analysis
		12.	Critical examination of the text – On the Sublime
		13.	Legacy of Longinus – Application in modern times – Longinus Timeline

Block No.	Block No.	Unit No.	Unit
4	NEO – CLASSICAL THEORY, CRITICISM & SAMUEL JOHNSON	14.	Origin and Development of Neo – classicism
		15.	Neo – Classicism in England: John Dryden
		16.	Neo – Classicism and Other Writers: Samuel Johnson

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ENG-1.2: CLASSICAL AND NEO – CLASSICAL THEORIES

Content

BLOCK-1: CLASSICAL THEORY AND CRITICISM

UNIT 1: Criticism & Literature

UNIT 2: Origin and development of criticism

UNIT 3: A Historical Perspective

UNIT 4: Major Critics of the Period – Plato

UNIT 5: Socrates and life history

UNIT – 1: CRITISIM AND LITERATURE

STRUCTURE

1.1 Objectives
1.2 Introduction

1.3 Definition

1.4 Classical criticism in literature

1.5 Relevance of Classical Criticism

1.6 Features of classical criticism

1.7 Summary

1.8 Key Terms

1.9 Review Questions

1.10 References

1.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall provide the learners a knowledge about the following:
>   - What is criticism?
>   - Relation between criticism and literature.
>   - The definition of criticism with other discipline.
>   - Relevance of critical criticism.

1.2 Introduction

Literary criticism, the reasoned consideration of literary works and issues. It applies, as a term, to any argumentation about literature, whether or not specific works are analyzed. Plato's cautions against the risky consequences of poetic inspiration in general in his *Republic* are thus often taken as the earliest important example of literary criticism. Criticism will here be taken to cover all phases of literary understanding, though the emphasis will be on the evaluation of literary works and of their authors' places in literary history.

The functions of literary criticism vary widely, ranging from the reviewing of books as they are published to systematic theoretical discussion. Though reviews may sometimes determine whether a given book will be widely sold, many works succeed commercially despite negative reviews, and many classic works, including Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), have acquired appreciative publics long after being unfavorably reviewed and at first neglected. One of criticism's principal functions is to express the shifts in sensibility that make such revaluations possible. The minimal condition for such a new appraisal is, of course, that the original text survive. The literary critic is sometimes cast in the role of scholarly detective, unearthing, authenticating, and editing unknown manuscripts. Thus, even rarefied scholarly skills may be put to criticism's most elementary use, the bringing of literary works to a public's attention.

The ideas of the artists were not welcome if they were. shocking or very individualistic in thought. The poet merely claimed that his/her products were only transmitted by hider. The credit of originality of creative going to the Muses. Not only the inspiration to create came from the Muses, the creation of the artist was also a copy of the world that had been created by a force much greater than hider. Theories of art for this reason believed the artist to be an imitator. Mention has already been made of them earlier on but we shall look at this in greater detail shen we analyse the ideas of Plato and Aristotle keeping the concept of imitation in mind. Another significant concern of the Greeks was the ethical value of art. Not only must the poet, an imitative painter of this world created by the gods, acknowledge hisher lower place, she must also ensure that whatever she produces is good and useful. The ancients left room for innovation but not for experimentation of doubtful worth. There was no room for a philosophy that advocated art for art's sake. Sometimes this \concern for social worth of art, led to a severe censure of the artist as in the case Plato who thought that no art can be good as, all of it consists of unreality and untruth. Or, as in the case of Aristotle, it led to a patronization of the artist, because for Aristotle the artist brought us knowledge and a deeper understanding of the world. Last but not least, the capacity of art to please by emotional arousal was also a demand on the poetic imagination. The emphasis in ancient times was not so such on miming an a vehicle for ideology or social reform but more on its capacity to Poetry and drama must please in a healthy way and provide an emotional outlet from the daily state of tension. This aim of art as emotional cure was best developed by Aristotle through his concept of catharsis. In the following units we shall see how all these ideas combine to create the value system of ancient literary criticism.

1.3 Definition

English word "criticism" derives from the ancient Greek term krites, meaning "judge." Perhaps the first type of criticism was that which occurred in the process of poetic creation itself: in composing his poetry, a poet would have made certain "judgments" about the themes and techniques to be used in his verse, about what his audience was likely to approve, and about his own relationship to his predecessors in the oral or literary tradition. Historical Background and Advantages of the Classical View In this broad sense, literary criticism goes at least as far back as archaic Greece, which begins around 800 years before the birth of Christ. This is the era of the epic poets Homer and Hesiod, and of the lyric poets Archilochus, Ibycus, Alcaeus, and Sappho. What we call the "classical" period emerges around 500 BC, the period of the great dramatists Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles, the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, theschools of rhetoric, and the rise of Athenian democracy and power. After this is the "Hellenistic" period, witnessing the diffusion of Greek culture through much of the Mediterranean and Middle East, a diffusion vastly accelerated by the conquests of Alexander the Great, and the various dynasties established by his generals after his death in 323 BC. Over the Hellenized domains there was a common ruling class culture, using a common literary dialect and a common education system. The city of Alexandria in Egypt, founded by Alexander in 331 BC, became a center of scholarship and letters, housing an enormous library and museum, and hosting such renowned poets and grammarians as Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Aristarchus, and Zenodotus. Weknow of these figures partly through the work of Suetonius (ca. 69–140 AD), who wrote the first histories of literature and criticism.

The Hellenistic period is usually said to end with the battle of Actium in 31 BC in which the last portion of Alexander's empire, Egypt, was annexed by the increasingly powerful and expanding Roman republic. After his victory at Actium, the entire Roman world fell under the sole rulership of Julius Caesar's nephew, Octavian, soon to becomerevered as the first Roman emperor, Augustus. During this span of almost a thousand years, poets, philosophers, rhetoricians, grammarians, and critics laid down many of the basic terms, concepts, and questions that were to shape the future of literary criticism as it evolved all the way through to our own century. These include the concept of "mimesis" or imitation; the concept of beauty and its connection with truth and goodness; the ideal of the organic unity of a literary work; the social, political, and moral functions of literature; the connection between literature, philosophy, and rhetoric; the nature and status of language;

4

the impact of literary performance on an audience; the definition of figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, and symbol; the notion of a "canon" of the most important literaryworks; and the development of various genres such as epic, tragedy, comedy, lyricpoetry, and song.

1.4 <u>Classical Criticism in Literature</u>

The Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English defines 'classical' as being in accordance with ancient Greek or Roman models in literature or art or with later systems and standards based on them, particularly with reference to balance, regularity and simpleness of art, The eight to the fourth centuries B.C. a period yet to be paralleled in the history of human civilization, for its brilliance in literature, philosophy and the visual arts, is normally known as the 'classical age'. Even as children in school, we are often advised to ready 'classics'. What do the teachers mean by the 'classics'? 'Classics' are works of fiction, like Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, that are relevant to all ages, through all times. 'Classics' are books that have stood the test of time for
 their relevance, their universal appeal, simplicity, regularity of form ahd a sense of beauty and balance. Would you agree with this view? Long before the term literary criticism came into

practice, literary theory existed as far back as fourth century B.C. In fact the earliest work of literary theory is considered to be Aristotle's Poetics, wherein he offers his famous definition of tragedy. Plato and Aristotle in Greece and Horace and Longinus in Rome formed the core of classical criticism in ancient times. It should however be remembered that the Greeks influenced the Romans as is obvious from the works of Seneca, Virgil and the later twentieth century Graeco- Roman models used by writers of the French and German courtly romances. Learners should note at this stage, that though the term 'classical criticism' denotes both the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, this block will concentrate only on Greek critical theory, for practical purposes and also because Greek civilization is older than its Roman counterpart, and the latter were greatly influenced by the former. Most Universities would normally offer Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, as a part of classical criticism. But the focus would be limited to just the Republic, Poetics, Ars Poetica-and On the Sublime. What we have done instead is to offer you a detailed understanding of ancient Greek thought as, the impact of this school of thought is to be felt even today. We have already mentioned that the Greeks influenced the Romans so much so that the Roman dramatist Seneca, imitated the Greek tragedians and Vigil was influenced by Homer. Aristotle's influence is to be felt, over much

drama of the 16" century, right till the 18" century. Classical influence was strongest in France and England in the 17' and 18' centuries, and in German writers like Goethe, and Schiller, towards the end of the 1 8 ~ century. In the 20" century, the influence was considerable in French drama, in the plays of Sartre among others.

1.5 Relevance of Classical Criticism

Study of Classical Criticism gives insight to a student into the critical way of thinking. By studying Classical Criticism students get sense and understanding about how the literary theories increase his/her capacities to think critically without the bias or prejudice or preconceived notions. The student also has a chance to study different points of view in the context of different genres of literature. Furthermore, s/he can develop critical sight and insight not only to judge the literature but also to evaluate any good piece of literature of the present time.

The Greek and Roman critics belong to the classical school of criticism which is still relevant today. The basic concepts they have given us to study literature with are still important and supply us with the basic ideas whereby to examine the literary text. When we study Plato's theory of Mimesis we come to know that literature is an imitation of nature. Further in Aristotle when we study his definition of tragedy, we come to appraise that this imitation is nothing but the imitation of an action.

1.6 Features of Classical Criticism

Classical Literary Criticism is objective, an "attempt of expressing countless ideas in a finite form, whereas romanticism is an attempt to express a kind of universal poetry in the creation of which the poet made his own Laws."

The Classical period introduced many important concepts and ideas of literary criticism that had tremendous significance all the way through to our own times. These include: 1. the concept of mimesis or imitation 2. the concept of beauty and its relationship with truth and goodness. 3. the ideal of organic unity of a work of art 4. the social, political and moral functions of literature 5. the relationship between literature, philosophy and rhetoric 6. the nature and status of language 7. the impact of literary performance on the audience 8. the definition of figures of speech 9. the notion of a "canon" of the most important literary works 10. the development of various genres like epic, tragedy comedy, lyric poetry etc. Two most important figures associated with Classical Literary Criticism are Plato and Aristotle.

1.7 Summary

Literary criticism, Discipline concerned with philosophical, descriptive, and evaluative inquiries about literature, including what literature is, what it does, and what it is worth. The Western critical tradition began with Plato's *Republic* (4th century BCE). A generation later, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, developed a set of principles of composition that had a lasting influence. European criticism since the Renaissance has primarily focused on the moral worth of literature and the nature of its relationship to reality. At the end of the 16th century, Sir Philip Sidney argued that it is the special property of literature to offer an imagined world that is in some respects superior to the real one. A century later John Dryden proposed the less idealistic view that literature must primarily offer an accurate representation of the world for "the delight and instruction of mankind," an assumption that underlies the great critical works of Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson. A departure from these ideas appeared in the criticism of the Romantic period, epitomized by William Wordsworth's assertion that the object of poetry is "truth…carried alive into the heart by passion." The later 19th century saw two divergent developments: an aesthetic theory of "art for art's sake," and the view (expressed by Matthew Arnold) that literature must assume the moral and philosophical functions previously filled by religion. The volume of literary criticism increased greatly in the 20th century, and its later years saw a radical reappraisal of traditional critical modes and the development of a multiplicity of critical factions (*see* deconstruction; poststructuralism; structuralism).

1.8 Key Terms

- **Anapaest:** The anapaestic meter consists of a series of two unstressed sounds followed by a single stressed sound – "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold" (Lord Byron)
- **Adage:** A traditional or proverbial saying.
- **Archetypal plot:** A sequence of events forming a type of story that has recurred throughout the history of a civilization, and with which most people are familiar; for example, a battle between good and evil.

1.9 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by critical criticism?
2. What are the features of classical criticism?
3. What is the relevance of classical criticism in literature?
4. How has Aristotle defined classical criticism?
5. Who are the important pioneers of classical criticism? Elucidate with examples.

1.10 References

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UNIT 2: ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICISM

STRUCTURE

2.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall enable the learners to know the following:
> - Origin and development of classical criticism.
> - To know the related concepts in general.
> - To know the objections to classical view.
> - To get an idea about the classical analyses.

2.2 Introduction

Since Aristotle, in Europe tragedy has never been a drama of despair, causeless death or chance disaster. The drama that only paints horrors and leaves souls shattered and mind un-reconciled with the world may be described as a gruesome, ghastly play, but not a healthy tragedy, for tragedy is a play in which disaster or downfall has causes which could carefully be avoided and sorrow in it does not upset the balance in favour of pessimism. That is why, in spite of seriousness, even heart-rending scenes of sorrow, tragedy embodies the vision of beauty. It stirs noble thoughts and serves tragic delight but does not condemn

us to despair. If the healthy notion of tragedy has been maintained throughout the literary history of Europe, the ultimate credit, perhaps, goes back to Aristotle who had propounded it in his theory of Catharsis.

Catharsis established tragedy as a drama of balance. Sorrow alone would be ugly and repulsive. Beauty, pure would be imaginative and mystical. These together constitute what may be called tragic beauty. Pity alone would be sentimentality. Fear alone would make us cowards. But pity and fear, sympathy and terror together constitute the tragic feeling which is most delightful though, it is tearfully delightful. Such tragic beauty and tragic feeling which it evokes, constitutes the aesthetics of balance as propounded for the first time by Aristotle in his theory of Catharsis. Therefore, we feel, the reverence which Aristotle has enjoyed through ages, has not gone to him undeserved. His insight has rightly earned it.

2.3 Concepts in General

The issue of the nature of concepts is important in philosophy generally, but most perspicuously in philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. Most generally, concepts are thought to be among those things that count as semantic values or meanings (along with propositions). There is also reason to think that concepts are universals (along with properties, relations, etc.), and what general theory of universals applies to concepts is thus a significant issue with respect to the nature of concepts. Whether concepts are mind-dependent or mind-independent is another such issue. Finally, concepts tend to be construed as the targets of analysis. If one then treats analysis as classical analysis, and holds that all complex concepts have classical analyses, then one accepts the classical view. Other views of concepts might accept the thesis that concepts are targets of analysis, but differ from the classical view over the sort of analysis that all complex concepts have.

2.4 Concepts as Semantic Values

As semantic values, concepts are the intensions or meanings of sub-sentential verbal expressions such as predicates, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Just as the sentence "The sun is a star" expresses the proposition that the sun is a star, the predicate "is a star" expresses the concept of being a star (or [star], to introduce notation to be used in what follows). Further, just as the English sentence "Snow is white" expressesthe proposition that snow is white, and so does the German sentence "Schneeist Weiss," the predicates "is white" in English and "ist Weiss" in German both expressthe same concept, the concept of being white (or [white]). The intension or meaning of a sentence is a proposition. The intensions or meanings of many sub-sentential entities are concepts.

2.5 **Concepts as Universals**

Concepts are also generally thought to be universals. The reasons for this arethreefold:

(1) A given concept is expressible using distinct verbal expressions. This can occur in several different ways. My uttering "Snow is white" and your uttering "Snow is white" are distinct utterances, and their predicates are distinct expressions of the same concept [white]. My uttering "Snow is white" and your uttering "Schneeist Weiss" are distinct sentences with their respective predicates expressing the same concept ([white], again). Even within the same language, my uttering "Grisham is the author of The Firm" and your uttering "Grisham is The Firm's author" are distinct sentences with distinct predicates, yet their respective predicates express the same concept (the concept [the author of The Firm], in this case).

(2) Second, different agents can possess, grasp, or understand the same concept, though such possession might come in degrees. Most English speakers possess the concept [white], and while many possess [neutrino], not many possess that concept to such a degree that one knows a great deal about what neutrinos themselves are.

(3) Finally, concepts typically have multiple exemplifications or instantiations. Many distinct things are white, and thus there are many exemplifications or instances of the concept [white]. There are many stars and many neutrinos, and thus there are many instances of [star] and [neutrino]. Moreover, distinct concepts can have the very same instances. The concepts [renate] and [cardiate] have all the same actual instances, as far as we know, and so does [human] and [rational animal]. Distinct concepts can also have necessarily all of the same instances: For instance, the concepts [triangular figure] and [trilateral figure] must have the same instances, yet the predicates "is a triangular figure" and "is a trilateral figure" seem to have different meanings.   As universals, concepts may be treated under any of the traditional accounts of universals in general. Realism about concepts (considered as universals) is the view that concepts are distinct from their instances, and nominalism is the view that concepts are nothing over and above, or distinct from, their instances. Ante rem realism (or platonism) about concepts is the view that concepts are ontologically prior to their instances—that is, concepts exist whether they have instances or not. In re realism about concepts is the view that concepts are in some sense "in" their instances, and thus are not ontologically prior to their instances. Conceptualism with respect to concepts holds that concepts are mental entities, being either immanent in the mind itself as a sort of idea, as constituents of complete thoughts, or somehow dependent on the mind for their existence (perhaps by being possessed by an agent or by being possessible by an agent). Conceptualist views also include imagism, the view (dating from Locke and others) that concepts are a sort of mental image. Finally, nominalist views of concepts might identify concepts with classes or sets of particular things (with the concept [star] being identified with the set of all stars, or perhaps the set of all possible stars). Linguistic nominalism identifies concepts with the linguistic expressions used to express them (with [star] being identified with the predicate "is a star," perhaps). Type linguistic nominalism identifies concepts with types of verbal expressions (with [star] identified with the type of verbal expression exemplified by the predicate "is a star").

2.6 Concepts as Mind-Dependent or Mind-Independent

On many views, concepts are things that are "in" the mind, or "part of" the mind, or at least are dependent for their existence on the mind in some sense. Other views deny such claims, holding instead that concepts are mind-independent entities. Conceptualist views are examples of the former, and platonic views are examples of the latter. The issue of whether concepts are mind-dependent or mind-independent carries great weight with respect to the clash between the classical view and other views of concepts (such as prototype views and theory-theories). If concepts are immanent in the mind as mental particulars, for instance, then various objections to the classical view have more force; if concepts exist independently of one's ideas, beliefs, capacities for categorizing objects, etc., then some objections to the classical view have much less force.

2.7 Concepts as the Targets of Analysis

Conceptual analysis is of concepts, and philosophical questions of the form What is F? (such as "What is knowledge?," "What is justice?," "What is a person?," etc.) are questions calling for conceptual analyses of various concepts (such as [knowledge], [justice], [person], etc.). Answering the further question "What is a conceptual analysis?" is yet another way to distinguish among different views of concepts. For instance, the classical view holds that all complex concepts have classical analyses, where a complex concept is a concept having an analysis in terms of other concepts. Alternatively, prototype views analyze concepts in terms of typical features or in terms of a prototypical or exemplary case. For instance, such a view might analyze the concept of being a bird in terms of such typical features as being capable of flight, being small, etc., which most birds share, even if not all of them do. A second sort of prototype theory (sometimes called "the exemplar view") might analyze the concept of being a bird in terms of a most exemplary case (a robin, say, for the concept of being a bird). So-called theory theories analyze a concept in terms of some internally represented theory about the members of the extension of that concept. For example, one might have an overall theory of birds, and the concept one expresses with one's use of 'bird' is then analyzed in terms of the role that concept plays in that internally represented theory. Neoclassical views of concepts preserve one element of the classical view, namely the claim that all complex concepts have metaphysically necessary conditions (in the sense that, for example, being unmarried is necessary for being a bachelor), but reject the claim that all complex concepts have metaphysically sufficient conditions. Finally, atomistic views reject all notions of analysis just mentioned, denying that concepts have analyses at all.

2.8 The Classical View and Concepts in General

The classical view claims simply that all complex concepts have classical analyses. As such, the classical view makes no claims as to the status of concepts as universals, or as being mind-dependent or mind-independent entities. The classical view also is consistent with

concepts being analyzable by means of other forms of analysis. Yet some views of universals are more friendly to the classical view than others, and the issue of the mind-dependence or mind-independence of concepts is of some importance to whether the classical view is correct or not. For instance, if concepts are identical to ideas present in the mind (as would be true on some conceptualist views), then if the contents of those ideas fail to have necessary and sufficient defining conditions, thenthe classical view looks to be false (or at least not true for all concepts). Alternatively, on platonic views of concepts, such a lack of available necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the contents of our own ideas is of no consequence to the classical view, since ideas are not concepts according to platonic accounts.

2.9 Classical Analyses

There are two components to an analysis of a complex concept (where a complex concept is a concept that has an analysis in terms of other "simpler" concepts): The analysandum, or the concept being analyzed, and the analysans, or the concept that

"does the analyzing." For a proposition to be a classical analysis, the following conditions must hold:

(I) A classical analysis must specify a set of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for being in the analysandum's extension (where a concept's extension is everything to which that concept could apply). (Other classical theorists deny that all classical analysis specify jointly sufficient conditions, holding instead that classical analyses merely specify necessary and sufficient conditions.)

(II) A classical analysis must specify a logical constitution of the analysandum.

Other suggested conditions on classical analysis are given below.

2.10 Logical Constitution

A classical analysis also gives a logical constitution of the concept being analyzed, in keeping with Moore's idea that an analysis breaks a concept up into its components or constituents. In an analysis, it is the logical constituents that an analysis specifies, wherea logical constituent of a concept is a concept entailed by that concept. (A concept entails another concept when being in the extension of the former entails being in the extension of the latter.) For instance, [four-sided] is a logical constituent of [square], since something's being a square entails that it is four-sided.

For a logical constitution specified by a classical analysis, a logical constitution of a concept is a collection of concepts, where each member of that collection is entailed by, and where entails all of them taken collectively.

Most complex concepts will have more than one logical constitution, given that thereare different ways of analyzing the same concept. For instance, "A square is a four- sided

regular figure" expresses an analysis of [square], but so does "A square is a four- sided, closed plane figure having sides all the same length and having neighboring sides orthogonal to one another." The first analysis gives one logical constitution for [square], and the second analysis seems to give another.

Other Conditions on Classical Analyses

In addition to conditions (I) and (II), other conditions on classical analyses have been proposed. Among them are the following:

(III) A classical analysis must not include the analysandum as either its analysans or as part of its analysans. That is, a classical analysis cannot be circular. "A square is a square" does not express an analysis, and neither does "A true sentence is a sentence that specifies a true correspondence between the proposition it expresses and the world."

(IV) A classical analysis must not have its analysandum be more complex than its analysans. That is, while "A square is a four-sided regular figure" expresses an analysis, "A four-sided regular figure is a square" does not. While the latter sentence is true, it does not express an analysis of [four-sided regular figure]. The concept [four-sided regular figure] analyzes [square], not the other way around.

(V) A classical analysis specifies a precise extension of the concept being analyzed, in the sense of specifying for any possible particular whether it is definitely in or definitely not in that concept's extension.

(VI) A classical analysis does not include any vague concepts in either its analysandum or its analysans.

The last two conditions concern vagueness. It might be thought that an analysis has to specify in some very precise way what is, and what is not, in that concept's extension (condition (V)), and also that an expression of an analysis itself cannot include any vague terms (condition (VI)).

2.11 Testing Candidate Analyses

In seeking a correct analysis for a concept, one typically considers some number of so-called candidate analyses. A correct analysis will have no possible counterexamples, where such counterexamples might show a candidate analysis to be either too broad or too narrow. For instance, let "A square is a four-sided, closed plane figure" express a candidate analysis for the concept of being a square. This candidate analysis is too broad, since it would include some things as being squares that are nevertheless not squares. Counterexamples include any trapezoid or rectangle (that is not itself a square, that is).

On the other hand, the candidate analysis expressed by "A square is a red four-sided regular figure" is too narrow, as it rules out some genuine squares as being squares, as it is at least possible for there to be squares other than red ones. Assuming for sake of illustration that squares are the sorts of things that can be colored at all, a blue square counts as a counterexample to this candidate analysis, since it fails one of the stated conditions that a square be red.

It might be wondered as to why correct analyses have no possible counterexamples, instead of the less stringent condition that correct analyses have no actual counterexamples. The reason is that analyses are put forth as necessary truths. An analysis of a concept like the concept of being a mind, for instance, is a specification of what is shared by all possible minds, not just what is in common among those minds that actually happen to exist. Similarly, in seeking an analysis of the concept of justice or piety (as Socrates sought), what one seeks is not a specification of what is incommon among all just actions or all pious actions that are actual. Instead, what one seeks is the nature of justice or piety, and that is what is in common among all possible just actions or pious actions.

2.12 Apriority and Analyticity with Respect to Classical Analyses

Classical analyses are commonly thought to be both a priori and analytic. They look to be a priori since there is no empirical component essential to their justification, and in that sense classical analyses are knowable by reason alone. In fact, the method of seeking possible counterexamples to a candidate analysis is a paradigmatic case of justifying a proposition a priori. Classical analyses also appear to be analytic, since on the rough construal of analytic propositions as those propositions "true by meaning alone," classical analyses are indeed that sort of proposition. For instance, "A square isa four-sided regular figure" expresses an analysis, and if "square" and "four-sided regular figure" are identical in meaning, then the analysis is true by meaning alone. On an account of analyticity where analytic propositions are those propositions where what is expressed by the predicate expression is "contained in" what is expressed in the subject expression, classical analyses turn out to be analytic. If what is expressed by "four-sided regular figure" is contained in what is expressed by "square," then "A square is a four-sided regular figure" is such that the meaning of its predicate expression is contained in what its subject expresses. Finally, on an account of analyticity treating analytic propositions as those where substitution of codesignating terms yields a logical truth, classical analyses turn out to be analytic propositions once more. For since "square" and "four-sided regular figure" have the same possible-worlds extension, then substituting "square" for "four-sided regular figure" in "A square is a four-sided regular figure" yields "A square is a square," which is a logical truth. (For a contrary view holding that analyses are synthetic propositions, rather than analytic, see Ackerman 1981, 1986, and 1992.)

2.13 Objections to the Classical View

Despite its history and natural appeal, in many circles the classical view has long since been rejected for one reason or another. Even in philosophy, many harbor at least some skepticism of the thesis that all complex concepts have classical analyses with the character described above. A much more common view is that some complex concepts follow the classical model, but not all of them. This section considers six fairly commonobjections to the classical view.

2.14 Summary

Some claim "critical" studies have a particular focus in their perspective or opinion, confusing the method of critique with individual critiques. The recent appearance of "critical" studies and theory further compounds the conflation of particular authors with the new method and discipline. Additionally, the method and disciplines are distinguished from analysis or traditional objectivist or hard sciences by their allowances for subjectivity in the perspective of the author.

2.15 Key Terms

- **Theory:** The word's use in connection with literature and literary criticism is related but distinct. Literary criticism proceeds by drawing on literary theory, defined as the set of methods, ideas, and assumptions that we bring to the reading of literature. There's a highly developed realm of academic research and discourse devoted to literary theory.

- **Canon:** The word "canon" refers to a collection of literary works that are held to be of extremely high quality and permanent value for a culture or civilization. The now-unfashionable idea of "the classics" is roughly equivalent. Originally used to refer to an official collection of religious texts that are held by some to be authoritative and sacred, such as the canon of 27 books that make up the New Testament, the word also came to be applied to works of literature in general as a broad conceptual tool for identifying those that constitute a kind of core collection of literary value for a given civilization—something along the lines of what the 19th-century English poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold meant in his essay "Culture and Anarchy" when he famously referred to "the best that has been thought and said."

- **Criticism:** The first word to understand is "criticism" itself, which can be confusing if you take it in the wrong sense, which also happens to be its more customary, everyday sense. In everyday conversation, to criticize most often means to find fault with someone or something.

2.16 Review questions

1. Where is the origin of literary criticism? Explain.

2. What are concepts in general? Explain with reference to literary texts.

3. Discuss the objections to Classical view.

4. What do you mean by Mind dependent and mind independent. Discuss with reference to

literary texts.

5. How is classical view related to concepts in general? Elucidate.

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UNIT 3: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Objectives

> - In this unit the students shall know about:
>   - Argument from categorization.
>   - Quine's criticism.
>   - Scientific essentialist criticism.
>   - Plato's problem

3.2 Introduction

The classical view can be traced back to at least the time of Socrates, for in many of Plato's dialogues Socrates is clearly seeking a classical analysis of some notion orother. In the Euthyphro, for instance, Socrates seeks to know the nature of piety: Yet what he seeks is not given in terms of, for example, a list of pious people or actions, nor is piety to be identified with what the gods love. Instead, Socrates seeks an account of piety in terms of some specification of what is shared by all things pious, or what makes pious things

pious—that is, he seeks a specification of the essence of piety itself. The Socratic elenchus is a method of finding out the nature or essence of various kinds of things, such as friendship (discussed in the Lysis), courage (the Laches), knowledge (the Theatetus), and justice (the Republic). That method of considering candidate definitions and seeking counterexamples to them is the same method one uses to test candidate analyses by seeking possible counterexamples to them, and thus Socrates is in effect committed to something very much like the classical view of concepts.

One sees the same sort of commitment throughout much of the Western tradition in philosophy from the ancient Greeks through the present. Clear examples include Aristotle's notion of a definition as "an account [or logos] that signifies the essence" (Topics I) by way of a specification of essential attributes, as well as his account of definitions for natural kinds in terms of genus and difference. Particular examples of classical-style analyses abound after Aristotle: For instance, Descartes (in Meditation VI) defines body as that which is extended in both space and time, and mind as that which thinks. Locke (in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Ch. 21) defines being free with respect to doing an action A as choosing/willing to do A where one's choice is part of the cause of one's actually doing A. Hume defines a miracle as an event that is both a violation of the laws of nature and caused by God. And so on. The classical view looks to be a presumption of the early analytic philosophers as well (with Wittgenstein being a notable exception). The classical view is present in the writings of Frege and Russell, and the view receives its most explicit treatment by that time in G.E. Moore's Lectures on Philosophy and other writings. Moore gives a classical analysis of the very notion of a classical analysis, and from then on the classical view (or some qualified version of it) has been one of the pillars of analytic philosophy itself.

One reason the classical view has had such staying power is that it provides themost obvious grounding for the sort of inquiry within philosophy that Socrates began. If one presumes that there are answers to What is F?-type questions, where such questionsask for the nature of knowledge, mind, goodness, etc., then that entails that there is sucha thing as the nature of knowledge, mind, goodness, etc. The nature of knowledge, for example, is that which is shared by all cases of knowledge, and a classical analysis of the concept of knowledge specifies the nature of knowledge itself. So the classical view fits neatly with the reasonable presumption that there are legitimate answers to philosophical questions concerning the natures or essences of things. As at least some other views of concepts reject the notion that concepts have metaphysically necessary conditions, accepting such other views is tantamount to rejecting (or at least significantly revising) the legitimacy of an important part of the philosophical enterprise.

The classical view also serves as the ground for one of the most basic tools of philosophy—the critical evaluation of arguments. For instance, one ground of contention in the abortion debate concerns whether fetuses have the status of moral persons or not. If they do, then since moral persons have the right not to be killed, generally speaking, then it would seem to follow that abortion is immoral. The classical view grounds the natural way to address the main contention here, for part of the task at hand is to find a proper analysis

of the concept of being a moral person. If that analysis specifies features such that not all of them are had by fetuses, then fetuses are not moral persons, and the argument against the moral permissibility of abortion fails. But without there being analyses of the sort postulated by the classical view, it is far from clear how such critical analysis of philosophical arguments is to proceed. So again, the classical view seems to underpin an activity crucial to the practice of philosophy itself.

In contemporary philosophy, J. J. Katz (1999), Frank Jackson (1994, 1998), and Christopher Peacocke (1992) are representative of those who hold at least some qualified version of the classical view. There are others as well, though many philosophers have rejected the view (at least in part due to the criticisms to be discussedin section 4 below). The view is almost universally rejected in contemporary psychology and cognitive science, due to both theoretical difficulties with the classical view and the arrival of new theories of concepts over the last quarter of the twentieth century.

3.3 Plato's Problem

Plato's problem is that after over two and a half millennia of seeking analyses of various philosophically important concepts, few if any classical analyses of such concepts have ever been discovered and widely agreed upon as fact. If there are classical analyses for all complex concepts, the critics claim, then one would expect a much higher rate of success in finding such analyses given the effort expended so far. In fact, aside from ordinary concepts such as [bachelor] and [sister], along with some concepts in logic and mathematics, there seems to be no consensus on analyses for any philosophically significant concepts. Socrates' question "What is justice?," for instance, has received a monumental amount of attention since Socrates' time, and while therehas been a great deal of progress made with respect to what is involved in the nature of justice, there still is not a consensus view as to an analysis of the concept of justice. Thecase is similar with respect to questions such as "What is the mind?," "What is knowledge?," "What is truth?," "What is freedom?," and so on.

One might think that such an objection holds the classical view to too high a standard. After all, even in the sciences there is rarely universal agreement with respect to a particular scientific theory, and progress is ongoing in furthering our understanding of entities such as electrons and neutrinos, as well as events like the Big Bang—there is always more to be discovered. Yet it would be preposterous to think that the scientific method is flawed in some way simply because such investigations are ongoing, and because there is not universal agreement with respect to various theories in the sciences.So why think that the method of philosophical analysis, with its presumption that all complex concepts have classical analyses, is flawed in some way because of the lack of widespread agreement with respect to completed or full analyses of philosophically significant concepts?

Yet while there are disagreements in the sciences, especially in cases where a given

scientific theory is freshly proposed, such disagreements are not nearly as common as they are in philosophy. For instance, while there are practicing scientists that claim to be suspicious of quantum mechanics, of the general theory of relativity, or of evolution, such detractors are extremely rare compared to what is nearly a unanimous opinion that those theories are correct or nearly correct. In philosophy, however, there are widespread disagreements concerning even the most basic questions in philosophy. For instance, take the questions "Are we free?" and "Does being free require somehow being able to do otherwise?" The first question asks for an analysis of what is meant by "free," and the second asks whether being able to do otherwise is a necessary condition on being free. Much attention has been paid to such basic questions, and the critics of the classical view claim that one would expect some sort of consensus as to the answers to them if the concept of freedom really has a classical analysis. So there is not mere disagreement with respect to the answers to such questions, but such disagreements are both widespread and involve quite fundamental issues as well. As a result, the difficulty in finding classical analyses has led many to reject the classical view.

3.4 The Argument from Categorization

There are empirical objections to the classical view as well. The argument from categorization takes as evidence various data with respect to our sorting or categorizing things into various categories, and infers that such behavior shows that the classical view is false. The evidence shows that we tend not to use any set of necessary and sufficient conditions to sort things in to one category or another, where such sorting behavior is construed as involving the application of various concepts. It is not as if one uses a classical analysis to sort things into the bird category, for instance. Instead, it seems that things are categorized according to typical features of members of the category in question, and the reason for this is that more typical members of a given category are sorted into that category more quickly than less typical members of that same category. Robins are sorted into the bird category more quickly than eagles, for instance, and eagles are sorted into the bird category more quickly than ostriches. What this suggests is that if concepts are used for acts of categorization, and classical analyses are not used in all such categorization tasks, then the classical view is false.

One presumption of the argument is that when one sorts something into one category or another, one uses one's understanding of a conceptual analysis to accomplish the task.

Yet classical theorists might complain that this need not be the case. One might use aset of typical features to sort things into the bird category, even if there is some analysis not in terms of typical features that gives the essential features shared by all birds. In other words (as Rey (1983) points out), there is a difference between what it is to look like a bird and what it is to be a bird. An analysis of a concept gives the conditions on which something is an instance of that concept, and it would seem that a concept can have an analysis (classical or otherwise) even if agents use some other set of conditions in acts of categorization.

Whether this reply to the argument from categorization rebuts the argument remains to be seen, but many researchers in cognitive psychology have taken the empirical evidence from acts of categorization to be strong evidence against the classical view. For such evidence also serves as evidence in favor of a view of concepts in competition with the classical view: the so-called prototype view of concepts. According to the prototype view, concepts are analyzed not in terms of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, but in terms of lists of typical features. Such typical features are not shared by all instances of a given concept, but are shared by at least most of them. For instance, a typical bird flies, is relatively small, and is not carnivorous. Yet none of these features is shared by all birds. Penguins don't fly, albatrosses are quite large, and birds of prey are carnivores. Such a view of concepts fits much more neatly with the evidence concerning our acts of categorization, so such critics reject the classical view.

3.5 Arguments from Vagueness

Vagueness has also been seen as problematic for the classical view. For one might think that in virtue of specifying necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, a classical analysis thus specifies a precise extension for the concept being analyzed (where a concept C has a precise extension if and only if for all x, x is either definitely in the extension of C or definitely not in the extension of C). Yet most complex concepts seem not to have such precise extensions. Terms like "bald," "short," and "old" all seem to have cases where it is unclear whether the term applies or not. That is, it seems that the concepts expressed by those terms are such that their extensions are unclear. Forinstance, it seems that there is no precise boundary between the bald and the non-bald, the short and the non-short, and the old and the non-old. But if there are no such precise boundaries to the extensions for many concepts, and a classical analysis specifies such precise boundaries, then there cannot be classical analyses for what is expressed by vague terms.

Two responses deserve note. One reply on behalf of the classical view is that vagueness is not part of the world itself, but instead is a matter of our own epistemic shortcomings. We find unclear cases simply because we don't know where the precise boundaries for various concepts lie. There could very well be a precise boundary between the bald and the non-bald, for instance, but we find "bald" to be vague simply because we do not know where that boundary lies. Such an epistemic view of vagueness would seem to be of assistance to the classical view, though such a view of vagueness needs a defense, particularly given the presence of other plausible views of vagueness. The secondresponse is that one might admit the presence of unclear cases, and admit the presenceof vagueness or "fuzziness" as a feature of the world itself, but hold that such fuzziness is mirrored in the analyses of the concepts expressed by vague terms. For instance, the concept of being a black cat might be analyzed in terms of [black] and [cat], even if "black" and "cat" are both vague terms. So classical theorists might reply that if the vagueness of a term can be mirrored in an analysis in such a way, then the classical view can escape the criticisms.

3.5.1 Quine's Criticisms

A family of criticisms of the classical view is based on W.V.O. Quine's (1953/1999, 1960) extensive attack on analyticity and the analytic/synthetic distinction. Accordingto Quine, there is no philosophically clear account of the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, and as such there is either no such distinction at all or it does no useful philosophical work. Yet classical analyses would seem to be paradigmatic cases of analytic propositions (for example, [bachelors are unmarried males], [a square is a four-sided regular figure]), and if there are no analytic propositions then it seems there are no classical analyses. Furthermore, if there is no philosophically defensible distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, then there is no legitimate criterion by which to delineate analyses from non-analyses. Those who hold that analyses are actually synthetic propositions face the same difficulty. If analyses are synthetic, then one still needs a principled difference between analytic and synthetic propositions in order to distinguish between analyses and non-analyses.

The literature on Quine's arguments is vast, and suffice it to say that criticism of Quine's arguments and of his general position is widespread as well. Yet even among those philosophers who reject Quine's arguments, most admit that there remains a great deal of murkiness concerning the analytic/synthetic distinction, despite its philosophicalusefulness. With respect to the classical view of concepts, the options available to classical theorists are at least threefold: Either meet Quine's arguments in a satisfactory way, reject the notion that all analyses are analytic (or that all are synthetic), or characterize classical analysis in a way that is neutral with respect to the analytic/synthetic distinction.

3.5.2 Scientific Essentialist Criticisms

Scientific essentialism is the view that the members of natural kinds (like gold, tiger, and water) have essential properties at the microphysical level of description, and that identity statements between natural kind terms and descriptions of such properties are metaphysically necessary and knowable only a posteriori. Some versions of scientific essentialism include the thesis that such identity statements are synthetic. That such statements are a posteriori and synthetic looks to be problematic for the classical view. For sake of illustration, let "Water is H2O" express an analysis of what is meant by the natural kind term "water." According to scientific essentialism, such a proposition is metaphysically necessary in that it is true in all possible worlds, but it is a necessary truth discovered via empirical science. As such, it is not discovered by the a priori process of seeking possible counterexamples, revising candidate analyses in light of such counterexamples, and so on. But if water's being H2O is known a posteriori, this runs counter to the usual position that all classical analyses are a priori. Furthermore, given that what is expressed by "Water is H2O" is a posteriori, this entails that it is synthetic, rather than analytic as the classical view would normally claim.

Again, the literature is vast with respect to scientific essentialism, identity statements involving natural kind terms, and the epistemic and modal status of such statements. For classical theorists, short of denying the basic theses of scientific essentialism, some options that save some portion of the classical view include holding that the classical view holds for some concepts (such as those in logic and mathematics) but not others (such as those

expressed by natural kind terms), or characterizing classical analysis in a way that is neutral with respect to the analytic/synthetic distinction. How successfulsuch strategies would be remains to be seen, and such a revised classical view would have to be weighed against other theories of concepts that handle all complex concepts with a unified treatment.

3.6 Summary

Up front, the thing to bear in mind is that literary criticism has a habit of taking everyday words and using them in very specific and sometimes counterintuitive ways. Consider the following title of an article, published in an academic literary journal, about Toni Morrison's novel Beloved: "'To Be Loved and Cry Shame': A Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's 'Beloved.'" You're already familiar with the word "reading," of course, but you may be less familiar with the way it's used here: as a noun. Instead of an act you perform, like reading a book, the word "reading" here refers to something the author of the article has created through her critical-interpretive work: a reading. And even more, it's a psychological reading. Clearly, the word "reading" is being used in a highly specific way.

3.7 Key Terms

- **Aestheticism :** It is a doctrine which holds the beauty as the highest ideal or most basic standard of art and life. It is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as "critical reflection of art culture and nature". The word is derived from the Greek which means sensitive, perceptive and sentient. Aesthetic is for the artist as ornithology is for birds, says Barnett Newman.

- **Ambiguity**: Ambiguity occurs when words carry double or more meanings. Figurative language is often ambiguous. William Empson in Seven Types of Ambiguity discusses ambiguities. Two meanings may be contradictory and show the division in the mind of the author. Verbal nuances bring about poetic richness but ambiguities must be avoided.

- **Baroque:** Baroque is an artistic style that used exaggerated motion and easily interpreted details to produce drama, sculpture painting. architecture, dance etc. It began around 1600 A.D. in Rome, Italy and spread in Europe. The word "baroque simply means that something is elaborate and detailed. It was used derogatively in the beginning to underline excess and redundancy. At present, it is used for ornate, complex and detailed works of art.

3.8 Review Questions

1. Discuss elaborately the historical origin of classical criticism.
2. How are the literary texts relating to literary theories? Explain.
3. What is aestheticism. Explain with help of examples.
4. How is ambiguity related to literary criticism. Explain.
5. Describe the importance of historical perspective of criticism in literature.

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UNIT 4: MAJOR CRITICS OF THE PERIOD – PLATO

STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

- ➢ The learners shall know the following from this unit. They are:
    - To know the major critics of the age.
    - To gain idea about the contributions of major literary critics of the age.
    - To know the important texts written by the critics.
    - To know the literary figures and their style of writing.

4.2 Introduction

Due to a lack of primary sources from the time period, much of Plato's life has been constructed by scholars through his writings and the writings of contemporaries and classical historians. Traditional history estimates Plato's birth was around 428 B.C., but more modern scholars, tracing later events in his life, believe he was born between 424 and 423 B.C. Both of his parents came from the Greek aristocracy. Plato's father, Ariston, descended from the kings of Athens and Messenia. His mother, Perictione, is said to be related to the 6th century B.C.Greek statesman Solon.

Some scholars believe that Plato was named for his grandfather, Aristocles, following the tradition of the naming the eldest son after the grandfather. But there is no conclusive evidence of this, or that Plato was the eldest son in his family. Other historians claim that "Plato" was a nickname, referring to his broad physical build. This too is possible, although

there is recordthat the name Plato was given to boys before Aristocles was born.

4.3Plato – Life History

Born circa 428 B.C., ancient Greek philosopher Plato was a student of Socrates and a teacher of Aristotle. His writings explored justice, beauty and equality, and also contained discussions in aesthetics, political philosophy, theology, cosmology, epistemology and the philosophy of language. Plato founded the Academy in Athens, one of the first institutions of higher learning in the Western world. He died in Athens circa 348 B.C.

As with many young boys of his social class, Plato was probably taught by some of Athens' finest educators. The curriculum would have featured the doctrines of Cratylus and Pythagoras as well as Parmenides. These probably helped develop the foundation for Plato's study of metaphysics (the study of nature) and epistemology (the study of knowledge).

Plato's father died when he was young, and his mother remarried her uncle, Pyrilampes, a Greek politician and ambassador to Persia. Plato is believed to have had two full brothers, one sister and a half brother, though it is not certainwhere he falls in the birth order. Often, members of Plato's family appeared in hisdialogues. Historians believe this is an indication of Plato's pride in his family lineage.

As a young man, Plato experienced two major events that set his course in life. One was meeting the great Greek philosopher Socrates. Socrates's methodsof dialogue and debate impressed Plato so much that he soon he became a close associate and dedicated his life to the question of virtue and the formation of a noble character. The other significant event was the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, in which Plato served for a brief time between 409 and 404 B.C. The defeat of Athens ended its democracy, which the Spartans replaced withan oligarchy. Two of Plato's relatives, Charmides and Critias, were prominent figures in the new government, part of the notorious Thirty Tyrants whose brief rule severely reduced the rights of Athenian citizens. After the oligarchy was overthrown and democracy was restored, Plato briefly considered a career in politics, but the execution of Socrates in 399 B.C. soured him on this idea and he turned to a life of study and philosophy.

After Socrates's death, Plato traveled for 12 years throughout the Mediterranean region, studying mathematics with the Pythagoreans in Italy, and geometry, geology, astronomy and religion in Egypt. During this time, or soon after, he began his extensive writing. There is some debate among scholars on theorder of these writings, but most believe they fall into

three distinct periods.

4.4 Plato and Contribution to literature

The first, or early, period occurs during Plato's travels (399-387 B.C.). The Apology of Socrates seems to have been written shortly after Socrates's death. Other texts in this time period include Protagoras, Euthyphro, Hippias Major and Minor and Ion. In these dialogues, Plato attempts to convey Socrates's philosophy and teachings.

In the second, or middle, period, Plato writes in his own voice on the central ideals of justice, courage, wisdom and moderation of the individual and society. The Republic was written during this time with its exploration of just governmentruled by philosopher kings.

In the third, or late, period, Socrates is relegated to a minor role and Plato takes a closer look at his own early metaphysical ideas. He explores the role of art, including dance, music, drama and architecture, as well as ethics and morality. Inhis writings on the Theory of Forms, Plato suggests that the world of ideas is the only constant and that the perceived world through our senses is deceptive and changeable.

Founding the Academy

Sometime around 385 B.C., Plato founded a school of learning, known as the Academy, which he presided over until his death. It is believed the school was located at an enclosed park named for a legendary Athenian hero. The Academy operated until 529 A.D., when it was closed by Roman Emperor Justinian I, who feared it was a source of paganism and a threat to Christianity. Over its years of operation, the Academy's curriculum included astronomy, biology, mathematics, political theory and philosophy. Plato hoped the Academy would provide a place for future leaders to discover how to build a better government in the Greek city- states.

In 367, Plato was invited by Dion, a friend and disciple, to be the personal tutorof his nephew, Dionysus II, the new ruler of Syracuse (Sicily). Dion believed that Dionysus showed promise as an ideal leader. Plato accepted, hoping the experience would produce a philosopher king. But Dionysius fell far short of expectations and suspected Dion, and later Plato, of conspiring against him. He had Dion exiled and Plato placed under "house arrest." Eventually, Plato returned to Athens and his Academy. One of his more promising students there was Aristotle, who would take his mentor's teachings in new directions.

Final Years

Plato's final years were spent at the Academy and with his writing. The circumstances surrounding his death are clouded, though it is fairly certain that he died in Athens around 348 B.C., when he was in his early 80s. Some scholars suggest that he died while attending a wedding, while others believe he died peacefully in his sleep.

Plato's impact on philosophy and the nature of humans has had a lasting impact far beyond his homeland of Greece. His work covered a broad spectrum of interests and ideas: mathematics, science and nature, morals and political theory. His beliefs on the importance of mathematics in education have proven to be essential for understanding the entire universe. His work on the use of reason to develop a more fair and just society that is focused on the equality of individuals established the foundation for modern democracy.

4.5 Plato and literary theory

In his theory of Mimesis, Plato says that all art is mimetic by nature; art is an imitation of life. He believed that 'idea' is the ultimate reality. Art imitates idea and so it is imitation of reality. He gives an example of a carpenter and a chair. The idea of 'chair' first came in the mind of carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea out of wood and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of chair. Thus, painter's chair is twice removed from reality. Hence, he believed that art is twice removed from reality. He gives first importance to philosophy as philosophy deals with the ideas whereas poetry deals with illusion – things which are twice removed from reality. So to Plato, philosophy is superior to poetry. Plato rejected poetry as it is mimetic in nature on the moral and philosophical grounds. On the contrary, Aristotle advocated poetry as it is mimetic in nature. According to him, poetry is an imitation of an action and his tool of enquiry is neither philosophical nor moral. He examines poetry as a piece of art and not as a book of preaching or teaching.

While Aristotle gave careful consideration to the function and roles of literature in his Poetics, his teacher Plato also offered an extended critique and definition of the role of literature in society in his dialogues The Republic and The Symposium. In The Republic, Plato offers a rather pointed and stark critique of literature's role and purpose in society. Plato believed that literature— specifically drama and poetry—were dangerous to the stability of what he envisioned to be an ideal republic or city state. He argued that the arts served to shape character and that an ideal society must itself train and educate its citizens, hence the arts must be strictly censored. Furthermore, Plato argued that an artisticwork is always a copy of a copy, hence an artistic work always imitates something real, and all things which are real are an imitation of a universal concept or idea (what Plato called "the really real"), thus all works of art are copies of copies and not fully true or real. Coupled with the ability of an artistic work to stir emotions and inspire action, the illusionary nature of art made such dangerous to society in Plato's view. On the other hand, in his dialogues Ion and The Symposium, Plato speculated that artists make better copies of that which is

true rather than which can be discovered in reality; hence, the artist can be understood as something like a prophet or visionary.

Plato's theory of art as imitation of truth had a tremendous influence upon early literary critics and theorists during the Renaissance and 19th century, many of whom often speculated as to the role and function of art as imitation of reality. While modern and contemporary literary theorists tend not to accept Plato's notion of art as being a dangerous social force, in fact, most literary theorists take exactly the opposite perspective of Plato, especially in the case of Marxist and new historicist theorists. Most literary theorists argue that literature is in fact a liberating force; Plato has had a tremendous impact on the development of literary theory. In fact, many contemporary literary theorists argue that Plato's theory of art as imitation served to first introduce a theory of literature to the Western world. The most lasting and potent aspect of Plato's theory, surely, is his "Allegory of the Cave" from Book VII of The Republic. In thisallegorical vision, Plato offers an image of chained prisoners facing a wall within a dark cave. Behind the prisoners are a high wall and a fire, and between the wall and the fire is a group of actors holding stick puppets. The prisoners can only see the shadows cast by the puppets, which they will understand to be their entire world or reality. If the prisoners are ever released, Plato argued, they would stumble about, be blinded by the fire, and eventually realize that the puppets are only shadows of a far greater reality. Once released, the prisoners will then come to see reality for what it truly is and will realize that the shadows they had seen before were mere copies of reality itself. For Plato, those shadows represented images of truth (or symbols of a greater reality) and served, also, as illusionary representations of truth. Plato's allegory has served, then, to represent humanity'sinability to see larger truths. While Plato was contending that art served, in essence, to block humans from seeing and understanding larger truths, some literary theorists feel that literary theory offers a method through which people can begin to comprehend greater truths by revealing to them the hidden machinations of reality which they are blind to.

4.6 Summary

Plato believed that reality is divided into two parts: the ideal and the phenomena. The ideal is the perfect reality of existence. The phenomena are the physical world that we experience; it is a flawed echo of the perfect, ideal model that exists outside of space and time.

4.7 Key Terms

- **Gestalt Philosophy:** Gestalt is a German word meaning form, figure or shape. It refers manner of literary composition. Herbert Read states: "Coleridge contends that in both prose and poetry, there is a characteristic construction what we should now (and what Schelling even then did) call a gestalt.

- **Judicial Criticism:** It seeks to pronounce judgments on works of literature on the basis of certain rules. If a work is found to adhere to these rules, it is good. If not, it is condemned as worthless. Such rules were derived from ancient Greek and Roman masters. Dr.

Johnson can be called the exponent of judicial criticism. 28. Mysticism: It is a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institution and traditions aimed at human transformation. It is a belief that union with the absolute can be attained through contemplation or self-surrender. It is often characterized by self-delusion and dreamy state of mind. It believes in attaining oneness with all human beings and nature.

- **Nihilism:** It is a rejection of all religious and moral principles. It also believes that life has no meaning. In philosophy. It is extreme scepticism maintaining that nothing in the world has a real existence. It can be called 'SHUNYAVAD'. It disapproved of all social order. It denied any objective ground for truth and morality.

4.8 Review Questions

1. What are the contributions of Plato to literary theory?
2. Discuss the theory of Plato to literary theory.
3. How are Plato and other writers of the age comparable to each other? Discuss.
4. Compare and contrast the style of writing in Plato's texts.
5. What are the major texts written by Plato and how his theory applicable to literature? Justify.

4.7 References

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UNIT 5: MAJOR CRITICS OF THE PERIOD – II

STRUCTURE

5.1 Objectives
5.2 Introduction
5.3 Socrates -   Life History
5.4 Socrates and contribution to literature
5.5 Socrates and literary theory
5.6 Summary
5.7 Key Terms
5.8 Review Questions
5.9 References

5.1 Objectives

➢ The learners shall know the following from this unit:
  • Major critics of classical theory.
  • Detailed study on Socrates and his life.
  • Socrates and his theory

- Contribution of Socrates's theory on the whole of literature.
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5.2 Introduction

Socrates (born   c.   470 BCE, <u>Athens</u> [Greece]—died   399 BCE,   Athens) <u>ancient Greek philosopher</u> whose way of life, character, and thought exerted a profound influence on <u>Classical antiquity</u> and <u>Western philosophy</u>.

Socrates was a widely recognized and controversial figure in his native Athens, so much so that he was frequently mocked in the plays of comic dramatists. (The *Clouds* of <u>Aristophanes</u>, produced in 423, is the best-known example.) Although Socrates himself wrote nothing, he is depicted in conversation in <u>compositions</u> by a small circle of his admirers—<u>Plato</u> and <u>Xenophon</u> first among them. He is portrayed in these works as a man of great insight, <u>integrity</u>, self-mastery, and argumentative skill. The impact of his life was all the greater because of the way in which it ended: at age 70, he was brought to <u>trial</u> on a charge of impiety and sentenced to death by poisoning (the poison probably being <u>hemlock</u>) by a jury of his fellow citizens. Plato's *Apology of Socrates* purports to be the speech Socrates gave at his trial in response to the accusations made against him (Greek *apologia* means "defense"). Its powerful <u>advocacy</u> of the examined life and its condemnation of Athenian <u>democracy</u> have made it one of the central documents of Western thought and <u>culture</u>.

While Socrates was alive, he was, as noted, the object of comic ridicule, but most of the plays that make reference to him are entirely lost or exist only in fragmentary form—*Clouds* being the chief exception. Although Socrates is the central figure of this play, it was not Aristophanes' purpose to give a balanced and accurate portrait of him (comedy never aspires to this) but rather to use him to represent certain <u>intellectual</u> trends in contemporary Athens—the study of <u>language</u> and nature and, as Aristophanes implies, the amoralism and <u>atheism</u> that accompany these pursuits. The value of the play as a reliable source of knowledge about Socrates is thrown further into doubt by the fact that, in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates himself rejects it as a fabrication. This aspect of the trial will be discussed more fully below.

Soon after Socrates' death, several members of his circle preserved and praised his memory by <u>writing</u> works that represent him in his most characteristic activity—conversation. His <u>interlocutors</u> in these (typically adversarial) exchanges included people he happened to meet, devoted followers, prominent political figures, and leading thinkers of the day. Many of these "Socratic discourses," as <u>Aristotle</u> calls them in his *Poetics*, are no longer extant; there are only brief remnants of the conversations written by <u>Antisthenes</u>, <u>Aeschines</u>, <u>Phaedo</u>, and Eucleides. But those composed by Plato and Xenophon survive in their entirety. What knowledge we have of Socrates must therefore depend primarily on one or the other (or both, when their portraits coincide) of these sources. (Plato and Xenophon also wrote separate accounts, each entitled *Apology of Socrates*, of Socrates' trial.) Most scholars, however, do not believe that every Socratic discourse of Xenophon and Plato was intended as a historical report of what the real Socrates said, word-for-word, on some occasion. What can reasonably be claimed about at least some of these <u>dialogues</u> is that they convey the gist of the questions

Socrates asked, the ways in which he typically responded to the answers he received, and the general philosophical orientation that emerged from these conversations.

5.3 Socrates - Life History

The Greek philosopher and logician (one who studies logic or reason) Socrates was an important influence on Plato (427–347 B.C.E.) and had a major effect on ancient philosophy.

➢ Early life

Socrates was the son of Sophroniscus, an Athenian stone mason and sculptor. He learned his father's craft and apparently practiced it for many years. He participated in the Peloponnesian War (431–04 B.C.E.) when Athens was crushed by the Spartans, and he distinguished himself for his courage. Details of his early life are scarce, although he appears to have had no more than an ordinary Greek education before devoting his time almost completely to intellectual interests. He did, however, take a keen interest in the works of the natural philosophers, and Plato records the fact that Socrates met Zeno of Elea (c. 495–430 B.C.E.) and Parmenides (born c. 515 B.C.E.) on their trip to Athens, which probably took place about 450 B.C.E.

Socrates himself wrote nothing, therefore evidence of his life and activities must come from the writings of Plato and Xenophon (c. 431–352 B.C.E.). It is likely that neither of these presents a completely accurate picture of him, but Plato's Apology, Crito, Phaedo, and Symposium contain details which must be close to fact.

From the Apology we learn that Socrates was well known around Athens; uncritical thinkers linked him with the rest of the Sophists (a philosophicalschool); he fought in at least three military campaigns for the city; and heattracted to his circle large numbers of young men who delighted in seeing their elders proved false by Socrates. His courage in military campaigns is describedby Alcibiades (c. 450–404 B.C.E.) in the Symposium.

In addition to stories about Socrates's strange character, the Symposium provides details regarding his physical appearance. He was short, quite the opposite of what was considered graceful and beautiful in the Athens of his time. He wasalso poor and had only the barest necessities of life. Socrates's physical ugliness did not stop his appeal.

➢ His death

Meletus, Lycon, and Anytus charged Socrates with impiety (being unreligious) and with corrupting the youth of the city. Since defense speeches were made by the principals in Athenian legal practice, Socrates spoke in his own behalf and hisdefense speech was a sure sign that he was not going to give in. After taking up the charges and showing how they

were false, he proposed that the city should honor him as it did Olympic victors. He was convicted and sentenced to death. Plato's Crito tells of Crito's attempts to persuade Socrates to flee the prison (Crito had bribed [exchanged money for favors] the jailer, as was customary), but Socrates, in a dialogue between himself and the Laws of Athens, reveals his devotion to the city and his obligation to obey its laws even if they lead to his death. In the Phaedo, Plato recounts Socrates's discussion of the immortality of the soul; and at the end of that dialogue, one of the most moving and dramatic scenes in ancient literature, Socrates takes the hemlock (poison) prepared for himwhile his friends sit helplessly by. He died reminding Crito that he owes a roosterto Aesculapius.

Socrates was the most colorful figure in the history of ancient philosophy. His fame was widespread in his own time, and his name soon became a household word although he professed no extraordinary wisdom, constructed no philosophical system, established no school, and founded no sect (following). Hisinfluence on the course of ancient philosophy, through Plato, the Cynics, and lessdirectly, Aristotle, is immeasurable.

5.4 Socrates and contribution to literature

There was a strong religious side to Socrates's character and thought which constantly revealed itself in spite of his criticism of Greek myths. His words and actions in the Apology, Crito, Phaedo, and Symposium reveal a deep respect for Athenian religious customs and a sincere regard for divinity (gods). Indeed, it was a divine voice which Socrates claimed to hear within himself on important occasions in his life. It was not a voice which gave him positive instructions, but instead warned him when he was about to go off course. He recounts, in his defense before the Athenian court, the story of his friend Chaerephon, who was told by the Delphic Oracle (a person regarded as wise counsel) that Socrates was the wisest of men. That statement puzzled Socrates, he says, for no one was moreaware of the extent of his own ignorance than he himself, but he determined to see the truth of the god's words. After questioning those who had a reputation for wisdom and who considered themselves, wise, he concluded that he was wiser than they because he could recognize his ignorance while they, who were equally ignorant, thought themselves wise.

5.5 Socrates and literary theory

Socrates was famous for his method of argumentation (a system or process used for arguing or debate) and his works often made as many enemies as admirers within Athens. An example comes from the Apology. Meletus had accused Socrates of corrupting the youth, or ruining the youth's morality. Socrates begins by asking if Meletus considers the improvement of youth important. He replies that he does, whereupon Socrates asks who is capable of improving the young. The laws, says Meletus, and Socrates asks him to name a person who knows the laws. Meletus responds that the judges there present know the laws, whereupon Socrates asks if all who are present are able to instruct and improve youth or whether only a few can. Meletus replies that all of them are capable of such a task, which forces Meletus to confess that other groups of Athenians, such as the Senate and the Assembly, and indeed all Athenians are capable of instructing andimproving the youth. All except Socrates, that is. Socrates then starts a similar set of questions regarding the instruction and improvement of horses and otheranimals. Is it true that all men are capable of training horses, or only those men with special qualifications and experience? Meletus, realizing the absurdity of hisposition, does not answer, but Socrates answers for him and says that if he does not care enough about the youth of Athens to have given adequate thought to who might instruct and improve them, he has no right to accuse Socrates of corrupting them.

Thus the Socratic method of argumentation begins with commonplace questions which lead the opponent to believe that the questioner is simple, but ends in a complete reversal.

Thus his chief contributions lie not in the construction of an elaborate system but in clearing away the false common beliefs and in leading men to an awareness of their own ignorance, from which position they may begin to discover the truth. It was his unique combination of dialectical (having to do with using logic and reasoning in an argument or discussion) skill and magnetic attractiveness to the youth of Athens which gave his opponents their opportunity to bring him to trial in 399 B.C.E.

5.6 Summary

Although Socrates is the interlocutor who guides the conversation in most of Plato's dialogues, there are several in which he plays a minor role (*Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Timaeus*, all of which are generally agreed to be among Plato's later works) and one (*Laws*, also composed late) in which he is entirely absent. Why did Plato assign Socrates a small role in some dialogues (and none in *Laws*) and a large role in others? A simple answer is that, by this device, Plato intended to signal to his readers that the dialogues in which Socrates is the major interlocutor convey the philosophy of Socrates, whereas those in which he is a minor figure or does not appear at all present Plato's own ideas.

5.7 Key Terms

- **Obscurantism:** It is the practice of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of some matter from becoming known. There are two common historical and intellectual denotations of obscurantism-opposition to spread of knowledge and deliberate obscurity of style in art or literature.

- **Oedipus Complex:** The term Oedipal complex is a term used by Freud. It explains the emotions and ideas that the mind keeps in the unconscious via repression that concentrates upon a child's desire to have sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex. Males are attracted to mothers and daughters to fathers.

- **Paganism:** It is a term that developed among the Christian community of Southern Europe during antiquity to describe religions other than their own. In 19 century, it was re-adopted as a self-descriptor by members of various artistic groups inspired by the ancient world. It was used pejoratively for polytheists.

5.8 Review Questions

1. How is Socrates different from Plato?
2. Discuss the life history of Socrates.
3. Discuss the theory of Socrates.

4. Compare and contrast the theories of Socrates and Plato.
5. Elucidate in detail the contribution of Socrates theory in literature.

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BLOCK 2: ARISTOTLE

UNIT 6: Aristotle – Life and Times
UNIT 7: Poetics: Theory and analysis
UNIT 8: A critical examination of the text – *Poetics*
UNIT 9: Aristotle's legacy – Application in modern times - Aristotle timeline

UNIT 6: ARISTOTLE – LIFE AND TIMES

STRUCTURE

6.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall enable the students to learn about the:

- Personal life history of Aristotle.

- Contribution of Aristotle in literature.

- Aristotle and his theory

- Aristotle's Scientific method.

6.2 Introduction

Little is known about Aristotle's life. He was born in the city of Stagira in northern Greece during the Classical period. His father, Nicomachus, died when Aristotle was a child, and he was brought up by a guardian. At 17 or 18, he joined Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until the age of 37 (c. 347 BC). Shortly after Plato died, Aristotle left Athens and, at the request of Philip II of Macedon, tutored his son Alexander the Great beginning in 343 BC. He established a library in the Lyceum, which helped him to produce many of his hundreds of books on papyrus scrolls.

Though Aristotle wrote many elegant treatises and dialogues for publication, only around a third of his original output has survived, none of it intended for publication. Aristotle provided a

complex synthesis of the various philosophies existing prior to him. His teachings and methods of inquiry have had a significant impact across the world, and remain a subject of contemporary philosophical discussion.

Aristotle's views profoundly shaped medieval scholarship. The influence of his physical science extended from late antiquity and the Early Middle Ages into the Renaissance, and was not replaced systematically until the Enlightenment and theories such as classical mechanics were developed. He influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophies during the Middle Ages, as well as Christian theology, especially the Neoplatonism of the Early Church and the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church.

Aristotle was revered among medieval Muslim scholars as "The First Teacher", and among medieval Christians like Thomas Aquinas as simply "The Philosopher", while the poet Dante called him "the master of those who know". His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic, and were studied by medieval scholars such as Peter Abelard and Jean Buridan. Aristotle's influence on logic continued well into the 19th century. In addition, his ethics, although always influential, gained renewed interest with the modern advent of virtue ethics.

6.3 Childhood and Early Life

Aristotle was born in the small Greek town of Stageira, Chalcidice in 384 B.C. His father, Nicomachus was the physician of King Amyntas of Macedon. There are not much record of Aristotle's early life but it was evident that he was trained and educated as an aristocratic member. Being a physician's son, he was inspired to his father's scientific work but didn't show much interest in medicine. At the age of eighteen, he headed towards Athens and joined the Plato Academy to continue his education. He spent next twenty years of his life in this academy only. It is said that even though Aristotle really admired and respected Plato,some considerable differences occurred between the two.

After the death of Plato in 348/347 B.C., when his nephew Speusippus became the head of the Plato Academy, Aristotle left Athens. He and his friend Xenocrates moved towards the court of Hermias of Atarneus in Asia Minor. In year 343 B.C., Philip II of Macedon invited Aristotle to be the tutor of his son Alexander who later became Alexander the Great. He was also appointed as the head of the royal academy of Macedon. There are significant proves that Aristotle encouraged Alexander towards eastern conquest. In one of examples, hetold Alexander that he is the leader of Greeks and Persians are barbarians and should be treated like beasts or plants. Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 B.C. and established his own school named as Lyceum. For the next twelve years ofhis life, he conducted courses at the school.

6.4 His Approach Towards Science

Aristotle's approach towards science was different from that of his teacher, Plato. While the

latter dedicated his wholly and solely to 'first philosophy', that of metaphysics and mathematics, Aristotle believed that it was also very important to study 'second philosophy': the world around us, from physics and mechanics to biology. It can be said that Aristotle single handedly invented science as it is today, including various fields and categories. Also, unlike Plato who was only involved with abstract form, Aristotle chose to study minutely the natural world, plants and animals, how they worked, what were theymade up of and to understand how each of them fitted in the larger picture of nature. His research and study of nature was idolized on four important causes – matter, form, moving cause and final cause. He wrote in detail about five hundred different animals in his works, including a hundred and twenty kinds of fish and sixty kinds of insect. He was the first to use dissection extensively.

6.5 Aristotle's Scientific Method

Aristotle is famous for his introduction of scientific method and also known for providing important term of science called 'empiricism'. Like his teacher, his philosophy quite lies in universal approach. He said that universal truths can be known from some particular things through induction. Even when induction was sufficient enough to discover universals by generalizations, itwasn't succeeding in identifying causes. For this cause, Aristotle had to use deductive reasoning in the form of syllogisms. He developed a complete normative approach to scientific enquiry with the help of syllogism. But there was a difficulty with this scheme; it had problems in showing that derived truths have solid primary premises. Perhaps he could have showed that demonstrations were circular in which conclusions have supported premises and premises must have supported conclusions. But he didn't allow that.

He didn't allow the inclusion of infinite number of middle terms between the primary premises and the conclusion. Induction was the only method suitable for this purpose. Aristotle's writings were more qualitative than quantitative. The main reason of his failings was the lack of concepts like mass, temperature, velocity and force in his research. His writings were considered as a mixture of curious errors and precocious accuracy. For example, his theory of heavier objects fall faster than lighter ones was proved incorrect by the simple experiments of Galileo and John Philoponus. He was also criticized for his simple observation and over-stretched reason in deriving the "laws of universe". In today's scientific method, his observations without sufficient facts are considered ineffective. His theory of geocentric cosmology also was provedwrong in terms of modern metaphysics.

6.6 Personal Life

During his stay in Asia Minor, Aristotle married Pythias, the niece of Hermias. She bore him a daughter. After the death of his wife, Aristotle married again to a woman named, Herpyllis of Stageira who gave birth to a son, whom henamed after his father, Nicomachus.

6.7 Death

During the end days of his life, Alexander suspected Aristotle of conspiring against him and threatened him in letters. Aristotle had publicly written against the Alexander's pretense of divinity. His grandnephew, Callisthenes was executed after accused as a traitor. After the death of Alexander,anti-Macedonian sentiments flared and Aristotle was accused of not holdingGods on honor. He fled to his mother's ancestral place in Chalcis. He later died in Euboea in 322 B.C. due to some natural causes. According to his will, he was buried next to his wife.

6.8 Summary

Aristotle is a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, who made important contributions to logic, criticism, rhetoric, physics, biology, psychology, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. He was a student of Plato for twenty years but is famous for rejecting Plato's theory of forms.

6.9 Key Terms

- **Pantheism:** Pantheism is a belief that universe is identical with divinity or that everything composes an all-encompassing immanent God. Pantheists don't believe in a distinct personal or anthropomorphic god. The term was used by Irish thinker John Tolard (1705) and constructed from the Greek roots 'pan' (all) and 'theos' (god). It believes that everything and everyone is god.

- **Pathetic Fallacy:** It is a literary term for attributing of human emotion and conduct to all aspects within nature. It is a kind of personification that is found in poetic writing when, for example, clouds look sullen, leaves dance or rocks seem indifferent. It attributes human emotions to inanimate objects.

- **Monotheism/ Polytheism:** Monotheism is a belief that there is only one powerful god, an opposed to religions that believe in many gods. Hinduism is the example of polytheistic philosophy.

- **Positivism:** A philosophical system that holds that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof. It rejects metaphysics and theism. It is a philosophy of science that positive facts, information derived from sensory experience interpreted through rational, logical or mathematical treatments form exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge.

6.10   Review Question

1. What is the contribution of Aristotle in literature?

2. Compare and Contrast the theories of Aristotle and Plato.

3. How are Aristotle, Plato and Socrates linked with each other? Elucidate

4. Compare the theories of Aristotle and Socrates.

5. How are Plato and Aristotle different?

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UNIT 7: POETICS: THEORY AND ANALYSIS

STRUCTURE

7.1 Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Background of the text *Poetics*

7.4 Important terms in Poetics

7.5 Summary

7.6 Key Terms

7.7 Review Questions

7.8 References

7.1 Objectives

- ➢ This unit shall enable the students to learn about the:

  - Text - Poetics of Aristotle.

  - Contribution of Aristotle in literature.

  - Aristotle and his important theoretical term.

  - Aristotle's Classical method.

7.2 Introduction

Aristotle proposes to discuss poetry, which he defines as a means of mimesis, or imitation, by means of language, rhythm, and harmony. As creatures who thrive on imitation, we are naturally drawn to poetry.

In particular, Aristotle focuses his discussion on tragedy, which uses dramatic, rather than narrative, form, and deals with agents who are better than us ourselves. Tragedy serves to arouse the emotions of pity and fear and to effect a katharsis (catharsis) of these emotions. Aristotle divides tragedy into six different parts, ranking them in order from most important to least important as follows:
(1) mythos, or plot, (2) character, (3) thought, (4) diction, (5) melody, and (6) spectacle.

The first essential to creating a good tragedy is that it should maintain unity of plot. This means that the plot must move from beginning to end according to a tightly organized sequence of necessary or probable events. The beginning should not necessarily follow from any earlier events, and the end should tie up all loose ends and not produce any necessary consequences. The plot can also be enhanced by an intelligent use of peripeteia, or reversal, and anagnorisis, or recognition. These elements work best when they are made an integral part of theplot.

A plot should consist of a hero going from happiness to misery. The hero should be portrayed consistently and in a good light, though the poet should also remain true to what we know of the character. The misery should be the result of some hamartia, or error, on the part of the hero. A tragic plot must always involvesome sort of tragic deed, which can be done or left undone, and this deed can be approached either with full knowledge or in ignorance.

Aristotle discusses thought and diction and then moves on to address epic poetry. Epic poetry is similar to tragedy in many ways, though it is generally longer, more fantastic, and deals with a greater scope of action. After addressing some problems of criticism, Aristotle argues that tragedy is superior to epic poetry.

7.3 Background of the text Poetics

Aristotle's one-time teacher, Plato (427–347 BCE) famously attacked art in Book X of his work *The Republic*. According to Plato's Theory of Forms, objects in this world are imitations or approximations of ideal Forms that are the true reality. A chair in this world is just an imitation or instantiation of the Form of Chair. That being the case, art is twice removed from reality, as it is just an imitation of an imitation: a painting of a chair is an imitation of a chair which is in turn an imitation of the Form of Chair. Further, Plato argues that art serves to excite the emotions, which can detract from the balanced reasoning that is essential to virtue. The text Poetics can be read as a response to Plato's attack on art in *The Republic.*

7.4 Important terms in Poetics

Mimesis - Mimesis is the act of creating in someone's mind, through artistic representation, an idea or ideas that the person will associate with past experience. Roughly translatable as "imitation," mimesis in poetry is the act of telling stories that are set in the real world. The events in the story need not have taken place, but the telling of the story will help the listener or viewer to imagine the events taking place in the real world.

Hamartia - This word translates almost directly as "error," though it is often rendered

more elaborately as "tragic flaw." Tragedy, according to Aristotle, involves the downfall of a hero, and this downfall is effected by some error onthe part of the hero. This error need not be an overarching moral failing: it could be a simple matter of not knowing something or forgetting something.

Anagnorisis - This word translates as "recognition" or "discovery." In tragedy, itdescribes the moment where the hero, or some other character, passes from ignorance to knowledge. This could be a recognition of a long lost friend or family member, or it could be a sudden recognition of some fact about oneself, as is the case with Oedipus. Anagnorisis often occurs at the climax of a tragedy in tandem with peripeteia.

Mythos - When dealing with tragedy, this word is usually translated as "plot," but unlike "plot," mythos can be applied to all works of art. Not so much a matterof what happens and in what order, mythos deals with how the elements of a tragedy (or a painting, sculpture, etc.) come together to form a coherent and unified whole. The overall message or impression that we come away with is what is conveyed to us by the mythos of a piece.

Katharsis - This word was normally used in ancient Greece by doctors to mean "purgation" or by priests to mean "purification." In the context of tragedy, Aristotle uses it to talk about a purgation or purification of emotions. Presumably, this means that katharsis is a release of built up emotional energy, much like a good cry. After katharsis, we reach a more stable and neutral emotional state.

Peripeteia - A reversal, either from good to bad or bad to good. Peripeteia oftenoccurs at the climax of a story, often prompted by anagnorisis. Indeed, we might say that the peripeteia is the climax of a story: it is the turning point in the action, where things begin to move toward a conclusion.

Lusis - Literally "untying," the lusis is all the action in a tragedy from the climax onward. All the plot threads that have been woven together in the desis are slowly unraveled until we reach the conclusion of the play.

Desis - Literally "tying," the desis is all the action in a tragedy leading up to the climax. Plot threads are craftily woven together to form a more and more complex mess. At the peripeteia, or turning point, these plot threads begin to unravel in what is called the lusis, or denouement.

7.5 Summary

Aristotle's work remains largely unknown to modern scientists, though zoologists sometimes mention him as the father of biology or in particular of marine biology. Practising zoologists are unlikely to adhere to Aristotle's chain of being, but its influence is still perceptible in the use of the terms "lower" and "upper" to designate taxa such as groups of plants. The evolutionary biologist Armand Marie Leroi has reconstructed Aristotle's biology, while Niko Tinbergen's four questions, based on Aristotle's four causes, are used to analyse animal behaviour; they

examine function, phylogeny, mechanism, and ontogeny. The concept of homology began with the evolutionary developmental biologist Lewis I. Held commented that he would be interested in the concept of deep homology. Aristotle;

7.6 Key Terms

- **Academy:** Run by Plato, the Academy was the center of Greek learning. Aristotle spent twenty years there and owes a great deal of his life's work to this formative influence.
- **City-state:** A self-governing political unit that is sometimes under the power of an overseeing nation, as Athens was in Greece.
- **Teleology:** The consideration of natural ends or purposes in explaining phenomena.
- **Unmoved Mover:** The first cause of all motion that is itself unmoved. Aristotle extended this natural science concept to his theology, arguing that the Unmoved Mover was equivalent to God. The being is perfect and eternal but does not take an interest in the world.

7.7 Review Questions

1. Define Aristotle's theory with reference to literature.
2. How is Aristotle praised for his contribution to the field of literature? Explain.
3. Elaborate the theory proposed by Aristotle in the other fields.
4. Discuss the difference between the theories of Aristotle and Plato.
5. Discuss the implications of Aristotle's theory in literary fields.

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UNIT 8: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TEXT- "POETICS"

STRUCTURE

8.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall let the learners to know about:
> - Plato's theory of mimesis.

- Aristotle's defense.
- Meaning of important terms in poetics.
- Aristotle's concept of tragedy.

8.2 Introduction

The Arabic version of Aristotle's *Poetics* that influenced the Middle Ages was translated from a Greek manuscript dated to some time prior to the year 700. This manuscript, translated from Greek to Syriac, is independent of the currently-accepted 11th-century source designated *Paris 1741*. The Syriac-language source used for the Arabic translations departed widely in vocabulary from the original *Poetics* and it initiated a misinterpretation of Aristotelian thought that continued through the Middle Ages. The scholars who published significant commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics* included Avicenna, Al-Farabi, and Averroes. Many of these interpretations sought to use Aristotelian theory to impose morality on the Arabic poetic tradition.[20]:15 In particular, Averroes added a moral dimension to the *Poetics* by interpreting tragedy as the art of praise and comedy as the art of blame. Averroes' interpretation of the *Poetics* was accepted by the West, where it reflected the "prevailing notions of poetry" into the 16th century.

8.3 Poetry as Mimesis (Imitation)

Aristotle defines all poetry as mimesis (imitation). In other words, poetry imitates nature, which is to say it imitates life, whether natural objects or human actions. For Aristotle, tragedy is an imitation of human action. The concept of art as imitation proved vastly influential in Western literature right up until the eighteenth century, when the Romantic age gave birth to the expressive theory, that poetry arises from the emotions, feelings and impressions of the artist. Aristotle insisted, perhaps consciously in opposition to Plato, that poetry represents something that is real, something that exists in the world. Whereas Plato believed that the poet was cut off from reality, Aristotle saw the poet's act of imitation as directly connected to life itself, instead of an attempt to reach a larger ideal. In his analysis of the origins of poetry, Aristotle argues that imitation is natural to childhood, and children learn most of their first life lessons through the imitation of others. People are also naturally given to taking pleasure in imitation.

➤ Unity of Plot

In his analysis of tragedy, Aristotle argues that the most important element is plot. Further, he insists on the necessity of unity in the plot. All the events portrayed must contribute to the plot. There must be no subplots or superfluous elements. Every element of the plot must work together to create a seamless whole. If any part were to be altered or withdrawn, this would leave the play disjointed and incomplete in some way. The plot must have a beginning, amiddle, and an end, in which each event follows either

in likelihood or necessity from the previous one. There must be a clear cause and effect relationship in the events depicted.

8.4 Aristotle's Concept of Tragedy

According to Aristotle metre/verse alone is not the distinguishing feature of poetry or imaginative literature in general. Even scientific and medical treatises may be written in verses. Verse will not make them poetry. "Even if a theory of medicine or physical philosophy be put forth in a metrical form, it is usual to describe the writer in this way; Homer and Empedocles, however, have really nothing in common apart from their metre; so that, if one is to be called a poet, the other should be termed a physicist rather than a poet." Then the question is, if metre/verse does not distinguish poetry from other forms of art, how can we classify the form of poetry along with other forms of art? Aristotle classifies various forms of art with the help of object, medium and manner of their imitation of life.

OBJECT: Which object of life is imitated determines the form of literature. If the Life of great people is imitative it will make that work a Tragedy and if the life of mean people is imitated it will make the work a Comedy. David Daiches writes explaining the classification of poetry which is imitative: "We can classify poetry according to the kinds of people it represents – they are either better than they are in real life, or worse, or the same. One could present characters, that is, on the grand or heroic scale; or could treat ironically or humorously the petty follies of men, or one could aim at naturalism presenting men neither heightened nor trivialized … Tragedy deals with men on a heroic scale, men better than they are in everyday life whereas comedy deals with the more trivial aspects of humannature, with characters 'worse' than they are in real life."

MEDIUM: What sort of medium is used to imitate life again determines the forms of different arts. The painter uses the colours, and a musician will use the sound, but a poet uses the words to represent the life. When words are used, how they are used and in what manner or metre they are used further classifies a piece of literature in different categories as a tragedy or a comedy or an epic.

The types of literature, says Aristotle, can be distinguished according to the medium of representation as well as the manner of representation in a particular medium. The difference of medium between a poet and a painter is clear; oneuses words with their denotative, connotative, rhythmic and musical aspects; the other uses forms and colours. Likewise, the tragedy writer may make use of one kind of metre, and the comedy writer of another.

MANNER: In what manner the imitation of life is presented distinguishes theone form of literature from another. How is the serious aspect of life imitated? For example, dramas are always presented in action while epics are always in narration. In this way the kinds of literature can be distinguished and determined according to the techniques they employ.

David Daiches says: "The poet can tell a story in narrative form and partly through the speeches of the characters (as Homer does), or it can all be done in third- person narrative, or the story can be presented dramatically, with no use of third person narrative at all."

8.4.1 The Definition of Tragedy

"Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in the language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation- catharsis of these and similar emotions." (Poetics, P.10)

8.4.2 Explanation of the definition

The definition is compact. Every word of it is pregnant with meaning. Each word of the above definition can be elaborated into a separate essay.

All art is representation (imitation) of life, but none can represent life in its totality. Therefore, an artist has to be selective in representation. He must aim at representing or imitating an aspect of life or a fragment of life.

Action comprises all human activities including deeds, thoughts and feelings. Therefore, we find soliloquies, choruses etc. in tragedy.

The writer of 'tragedy' seeks to imitate the serious side of life just as a writerof 'comedy' seeks to imitate only the shallow and superficial side. The tragic section presented on the stage in a drama should be complete or self-contained with a proper beginning, proper middle and proper end. A beginning is that before which the audience or the reader does not need to be told anything to understand the story. If something more is required to understand the story than the beginning gives, it is unsatisfactory. From it follows the middle. In their turn the events from the middle lead to the end. Thus the story becomes a compact &self sufficient one. It must not leave the impression that even after the end the action is still to be continued, or that before the action starts certain things remain to be known.

Tragedy must have close-knit unity with nothing that is superfluous or unnecessary. Every episode, every character and a dialogue in the play mustcarry step by step the action that is set into motion to its logical dénouement. It must give the impression of wholeness at the end.

The play must have, then, a definite magnitude, a proper size or a reasonable length such as the mind may comprehend fully. That is to say that it must have only necessary duration, it should neither be too long to tire our patience nor be too short to make effective representation impossible. Besides, a drama continuing for hours – indefinitely may fail to keep the various parts of it together into unity and wholeness in the spectator's mind. The reasonable duration enables the spectator to view the drama as a whole, to remember its various episodes and to maintain interest. The language employed here should be duly

embellished and beautified with various artistic ornaments (rhythm, harmony, song) and figures of speech. The language of our daily affairs is not useful here because tragedy has to present a heightened picture of life's serious side, and that is possible only if elevated language of poetry is used. According toneed, the writer makes use of songs, poetry, poetic dialogue; simple conversation etc. is various parts of the play.

Its manner of imitation should be action, not narration as in epic, for it is meantto be a dramatic representation on the stage and not a mere story-telling. Then, for the function/aim of tragedy is to shake up in the soul the impulses of pity and fear, to achieve what he calls Catharsis. The emotions of pity and fear find a full and free outlet in tragedy. Their excess is purged and we are lifted out of ourselves and emerges nobler than before.

8.5 Six Formative Elements of Tragedy

After discussing the definition of tragedy, Aristotle explores various important parts of tragedy. He asserts that any tragedy can be divided into six constituent parts.

They are: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song and Spectacle. The Plot is the most important part of a tragedy. The plot means 'the arrangement of the incidents'. Normally the plot is divided into five acts, and each Act is further divided into several scenes. The dramatist's main skill lies in dividing the plot into Acts and Scenes in such a way that they may produce the maximum scenic effect in a natural development. Characters are men and women who act. The hero and the heroine are two important figures among the characters. Thought means what the characters think or feel during their career in the development of the plot. The thought is expressed through their speeches and dialogues. Dictionis the medium of language or expression through which the characters reveal their thoughts and feelings. The diction should be 'embellished with each kind of artistic element'. The song is one of these embellishments. The decoration of the stage is the major part of the spectacle. The Spectacle is theatrical effect presented on the stage. But spectacle also includes scenes of physical torture, loud lamentations, dances, colourful garments of the main characters, and the beggarly or jocular appearance of the subordinate characters or of the fool on the stage. These are the six constituent parts of tragedy.

8.5.1 Plot and Character

Aristotle argues that, among the six formative elements, the plot is the most important element. He writes in The Poetics. The plot is the underlying principle of tragedy'. By plot Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. Incidents mean action, and tragedy is an imitation of actions, both internal and external. That isto say that it also imitates the mental processes of the dramatic personae. In answering a question once he said that a tragedy could be written without

a character but not without a plot. Though his overstatement on plot, he acceptsthat without action there cannot be a tragedy. The plot contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is "not posterior to another thing," while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end "there is nothing else."

The characters serve to advance the action of the story, not vice verse. The ends we pursue in life, our happiness and our misery, all take the form of action. Tragedy is written not merely to imitate man but to imitate man in action. That is, according to Aristotle, happiness consists in a certain kind of activity rather than in a certain quality of character. As David Daiches says: 'the way in which the action works itself out, the whole casual chain which leads to the final outcome.' Diction and Thought are also less significant than plot: a series of well-written speeches has nothing like the force of a well-structured tragedy. Lastly, Aristotle notes that forming a solid plot is far more difficult than creating good characters or diction. Having asserted that the plot is the most important of the six parts of tragedy, he ranks the remainder as follows, from most important to least: Character, Thought, Diction, Melody, and Spectacle. Character reveals the individual motivations of the characters in the play, what they want or don't want,and how they react to certain situations, and this is more important to Aristotle than thought, which deals on a more universal level with reasoning and general truths. Diction, Melody/ Songs and Spectacle are all pleasurable accessories, but the melody is more important in tragedy than spectacle.

8.5.2 The Tragic Hero

The ideal tragic hero, according to Aristotle, should be, in the first place, a man of eminence. The actions of an eminent man would be 'serious, complete and of a certain magnitude', as required by Aristotle. Further, the hero should not only be eminent but also basically a good man, though not absolutely virtuous. The sufferings, fall and death of an absolutely virtuous man would generate feelings of disgust rather than those of 'terror and compassion' which a tragic play must produce. The hero should neither be a villain nor a wicked person for his fall, otherwise his death would please and satisfy our moral sense without generation the feelings of pity, compassion and fear. Therefore, the ideal tragic hero should be basically a good man with a minor flaw or tragic trait in his character. The entire tragedy should issue from this minor flaw or error of judgment. The fall and sufferings and death of such a hero would certainly generate feelings of pity and fear. So, Aristotle says: "For our pity is excited by misfortunes undeservedly suffered, and our terror by some resemblance between the sufferer and ourselves." Finally, Aristotle says: "There remains for our choice a person neithereminently virtuous nor just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some error or human frailty; and this person should also be someone of high-fame and flourishing prosperity." Such a man would make an ideal tragic hero.

a) The characteristics of a Tragic Hero

According to Aristotle, in a good tragedy, character supports plot. The personal motivation / actions of the characters are intricately involved with the action to such an extent that it leads to arouse pity and fear in the audience. The protagonist / tragic hero of the play should have all the characteristics of a good character. By good character, Aristotle means that they should be:

True to the self
True to type
True to life

Probable and yet more beautiful than life.

The tragic hero having all the characteristics mentioned above, has, in addition, a few more attributes. In this context Aristotle begins by the following observation,

A good man – coming to bad end. (Its shocking and disturbs faith)

A bad man – coming to good end. (neither moving, nor moral)

A bad man – coming to bad end. (moral, but not moving)

A rather good man – coming to bad end. (an ideal situation)

Aristotle disqualifies two types of characters – purely virtuous and thoroughly bad. There remains but one kind of character, who can best satisfy this requirement – 'A man who is not eminently good and just yet whose misfortune is not brought by vice or depravity but by some error of frailty'. Thus the ideal Tragic Hero must be an intermediate kind of a person- neither too virtuous nor too wicked. His misfortune excites pity because it is out of all proportion to his error of judgement, and his over all goodness excites fear for hisdoom. Thus, he is a man with the following attributes: He should be a man of mixed character, neither blameless nor absolutely depraved. His misfortune should follow from some error or flaw of character; short of moral taint. He must fall from height of prosperity and glory. The protagonist should be renowned and prosperous, so that his change of fortune can be from good to bad. The fall of such a man of eminence affects entire state/nation. This change occurs not as the result of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character. Such a plot is most likely to generate pity and fear in the audience. The ideal tragic hero should be anintermediate kind of a person, a man not preeminently virtuous and just yet whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgement. Let us discuss this error of judgement in following point.

b) The meaning of Hamartia

Hamartia ('fatal flaw' or 'tragic flaw') may consist of a moral flaw, or it may simply be a

technical error/ error of judgement, or, ignorance, or even, at times, an arrogance (called hubris in Greek). It is owing to this flaw that the protagonist comes into conflict with Fate and ultimately meets his/her doom through the workings of Fate (called Dike in Greek) called Nemesis.

8.5.3 The Three Unities

The unity of action: a play should have one single plot or action to sustain the interest of the spectators and it can also lead him to proper purgation.

The unity of time: the action in a play should not exceed the single revolution of the sun.

The unity of place: a play should cover a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place.

These three principles are called unities, and the Three unities were unity of action, place and time.

a) Unity of Action

The combination of incidents which are the action of the play, should be one – one story told, which is not to say it has to be about only one person, since characters are not in the centre of the tragedy, but the action itself is. He is against the plurality of action because it weakens the tragic effect. Number of incidents should be connected to each other in such a way that they must be conducive to one effect.

The Unity of Action limits the supposed action to a single set of incidents which are related as cause and effect, "having a beginning, middle, and an end." No scene is to be included that does not advance the plot directly. No subplots,no characters who do not advance the action.

This unity of action evidently contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is "not posterior to another thing," while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end "there is nothing else."
The chain of events has to be of such nature as "might have happened," either being possible in the sense of probability or necessary because of what forewent. Anything absurd can only exist outside of the drama, what is included in it must be believable, which is something achieved not by probability alone, "It is, moreover, evident from what has been said that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what may happen- what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity."(Poetics in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Adams. P. 54) Aristotle even recommends things impossible but probable, beforethose possible but improbable. What takes place should have nothing irrational about it, but if this is unavoidable, such events should have taken place outside ofthe drama enacted.

b) Unity of Time

As for the length of the play, Aristotle refers to the magnitude called for, a grandness indeed, but one which can be easily seen in its entirety – in the aspectof length, than, one that can easily be remembered. The ideal time which the fable of a tragedy encompasses is "one period of the sun, or admits but a small variation from this period."

The Unity of Time limits the supposed action to the duration, roughly, of a single day. Aristotle meant that the length of time represented in the play should be ideally speaking the actual time passing during its presentation. We should keep in our minds that it is a suggestion i.e. to be tried "as far as possible"; there is nothing that can be called a rule.

c) Unity of Place

According to the Unity of Place, the setting of the play should have one place. Aristotle never mentioned the Unity of Place at all. The doctrine of the three unities, which has figured so much in literary criticism since the Renaissance, cannot be laid to his account. He is not the author of it; it was foisted on him by the Renaissance critics of Italy and France.

8.6 Functions of Tragedy

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude…through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions."(Poetics, p. 10)

The above given definition of Aristotle indicates that the function of tragedy is to arouse 'pity and fear' in the spectator for both moral and aesthetic purpose. One has to remember in this context that he had Plato's famous charge against the immoral effects of poetry on people's minds. Aristotle uses the word in his definition of tragedy in chapter –VI of Poetics, and there has been much debate on exactly what he meant. The key sentence is: 'Tragedy through pity and fear effects a purgation of such emotions.' So, in a sense, the tragedy, having aroused powerful feelings in the spectator, has also a salubrious effect; after the storm and climax there comes a sense of release from tension, of calm. His theory of Catharsis consists in the purgation or purification of the excessive emotions of pity and fear. Witnessing the tragedy and suffering of the protagonist on the stage, such emotions and feelings of the audience are purged. The purgation of such emotions and feelings make them relieved, and they emerge as better human beings than they were. Thus, Aristotle's theory of Catharsis has moral and ennobling function.

It should be remembered that Plato, his master, had attacked poetry in general including tragedy from moral and philosophical points of view. So Aristotle had to defend poetry against his master's attack on the moral and philosophicalgrounds. He has to refute Plato's charges. To quote F.L.Lucas: "Poetry, said Plato, makes men cowardly by its picture of the afterworld. No, replies Aristotle, it can purge men's fears. Poetry, said Plato, encourages men to be hysterical and uncontrolled. On the contrary, answers his pupil, it makes them less, not more, emotional by giving a periodic healthy outlet to their feelings. In short,

Aristotle's definition of tragedy is half a defence."(Pg. 57) But it is only half a defence. That is to say, the other half of the theory is possibly the result of a serious, analytical inquiry of Aristotle's into the nature of tragic delight and its psychological effects. His Catharsis forms the most important part of his concept of tragedy as a positive, not pessimistic, drama which leaves wholesome effect, not mere disturbance, in the minds of the spectators.

8.7 The meaning of Catharsis

Let us quote F.L.Lucas at length on the meaning of catharsis: "First, there has been age-long controversy about Aristotle's meaning, though it has almost always been accepted that whatever he meant was profoundly right. Many, for example, have translated Catharsis as 'purification', 'Correction or refinement' or the like. There is strong evidence that Catharsis means, not 'Purification', but 'Purgation' - a medical term (Aristotle was a son of a Physician.) Yet, owing to changes in medical thought, 'Purgation' has become radically misleading to modern minds. Inevitably we think of purgatives and complete evacuations of water products; and then outraged critics ask why our emotions should be so ill- treated. "But Catharsis means 'Purgation', not in the modern, but in the older, wider English sense which includes the partial removal of excess 'humours'. The theory is as old as the school of Hippocrates that on a due balance … of these humours depend the health of body and mind alike." (F.L.Lucas) To translate Catharsis simply as purgation today is misleading owing to the change of meaning which the word has undergone. The theory of humours is outdated in the medical science. 'Purgation' has assumed different meanings. It is no longer what Aristotle had in mind. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to translate Catharsis as 'moderating' or 'tempering' of the passions. But such translation, as F.L.Lucas suggests, 'keeps the sense but loses the metaphor'. However, when it is not possible to keep up both, the meaning and the metaphor, it is better to maintain the meaning and sacrifice the metaphor in translating Catharsis as'moderating' or 'tempering'. The passions to be moderated are those of pity and fear. The pity and fear to be moderated is, again, of specific kinds. There can never be an excess in the pity that results into a useful action. But there can be too much of pity as an intense and helpless feeling, and there can be also too much of self-pity which is not a praise-worthy virtue. The Catharsis or moderation of such forms of pity ought to be achieved in the theatre or otherwise when possible, for such moderation keeps the mind in a healthy state of balance. Similarly, only specific kinds of fear are to be moderated. Aristotle does not seemto have in mind the fear of horrors on the stage which as Lucas suggests are "supposed to have made women miscarry with terror in the theatre", Aristotle specifically mentions 'sympathetic fear for the characters'. "And by allowing freevent to this in the theatre, men are to lessen, in facing life thereafter, their own fear of … the general dread if destiny." (F.L.Lucas) There are, besides fear and pity, the allied impulses which also are to be moderated: "Grief, weakness, contempt, blame – these I take to be the sort of thing that Aristotle meant by 'feeling of that sort'." (Lucas).

8.8 Plato's Theory of Mimesis and Aristotle's Defense

In his theory of Mimesis, Plato says that all art is mimetic by nature; art is an imitation of life. He believed that 'idea' is the ultimate reality. Art imitates idea and so it is imitation of reality. He gives an example of a carpenter and a chair. The idea of 'chair' first came in the mind of carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea out of wood and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of chair. Thus, painter's chair is twice removed from reality. Hence, he believed that art is twice removed from reality. He gives first importance to philosophy as philosophy deals with the ideas whereas poetry deals with illusion – things which are twice removed from reality. So to Plato, philosophy is superior to poetry. Plato rejected poetry as it is mimetic in nature on the moral and philosophical grounds. On the contrary, Aristotle advocated poetry as it is mimetic in nature. According to him, poetry is an imitation of an action and his tool of enquiry is neither philosophical nor moral. He examines poetry as a piece of art and not as a book of preaching or teaching.

Aristotle replied to the charges made by his Guru Plato against poetry in particular and art in general. He replied to them one by one in his defence of poetry.

Plato says that art being the imitation of the actual is removed from the Truth. It only gives the likeness of a thing in concrete, and the likeness is always less than real. But Plato fails to explain that art also gives something more which is absent in the actual. The artist does not simply reflect the real in the manner of a mirror. Art cannot be slavish imitation of reality. Literature is not the exact reproduction of life in all its totality. It is the representation of selected events and characters necessary in a coherent action for the realization of the artist's purpose. He even exalts, idealizes and imaginatively recreates a world which has its own meaning and beauty. These elements, present in art, are absent in the raw and rough real. While a poet creates something less than reality he at the same times creates something more as well. He puts an idea of the reality which he perceives in an object. This 'more', this intuition and perception, is the aim of the artist. Artistic creation cannot be fairly criticized on the ground that it is not the creation in concrete terms of things and beings. Thus considered, it does not take us away from the Truth but leads us to the essential reality of life.

Plato again says that art is bad because it does not inspire virtue, does not teach morality. But is teaching the function of art? Is it the aim of the artist? The function of art is to provide aesthetic delight, communicate experience, express emotions and represent life. It should never be confused with the function of ethics which is simply to teach morality. If an artist succeeds in pleasing us in the aesthetic sense, he is a good artist. If he fails in doing so, he is a bad artist. There is no other criterion to judge his worth. R.A.Scott -James observes: "Morality teaches. Art does not attempt to teach. It merely asserts it is thus or thus that life is perceived to be. That is my bit of reality, says the artist. Take it or leave it – draw any lessons you like from it – that is my account of things as they are – if it has any value to you as evidence of teaching, use it, but that is not my business: I have given you

my rendering, my account, my vision, my dream, my illusion – call it what you will. If there is any lesson in it, it is yours to draw, not mine to preach." Similarly, Plato's charges on needless lamentations and ecstasies at the imaginary events of sorrow and happiness encourage the weaker part of the soul and numb the faculty of reason. These charges are defended by Aristotle in his Theory of Catharsis. David Daiches summarizes Aristotle's views in reply to Plato's charges in brief: "Tragedy (Art) gives new knowledge, yields aesthetic satisfaction and produces a better state of mind."

Plato judges poetry now from the educational standpoint, now from the philosophical one and then from the ethical one. But he does not care to consider it from its own unique standpoint. He does not define its aims. He forgets that everything should be judged in terms of its own aims and objectives, its own criteria of merit and demerit. We cannot fairly maintain that music is bad becauseit does not paint, or that painting is bad because it does not sing. Similarly, we cannot say that poetry is bad because it does not teach philosophy or ethics. If poetry, philosophy and ethics had identical function, how could they be different subjects? To denounce poetry because it is not philosophy or ideal is clearly absurd.

Aristotle agrees with Plato in calling the poet an imitator and creative art, imitation. He imitates one of the three objects – things as they were/are, things as they are said/thought to be or things as they ought to be. In other words, he imitates what is past or present, what is commonly believed and what is ideal.
Aristotle believes that there is natural pleasure in imitation which is an in-born instinct in men. It is this pleasure in imitation that enables the child to learn his earliest lessons in speech and conduct from those around him, because there is a pleasure in doing so. In a grown-up child – a poet, there is another instinct, helping him to make him a poet – the instinct for harmony and rhythm.

He does not agree with his teacher in – 'poet's imitation is twice removed form reality and hence unreal/illusion of truth', to prove his point he compares poetry with history. The poet and the historian differ not by their medium, but the true difference is that the historian relates 'what has happened', the poet, 'what may/ought to have happened' - the ideal. Poetry, therefore, is more philosophical, and a higher thing than history because history expresses the particular while poetry tends to express the universal. Therefore, the picture of poetry pleases all and at all times.

Aristotle does not agree with Plato in the function of poetry making people weaker and emotional/too sentimental. For him, catharsis is ennobling andit humbles a human being.

So far as the moral nature of poetry is concerned, Aristotle believes that the end of poetry is to please; however, teaching may be the byproduct of it. Suchpleasing is superior to the other pleasures because it teaches civic morality. So all good literature gives pleasure, which is not divorced from moral lessons.

8.9 Summary

Giorgio Valla's 1498 Latin translation of Aristotle's text (the first to be published) was included with the 1508 Aldine printing of the Greek original as part of an anthology of *Rhetores graeci*. By the early decades of the sixteenth century, vernacular versions of Aristotle's *Poetics* appeared, culminating in Lodovico Castelvetro's Italian editions of 1570 and 1576. Italian culture produced the great Renaissance commentators on Aristotle's *Poetics*, and in the baroque period Emanuele Tesauro, with his *Cannocchiale aristotelico*, re-presented to the world of post-Galilean physics Aristotle's poetic theories as the sole key to approaching the human sciences. Recent scholarship has challenged whether Aristotle focuses on literary theory per se (given that not one poem exists in the treatise) or whether he focuses instead on dramatic musical theory that only has language as one of the elements.

8.10 Key Terms

- **Anagnorisis**: is a moment in a play or other work when a character makes a critical discovery. Anagnorisis originally meant recognition in its Greek context, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for. Anagnorisis was the hero's sudden awareness of a real situation, the realisation of things as they stood, and finally, the hero's insight into a relationship with an often antagonistic character in Aristotelian tragedy.

- **Dianoia**: In Platonism, **Dianoia** (Greek: διάνοια) is the human cognitive capacity for, process of, or result of *discursive* thinking, specifically about mathematical and technical subjects. It stands in contrast to the immediate, cognitive process of *intuitive* apprehension or **noesis** (noesis).

- **Hubris:** describes a personality quality of extreme or excessive pride or dangerous overconfidence and complacency, often in combination with (or synonymous with) arrogance. The term *arrogance* comes from the Latin *adrogare*, meaning "to feel that one has a right to demand certain attitudes and behaviors from other people". To *arrogate* means "to claim or seize without justification... To make undue claims to having", or "to claim or seize without right... to ascribe or attribute without reason". The term *pretension* is also associated with the term *hubris*, but is not synonymous with it.

8.11 Review Questions

1. How is Aristotle an eminent figure in classical theory? Explain.

2. What are key concepts in Poetics?

3. What's the Function of tragedy?

4. Explain the key elements of tragedy.

5. What's the difference between Plato's mimesis and Aristotle's Defense

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UNIT 9: ARISTOTLE'S LEGACY

STRUCTURE

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Aristotle's Legacy

    9.3.1 Aristotle in the Middle Ages and beyond

9.4 Aristotle Timeline
9.5 Application in Modern Times
9.6 Summary
9.7 Key Terms
9.8 Review Questions
9.9 References

9.1 Objectives

- ➢ This unit shall let the learners to know about:
  - Aristotle's and Middle age.
  - Aristotle's Timeline
  - Application of Aristotle's theory in modern times.
  - Aristotle's legacy of writing.

9.2 Introduction

Aristotle's influence is difficult to overestimate. After his death, his school, the Lyceum, carried on for some period of time, though precisely how long isunclear. In the century immediately after his death, Aristotle's works seem to have fallen out of circulation; they reappear in the first century B.C.E., after which time they began to be disseminated, at first narrowly, but then much more broadly. They eventually came to form the backbone of some seven centuries of philosophy, in the form of the commentary tradition, much of it original philosophy carried on in a broadly Aristotelian framework. They also played a very significant, if subordinate role, in the Neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyry. Thereafter, from the sixth through the twelfth centuries, although the bulk of Aristotle's writings were lost to the West, they received extensive consideration in Byzantine Philosophy, and in Arabic Philosophy, where Aristotle was so prominent that

be became known simply as The First Teacher (see the entry on the influence of Arabic and Islamic philosophy on the Latin West). In this tradition, the notably rigorous and illuminating commentaries of Avicenna and Averroes interpreted and developed Aristotle's views in striking ways. These commentaries in turn proved exceedingly influential in the earliest reception of the Aristotelian corpus into the Latin West in the twelfth century.

9.3 Aristotle's Legacy

Among Aristotle's greatest exponents during the early period of his reintroduction to the West, Albertus Magnus, and above all his student Thomas Aquinas, sought to reconcile Aristotle's philosophy with Christian thought. Some Aristotelians disdain Aquinas as bastardizing Aristotle, while some Christians disown Aquinas as pandering to pagan philosophy. Many others in both camps take a much more positive view, seeing Thomism as a brilliant synthesis of two towering traditions; arguably, the incisive commentaries written by Aquinas towards the end of his life aim not so much at synthesis as straightforward exegesis and exposition, and in these respects they have few equals in any period of philosophy. Partly due to the attention of Aquinas, but for many other reasons as well, Aristotelian philosophy set the framework for the Christian philosophy of the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, though, of course, that rich period contains a broad range of philosophical activity, some more and some less in sympathy with Aristotelian themes. To see the extent of Aristotle's influence, however, it is necessary only to recall that the two concepts forming the so-called binariumfamosissimum ("the most famous pair") of that period, namely universal hylomorphism and the doctrine of the plurality of forms, found their first formulations in Aristotle's texts.

Interest in Aristotle continued unabated throughout the renaissance in the form of Renaissance Aristotelianism. The dominant figures of this period overlap withthe last flowerings of Medieval Aristotelian Scholasticism, which reached a rich and highly influential close in the figure of Suárez, whose life in turn overlaps with Descartes. From the end of late Scholasticism, the study of Aristotle has undergone various periods of relative neglect and intense interest, but has been carried forward uninterrupted down to the present day.

Today, philosophers of various stripes continue to look to Aristotle for guidance and inspiration in many different areas, ranging from the philosophy of mind to theories of the infinite, though perhaps Aristotle's influence is seen most overtly and avowedly in the resurgence of virtue ethics which began in the last half of the twentieth century. It seems safe at this stage to predict that Aristotle's stature is unlikely to diminish in the new millennium. If it is any indication of thedirection of things to come, a quick search of the present Encyclopedia turns up more citations to 'Aristotle' and 'Aristotelianism' than to any other philosopheror philosophical movement. Only Plato comes close.

Theophrastus, his successor at Lyceum, wrote a number of books on botany which were considered one of the primary bases of botany till middle ages. Few names of plants

mentioned by him are still survived to modern times. From a modest beginning, Lyceum grew to be a Peripatetic school. The other notable students from his Lyceum were Aristoxenus, Dicaearchus, Demetrius of Phalerum, Eudemos of Rhodes, Harpalus, Hephaestion, Meno, Mnason of Phocis, and Nicomachus. His influence on Alexander the Great can be clearly seen from the fact that Alexander used to carry a horde of botanist, zoologist and researchers along with him on his expeditions. Aristotle is considered as "The Philosopher" by many scholastic thinkers and was one of the most influential persons ever lived.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., anti-Macedonian sentiment again forced Aristotle to flee Athens. He died a little north of the city in 322, of a digestive complaint. He asked to be buried next to his wife, who had died some years before. In his last years he had a relationship with his slave Herpyllis, who bore him the son, Nicomachus, for whom his great ethical treatiseis named.

Aristotle's favored students took over the Lyceum, but within a fewdecades the school's influence had faded in comparison to the rival Academy. For several generations Aristotle's works were all but forgotten. The historian Strabo says they were stored for centuries in a moldy cellar in Asia Minor before their rediscovery in the first century B.C., though it is unlikely that these were theonly copies.

In 30 B.C. Andronicus of Rhodes grouped and edited Aristotle's remaining works in what became the basis for all later editions. After the fall of Rome, Aristotle was still read in Byzantium and became well-known in the Islamic world, where thinkers like Avicenna (970-1037), Averroes (1126-1204) and the Jewish scholar Maimonodes (1134-1204) revitalized Aritotle's logicaland scientific precepts.

➢ 9.3.1 Aristotle in the Middle Ages and beyond

In the 13th century Aristotle was reintroduced to the West through the work of Albertus Magnus and especially Thomas Aquinas, whose brilliant synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian thought provided a bedrock for late medieval Catholic philosophy, theology and science.

Aristotle's universal influence waned somewhat during the Renaissance and Reformation, as religious and scientific reformers questioned the way the Catholic Church had subsumed his precepts. Scientists like Galileo and Copernicus disproved his geocentric model of the solar system, while anatomists such as William Harvey dismantled many of his biological theories. However, even today Aristotle's work remains a significant starting point for any argument in the fields of logic, aesthetics, political theory and ethics.

9.4 Aristotle's Timeline

- 384 BC: Aristotle born in Stageira, Chalcidice366 BC:Went to Athens to continue his education
- 348/347 BC:Quit Athens and left for Asia Minor

- 335 BC:Returned to Athens to open his own school, Lyceum
- 322 BC:Died in Euboea

9.5 Application in Modern Times

Since Aristotle, in Europe tragedy has never been a drama of despair, causeless death or chance disaster. The drama that only paints horrors and leaves souls shattered and mind unreconciled with the world may be described as a gruesome.

9.6 Summary

Aristotle is a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, who made important contributions to logic, criticism, rhetoric, physics, biology, psychology, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. He was a student of Plato for twenty years but is famous for rejecting Plato's theory of forms. He was more empirically minded than both Plato and Plato's teacher, Socrates. A prolific writer, lecturer, and polymath, Aristotle radically transformed most of the topics he investigated. In his lifetime, he wrote dialogues and as many as 200 treatises, of which only 31 survive. These works are in the form of lecture notes and draft manuscripts never intended for general readership. Nevertheless, they are the earliest complete philosophical treatises we still possess. Aristotle was the founder of the Lyceum, a school based in Athens, Greece; and he was the first of the Peripatetics, his followers from the Lyceum. Aristotle's works, exerted tremendous influence on ancient and medieval thought and continue to inspire philosophers to this day.

9.7 Key Terms

- **Practical Philosophy:** Practical philosophy is distinguished from theoretical philosophy both in its goals and in its methods. While the aim of theoretical philosophy is contemplation and the understanding of the highest things, the aim of practical philosophy is good action, that is, acting in a way that constitutes or contributes to the good life.

- **First Philosophy:** In addition to natural and mathematical sciences, there is a science of independent beings that Aristotle calls "first philosophy" or "wisdom." What is the proper aim of this science? In some instances, Aristotle seems to say that it concerns *being* insofar as it is (*Met*.1003a21–22), whereas in others, he seems to consider it to be equivalent to "theology," restricting contemplation to the highest kind of being (*Met*.1026a19–22), which is unchanging and separable from matter.

- **Psychology:** Psychology is the study of the psyche, which is often translated as "soul." While prior philosophers were interested in the psyche as a part of political inquiry, for Aristotle, the study of the psyche is part of natural science (Ibn Bajjah 1961, 24), continuous with biology. This is because Aristotle conceives of the psyche as the form of a living being, the body being its material.

9.8 Review Questions

1. What is timeline of Aristotle?

2. Discuss the contribution of Aristotle in different discipline.

3. Describe the application of Aristotle's theory in modern times.

4. What is Aristotle's Legacy. Explain with reference to Aristotle's text.

5. Discuss in details the theme and theory of Aristotle's Poetics.

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BLOCK - 3: LONGINUS

UNIT 10: Longinus – life and times

UNIT 11: Longinus: Theory and Analysis

UNIT 12: Critical examination of the text – On the Sublime

UNIT 13: Legacy of Longinus – Application in modern times – Longinus Timeline

UNIT -10: LONGINUS - LIFE AND TIMES

STRUCTURE

10.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall let the learners to know about:
> - Longinus and His age.
> - Early life of Longinus
> - Important episodes in Longinus's life.
> - Longinus style of writing.

10.2 Introduction

There has been considerable dispute as to the author of *On the Sublime*. One Cassius Longinus, born about 210, was a critic, scholar, and teacher of rhetoric in the 3rd century and a friend and teacher of Porphyry, the pupil of Plotinus and author of many literary works. He also earned a reputation as the most famous scholar of his time. Educated at Alexandria, he probably taught at

Athens and then traveled to <u>Asia Minor</u> as a minister of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra. Along with Zenobia he is reported to have been executed by the Roman emperor Aurelian in 273 on charges of conspiring against the Roman state.

Some critics date the author of *On the Sublime* to the 1st century and assign authorship to an otherwise unknown literary critic, for there is no mention of this work in ancient sources. In modern times it was not until 1554 that the treatise was published, and it was subsequently translated by the French critic Boileau in 1674. Those who argue for a 1st-century author point to the fact that Caecilius of Calacte of 1st-century Rome is being addressed and that the decay of eloquence, which was a live question in the 1st century, was not a real issue in the 3rd century of Cassius Longinus.

Regardless of the author or dates the work is of major significance for the history of literary criticism. The 18th century particularly saw the golden age of "Longinus, " and interest in him has continued unabated. *On the Sublime* is second only to Aristotle's *Poetics* in its influence. Its concern is with great writing (perhaps a better translation than "the sublime"). The five "sources, " or "causes, " of great writing are listed as vigor and nobility of mind (the ability to seize upon great ideas); powerful emotion; skill in the use of figures; diction (including the use of metaphors and new words); and the appropriate arrangement of words. Of these the first two are the most important. As Moses Hadas said in his *History of Greek Literature,* "Longinus' object is to define true grandeur in literature as opposed to sophomoric turgidity and frigid pretentiousness."

Longinus insists that greatness does not come from rules but from the search for ecstasy, and it is an ecstasy that must affect the reader and hearer.

10.3 Early Life

Gaius Cassius Longinus (before 85 BC – October 42 BC) was a Roman senator,a leading instigator of the plot to kill Julius Caesar, and the brother in-law of Marcus Junius Brutus. Little is known of Gaius Cassius' early life, apart from a story that he showed his dislike of despots while still at school, by quarreling with the son of the dictator Sulla. He studied philosophy at Rhodes under Archelaus and became fluent in Greek. He was married to JuniaTertia (Tertulla), who was the daughter of ServiliaCaepionis and thus a half-sister of his co-conspirator Brutus. They had one son, who was born in about 60 BC. In 53 BC he took part in the Battle of Carrhae lost by Marcus Licinius Crassus against the Parthians.

Military and Political Career: Cassius' first notable appearance in history came in 53 b. c. when he was quaestor, or chief financial assistant, to thecommander Marcus Crassus in the ill-fated campaign against Parthia. After the disastrous defeat of the Romans at Carrhae in

Mesopotamia, Cassius escaped (or deserted) with the surviving Roman troops and managed to reorganize successful resistance to the Parthians. In 51 he saved the Roman province of Syria from Parthian assault, thereby establishing his military reputation. In 49, Cassius was tribune in Rome when civil war erupted between Caesar and Pompey. The war split many families down the middle. A relative, Quintus Cassius, fled to Caesar and fought under him. But Gaius Cassius joined the forces of Pompey and served as a naval commander. Cassius was among several Pompeian lieutenants who surrendered following Caesar's victory over Pompey at Pharsalus in 48. Caesar could afford to be merciful and generous. Cassius received pardon and then honors befitting his rank. Caesar named him to the praetorship for 44. But this served only to increase the resentment of the proud and bitter Cassius. He became chief organizer of the plot to assassinate Caesar. The conspiracy included not only ex-Pompeians but even friends of the dictator. Cassius brought unity to this scattered and disparate group by inducing hisbrother-in-law, the much-admired Marcus Brutus, to join the conspiracy.

10.3.1 Post- Assassination Campaign:

Caesar was slain in March 44, but his lieutenant Mark Antony was spared. Brutus had overridden Cassius' insistence than Antony too be killed. This proved to be afatal mistake. In the succeeding months Antony consolidated his position as the new leader of the Caesarian faction. The conspirators found their support dwindling in Italy and went abroad, Brutus to Macedonia, Cassius to Syria. Cassius still had friends in the East and was able to gather forces and raise money. In 43 he defeated Dolabella, the commander sent to the East by Antony. Cassius expanded his forces with Dolabella's troops. By 42, Cassius had pooled his resources with those of Brutus, who had been equally successful in Macedonia. Together they had at their disposal 19 legions and a multitude of forces from client princes all over the East. The armies of the West, however, had gathered under Antony and Caesar's heir Octavian; 28 legions crossed the Adriatic to face the assassins at Philippi in Thrace in October 42. The battle was inconclusive. Brutus fared better than Cassius, but Cassius despaired. A defect in his eyesight, so it is reported, led him to the mistaken belief that Brutus too had been defeated; as a result Cassius committed suicide. In a subsequent battle, threeweeks later, Brutus was indeed beaten and also took his own life. Any hopes of restoring the republic had vanished. But Cassius' memory lived on and his name became synonymous with tyrannicide and republicanism.

10.3.2 The Jurist Cassius

The most famous of Cassius' descendants was also named Gaius Cassius Longinus. A prominent and respected jurist, he reached the consulship in 30 a. d. He inherited his ancestor's severity, rigor, and devotion to Roman traditions. From 45 to 49 he served as governor of Syria.

The emperor Nero, having barely escaped a major attempt on his life in 65, began to crack down on enemies and potential enemies. Cassius' reverence for his ancestor and his general attitude made the emperor suspicious of him, and Nero exiled the legal scholar to Sardinia. But Cassius survived, to be recalled later by the emperor Vespasian, during whose reign (69-79) he died peacefully in Rome. Cassius' writings on Roman law were eventually incorporated into the Justinian code.

10.3.3 Epicureanism

"Among that select band of philosophers who have managed to change the world," writes David Sedley, "it would be hard to find a pair with a higher public profile than Brutus and Cassius — brothers-in-law, fellow-assassins, and Shakespearian heroes," adding that "it may not even be widely known that they were philosophers."

Like Brutus, whose Stoic proclivities are widely assumed but who is more accurately described as an Antiochean Platonist, Cassius exercised a long and serious interest in philosophy. His early philosophical commitments are hazy, though D.R. Shackleton Bailey thought that a remark by Cicero indicates a youthful adherence to the Academy. Sometime between 48 and 45 BC, however, Cassius famously converted to the school of thought founded by Epicurus. Although Epicurus advocated a withdrawal from politics, at Rome his philosophy was made to accommodate the careers of many prominent men in public life, among them Caesar's father-in-law, CalpurniusPisoCaesoninus. ArnaldoMomigliano called Cassius' conversion a "conspicuous date in the history of Roman Epicureanism," a choice made not to enjoy the pleasures of the Garden, but to provide a philosophical justification for assassinating a tyrant.

Cicero associates Cassius's new Epicureanism with a willingness to seek peace in the aftermath of the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius.Miriam Griffin dates his

conversion to as early as 48 BC, after he had fought on the side of Pompeius at the Battle of Pharsalus but decided to come home instead of joining the last holdouts of the civil war in Africa.Momigliano placed it in 46BC, based on a letter by Cicero to Cassius dated January 45.Shackleton Bailey points to a date of two or three years earlier.

The dating bears on, but is not essential to, the question of whether Cassius justified the murder of Caesar on Epicurean grounds. Griffin argues that his intellectual pursuits, like those of other Romans, may be entirely removed from any practical application in the realm of politics. Romans of the Late Republic who can be identified as Epicureans are more often found among the supporters of Caesar, and often literally in his camp. Momigliano argued, however, that many of those who opposed Caesar's dictatorship bore no personal animus toward him, and Republicanism was more congenial to the Epicurean way of life than dictatorship. The Roman concept of libertas had been integrated into Greek philosophical studies, and though Epicurus' theory of the social contract admitted various forms of government based on consent, including but not limited to democracy, a tyrannical state was regarded by Roman Epicureans as incompatible with the highest good of pleasure, defined as freedom from pain. Tyranny also threatened the Epicurean value of parrhesia (παρρησία), "free speech", and the movement toward deifying Caesar offended Epicurean belief in abstract gods who lead an ideal existence removed from mortal affairs.

10.4 Summary

Longinus is venerated, generally as a martyr, in the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Armenian Apostolic Church. His feast day is kept on 16 October in the Roman Martyrology, which mentions him, without any indication of martyrdom, in the following terms: "At Jerusalem, commemoration of Saint Longinus, who is venerated as the soldier opening the side of the crucified Lord with a lance". The pre-1969 feast day in the Roman Rite is 15 March. The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates him on 16 October. In the Armenian Apostolic Church, his feast is commemorated on 22 October.

10.5 Key Terms

- **Serpent of Genesis:** Revelation 12 is thought to identify the serpent with Satan, unlike the pseudepigraphical-apocryphal Apocalypse of Moses (Vita Adae et Evae) where the Devil works with the serpent.

- **Wives of the antediluvian patriarchs:** The pseudepigraphical Book of Jubilees provides names for a host of otherwise unnamed biblical characters, including wives for most of the antediluvian patriarchs. The last of these is Noah's wife, to whom it gives the name of *Emzara*. Other Jewish traditional sources contain many different names for Noah's wife.

- The Book of Jubilees says that Awan was Adam and Eve's first daughter. Their second daughter Azura married Seth. For many of the early wives in the series, *Jubilees* notes that the patriarchs married their sisters.

- **Nimrod's wife:** A large body of legend has attached itself to Nimrod, whose brief mention in Genesis merely makes him "a mighty hunter in the face of the Lord". (The biblical account makes no mention of a wife at all.) These legends usually make Nimrod to be a sinister figure, and they reach their peak in Hislop's *The Two Babylons*, which make Nimrod and his wife Semiramis to be the original authors of every false and pagan religion.

10.6 Review Questions

1. What do you know about Longinu? Explain.
2. Elaborate the early life and events of Longinus.
3. Comment on the writing style of Longinus.
4. What is the relation between Longinus's life and bible? Comment.
5. Discuss the key points to be known when you study Longinus.

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UNIT -11: LONGINUS - THEORY AND ANALYSIS

STRUCTURE

11.1 Objectives

- ➢ This unit shall let the learners to know about:
  - Longinus and His Theory.
  - Notable works of Longinus
  - Longinus – Theory and Analysis
  - Longinus ages and beyond.

11.2 Introduction

In the estimation of many literary critics and critical historians who have surveyed the rich offerings of classical literary criticism and theory, the treatise *On the Sublime*, written by probably in the first century A.D., often ranks second in importance only to Aristotle's *Poetics* (circa 335 B.C.). Aristotle's analytic work succinctly maps the terrain of literary genre, character, structure, and rhetoric; but the highly compact *On the Sublime* explores with intensity the nature and occurrence of a certain kind of writing—specifically writing whose expressive power appears to transgress the rules of artistic and rhetorical composition and to achieve what in Greek is termed hypsos, a word that denotes greatness, excellence, or sublimity.

11.3 Longinus – Ages and Beyond

Longinus, (flourished 1st century AD), name sometimes assigned to the author of *On the Sublime* (Greek *Peri Hypsous*), one of the great seminal works of literary criticism. The earliest surviving manuscript, from the 10th century, first printed in 1554, ascribes it to Dionysius Longinus. Later it was noticed that the index to the manuscript read "Dionysius or Longinus." The problem of authorship embroiled scholars for centuries, attempts being made to identify

him with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cassius Longinus, Plutarch, and others. The solution has been to name him Pseudo-Longinus.

11.3.1 Longinus's Biography and Notable works

On the Sublime apparently dates from the 1st century AD, because it was a response to a work of that period by <u>Caecilius of Calacte</u>, a Sicilian rhetorician. About a third of the manuscript is lost. Longinus defines sublimity (Greek *hypsos*) in <u>literature</u> as "the echo of greatness of spirit," that is, the <u>moral</u> and imaginative power of the writer that pervades a work. Thus, for the first-time greatness in literature is ascribed to qualities innate in the writer rather than in the art.

11.3.2 Longinus – Theory and Analysis

In the estimation of many literary critics and critical historians who have surveyed therich offerings of classical literary criticism and theory, the treatise On the Sublime,written probably in the first century A.D., often ranks second in importance only toAristotle's Poetics (circa 335 B.C.). Aristotle's analytic work succinctly maps theterrain of literary genre, character, structure, and rhetoric; but the highly compact Onthe Sublime explores with intensity the nature and occurrence of a certain kind ofwriting—specifically writing whose expressive power appears to transgress the rules ofartistic and rhetorical composition and to achieve what in Greek is termed hypsos, aword that denotes greatness, excellence, or sublimity.The author of this singular literary analysis, however, remains shrouded in such a veilof obscurity and competing claims regarding his identity that it may be impossible toknow with certainty who he was or where and when he lived. From 1554, the date ofthe treatise's first publication in modern times, until the discovery of some anomaliesin the attribution of authorship some two and a half centuries later, in 1809, On theSublime was unquestionably assumed to be written by Dionysius Longinus—otherwiseknown as Cassius Longinus. The oldest extant manuscript, a tenth-century manuscripthoused in the National Library in Paris, displays the name "Dionysius Longinus" inGreek on the title page but "Dionysius or Longinus" in an accompanying table ofcontents. At least two other fifteenth-century manuscripts of On the Sublime exhibitthe latter, indeterminate attribution. As a result, at least three major competing claimshave been advanced regarding the identity of the writer known as "Longinus"; and,though none is ultimately satisfactory, each stillmerits attention.

The first major claim argues that Longinus is indeed the Cassius Longinus whoseconnection with the treatise had been assumed by classicists and literary scholars ofthe late Renaissance and Enlightenment. The most recentchampion of this view hasbeen G. M. A. Grube, who presents his case eloquentlyin the "Translator'sIntroduction" to his Longinus On Great Writing (On the Sublime) (1957). Accordingto what little is known about him, Cassius Longinus was a Greek living under Romanrule in the eastern Mediterranean, and he wrote in Greek. He was born circa A.D. 213,educated in Alexandria, and appears to have taught for some time in Athens. CassiusLonginus,

moreover, earned areputation as "a living library and a walking museum,"in the words of the historian Eunapius; and he was extolled also by Porphyry, hisfriend and pupil, as the finest critic of his time. Toward the end of his life he moved toAsia Minor; became an important adviser to Zenobia, queen of Palmyra; and wasexecuted by order of the Roman emperor Aurelian in 273 after being caught up in aconspiracy with Queen Zenobia to challenge Roman imperial power. This CassiusLonginus, a Greek bearing a Roman name, may also have had a more clearly Greekfirst name—Dionysius. However, this hypothesis remains mere supposition.Some meager but intriguing internal evidence, nonetheless, seems to chime wellenough with this supposition. In chapter 39 of On the Sublime Longinus declines todiscuss the role of emotion, which he has characterized as one source of greatness orsublimity in writing, because, he writes, he has "adequately presented [his]conclusions on this subject in two published works." (All translations are by G. M. A.Grube, from his Longinus on Great Writing, 1957.) It is known that Cassius Longinuswrote an Art of Rhetoric (circa mid- to late-third-century A.D.) and several othernonextant works on rhetoric have been ascribed to him. Moreover, in chapter 12 of Onthe Sublime, Longinus identifies himself "as a Greek" while naming his interlocutorand his cohorts as "You Romans," setting his nationality; he also emphaticallyunderscores his clear preference for the Athenian Demosthenes over the Roman.

A second major claim is that Longinus was yet another famous Greek scholar andrhetorician of the eastern Mediterranean, Dionysius of Halicarnassus. This claim islargely based on the inscription to "Dionysius or Longinus" in the table of contents ofthe earliest extant manuscript. The most recent exponent of this view has been theItalian scholar Demetrio St. Marin, but the position has drawn a variety of supportersever since the case for Cassius Longinus was opened to doubt. There are a handful ofresemblances between the Halicarnassian's known writings and On the Sublime;moreover, Dionysius, who flourished around 30-7 B.C., was roughly contemporaneouswith the Roman rhetorician Caecilius of Calacte (first century B.C.), whom the authorof On the Sublime criticizes at the outset of his treatise. Furthermore, the philologicalevidence indicates a mid-first-century-A.D. date of composition, a good half century ormore too late for Dionysius of Halicarnassus; views resemble those attributed toCaecilius of Calacte more than those of Longinus.

A third major claim regarding the identity of Longinus essentially concedes that it isimpossible to determine with any certainty who the author ofOn the Sublime mayhave been. John H. Crossett and James Arieti have concluded in their essay "TheDating of Longinus" (StudiaClassica, 3 [Department of Classics, Pennsylvania StateUniversity, n.d.]) that the author's identity is impossible to fix but that the treatisevery probably dates from the reign of the emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68). The topic ofcultural decline that Longinus develops at some length in chapter 44 was a majorrhetorical commonplace in the first century A.D., especially during the period of Nero,and does not seem to occur with any frequency in the third century. Moreover, On theSublime contains no references to authors, literary works, or historical events—such asthe massive eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79—that may be dated past the mid first century A.D

This third claim may be the most conservative and defensible; but it nevertheless depends, like the others, upon a fragile network of somewhat tenuous philological probabilities. Whoever authored On the Sublime, a general portrait of the writer materializes from a reading of his treatise. He appears to be a well-educated and thoroughly cosmopolitan Greek of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, one who shows a keen interest in several literatures, including the first chapter of Genesis. His Greek is fluent and assured and not that of a Roman citizen writing in the more cultured tongue of the conquered. This Longinus finds Greek and eastern Mediterranean discursive techniques preferable to Roman, and he pointedly quotes Homer and Plato rather than Virgil and Cicero. His frequently discussed rhetorical set piece on cultural decline in chapter 44 also appears to be an implicit critique of the "slavery" and "world-wide sterility of utterance" endemic to imperial rule.

Moreover, this Longinus seeks some measure of release from the "endless war" spawned by "the desires which surely rule our present world like an army of occupation." This Longinus turns from the typical preoccupations of Roman and Greco-Roman orators and rhetoricians and toward the intensive cultivation of critical skills and refined literary judgment in the pursuit of expressive power and intellectual transport.

11.4 Summary

Little is known of his early life. As a quaestor in 53 BC, Cassius served under Marcus Licinius Crassus and saved the remnants of the Roman army defeated by the Parthians at Carrhae (modern Harran, Turkey). For the next two years he successfully repelled the Parthian attacks on Syria. Cassius became tribune in 49, and the outbreak of the civil war between Caesar and the Optimates in that year saved him from being brought to trial for extortion in Syria. In that war he at first commanded part of the fleet of Caesar's opponent, Pompey the Great. After Pompey was decisively defeated by Caesar at Pharsalus in Thessaly (48), Cassius was reconciled to Caesar, who made him one of his legates.

In 44 Cassius became *praetor peregrinus* and was promised the governorship of Syria for the following year. The appointment of his junior, Marcus Junius Brutus, as *praetor urbanus* deeply offended him, and he became one of the busiest conspirators against Caesar, taking a very active part in the assassination. Forced by popular resentment to withdraw from Rome after the murder, he left Italy for Syria, where he raised a large army and defeated Publius Cornelius Dolabella, to whom the province had been assigned by the Senate. When in 43 the Caesarian leaders Mark Antony, Octavian (later the emperor Augustus), and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus formed the Second Triumvirate, Cassius and his fellow conspirator, Brutus, combined their armies, crossed the Hellespont, marched through Thrace, and encamped near Philippi in Macedonia. Their intention was to starve out the enemy, but they were forced into an engagement. Brutus was successful against Octavian, but Cassius, defeated by Mark Antony, gave up all for lost and ordered his freedman to slay him. He was lamented by Brutus as "the last of the Romans" and buried at Thasos. (He had married Brutus' half-sister Junia Tertia, who lived until AD 22.)

Cassius was a man of considerable ability and a good soldier, but in politics he was actuated by vanity and ambition and had an uncontrollable temper and sharp tongue. His portrait in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* though vivid, is scarcely historical.

11.5 Key Terms

- **Sublime: I**n literary criticism, grandeur of thought, emotion, and spirit that characterizes great literature. It is the topic of an incomplete treatise, *On the Sublime,* that was for long attributed to the 3rd-century Greek philosopher Cassius Longinus but now believed to have been written in the 1st century AD by an unknown writer frequently designated Pseudo-Longinus.

- **Antiquity:** Although almost all of the criticism ever written dates from the 20th century, questions first posed by Plato and Aristotle are still of prime concern, and every critic who has attempted to justify the social value of literature has had to come to terms with the opposing argument made by Plato in *The Republic*. The poet as a man and poetry as a form of statement both seemed untrustworthy to Plato, who depicted the physical world as an imperfect copy of transcendent ideas and poetry as a mere copy of the copy.

- **Greek literature:** The body of writings in the Greek language, with a continuous history extending from the 1st millennium BC to the present day. From the beginning its writers were Greeks living not only in Greece proper but also in Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands, and Magna Graecia (Sicily and southern Italy). Later, after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek became the common language of the eastern Mediterranean lands and then of the Byzantine Empire. Literature in Greek was produced not only over a much wider area but also by those whose mother tongue was not Greek. Even before the Turkish conquest (1453) the area had begun to shrink again, and now it is chiefly confined to Greece and Cyprus.

11.6 Review Questions

1. Discuss the legacy of Longinus.

2. Comment on the works of Longinus.

3. Explain the features of Longinus's works.

4. Elucidate with examples the contribution of Longinus towards literature.

5. Assess the other contemporary writers of Longinus.

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UNIT -12: CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TEXT – ON THE SUBLIME

STRUCTURE

12.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit shall learn the following from this unit:
> - Critical examination of On The Sublime.
> - The false and true sublime.
> - Six types of figures.
> - Five elements in the text.

12.2 Introduction

First of all, we must raise the question whether there is such a thing as an art of the sublime or lofty. Some hold that those are entirely in error who would bring such matters under the precepts of art. A lofty tone, says one, is innate, and does not come by teaching; nature is the

only art that can compass it. Works of nature are, they think, made worse and altogether feebler when wizened by the rules of art. But I maintain that this will be found to be otherwise if it be observed that, while nature as a rule is free and independent in matters of passion and elevation, yet is she wont not to act at random and utterly without system. Further, nature is the original and vital underlying principle in all cases, but system can define limits and fitting seasons, and can also contribute the safest rules for use and practice.

12.3 What is Sublime?

"Sublimity is a certain distinction and excellence in expression." Well . . . that's a little better, but not much. The "elevated language" of the sublime aims to cast a spell over the audience, not merely persuading but transporting the audience in an enthralling and delightful manner to the conclusion desired by the writer. So what we have seems to boil down to this: good writing partakes of the sublime, and the sublime is comprised of elevated language which takes the audience out of itself and into someplace the writer has in mind. This is still somewhatnebulous, but it gets clearer along the way.

Longinus identifies three pitfalls to avoid on the quest for sublimity:

    A. Tumidity;

    B. Puerility

    C. Parenthyrsus.

Tumidity tries to "transcend the limits of the sublime" through false elevation and overblown language. Puerility (from the Latin puer--boy) is the fault Longinus associates with pedants: it is comprised of "learned trifling," a hair-splitting(often seen in the pages of College English, and anything coming out of an MLA convention) which becomes "tawdry and affected." Parenthyrsus is the expression of false, empty, or out-of-place passion, a kind of mawkish, tear- jerker sentimentality of the lowest-common-denominator sort. Longinus identifies as the source of these "ugly and parasitical growths in literature" the "pursuit of novelty in the expression of ideas."

12.4 Five Elements

Longinus goes on to identify five elements of the sublime:
    a) Grandeur of Thought
    b) Capacity for Strong Emotion
    c) Appropriate Use of Pictures
    d) Nobility of Diction
    e) Dignity of Composition

a) Grandeur of Thought

Nobody can produce a sublime work unless his thoughts are sublime. For "sublimity is the echo of greatness of soul It is impossible for those whose whole lives are full of mean and servile ideas and habits, to produce anything that is admirable and worthy of an immortal life. It is only natural that great accents should fall from the lips of those whose thoughts have always been deep and full of majesty." Stately thoughts belong to the loftiest minds.

Therefore, he who would attain distinction of style must feed his soul on the works of the great masters, as Homer, Plato and Demosthenes, and capture from them some of their own greatness, this reflects the classicism of Longinus. However, what Longinus has in mind is not mere imitation or borrowing, but that "men catch fire from the spirit of others." To Longinus the operation is one that aims at capturing something of the ancient spirit, something of that vital creative force which had gone to the " making, of the earlier masterpieces; and its effect he describes as that of illumination, guiding the mind in some mysterious way to the lofty standards of the ideal.

The grandeur of conception is to be emphasized and made effective by a suitable treatment of material. Details should be so chosen as to form an organic whole. Amplification or accumulation of all the details of a given subject is also helpful. Such an amplification by its profusion suggests overwhelming strength and magnitude. The use of vivid and compelling images is also useful, for it brings home to the readers the conception of the writer, effectively and forcefully.

b) Capacity for Strong Emotion

The second source of the sublime is vehement and inspired passion. Longinus asserts that nothing contributes more to loftiness of tone in writing than genuine emotion. At one place, for instance, he says, "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 and fills them with divine frenzy. " It is for this reason that he prefers the Illiad to the Odyssey and Demosthenes to Cicero. But the emotions have to be 'true emotions' and 'in the right place'. He thus justifies emotions more artistically than Aristotle. However, the subject of emotions has not been dealt with in detail. The author declares his intention of dealing with it in a second treatise, which unfortunately has not come down to us.

c) Appropriate Use of Pictures

The third source of attaining excellence of style is the use of figures of speech which he considers very important, and so devotes nearly one third of his work toit. He shows great discrimination and originality of thinking in his treatment of the subject. Figures of speech should not be used mechanically, rather they must be rooted in genuine emotion. Used naturally, they impart elevation to style, and are themselves made more effective by an elevated style.

The figures of thought and diction have to be judiciously employed. The grandeur of any figure "will depend on its being employed in the right place and the right manner, on the

right occasion, and with the right motive.'" It strengthens the sublime, and the sublime supports it. We need the figures only "when the nature of the theme makes it allowable to amplify, to multiply or to speak in the tones of exaggeration or passion; to overlay every sentence with ornament is verypedantic." When the figure is unrelated to passion, it creates a suspicion of dishonesty and is divorced from sublimity. The chief figures that make for sublimity are the theoretical question, asyndeton, hyperbaton, and periphrasis. In brief, the use of figures must be psychological—intimately connected with thought and emotion, and not merely mechanical.

d) Nobility of Diction

The fourth source of the 'sublime' is diction which includes choice and arrangement of words and the use of metaphors and ornamental language. The discussion of diction is incomplete because four leaves of this part of the book are unfortunately lost. Nevertheless, words, when suitable and striking, he says, have "a moving and seductive effect" upon the reader and are the first things in a style to lend it "grandeur, beauty and mellowness, dignity, force, power, and a sort of glittering charm." It is they that breathe voice into dead things. They are 'the very light of ought'—a radiance that illumines the innermost recesses of the writer's mind. But 'it should be noted that imposing language is not suitable for every occasion. When the object is trivial, to invest it with grand and stately words would have the same effect as putting a full-sized tragic mask on the head of a little child.' This necessitates the use of common words which, when in elegant, make up for it by their raciness and forcefulness. Among these ornaments of speech Longinus considers metaphor and hyperbole.

e) Dignity of Composition

The fifth source of the sublime is the dignity of composition, that is, a dignified composition or the arrangement of words. It should be one that blends thought, emotion, figures, and words themselves—the preceding four elements of sublimity—into a harmonious whole. Such an arrangement has not only 'a naturalpower of persuasion and of giving pleasure but also the marvellous power of exalting the soul and swaying the heart of men." It makes the hearer or reader share the emotion of the speaker. But 'if the elements of grandeur be separated from one another, the sublimity is scattered and made to vanish but when organised into a compact system and still further encircled in a chain of harmony they gain a living voice by being merely rounded into a period.' A harmonious composition alone sometimes makes up for the deficiency of the other elements. A proper rhythm is one of the elements in this harmony. Negatively, deformity and not grandeur is the result if the composition is either extremely concise or unduly prolix. The one cripples the thought and the other overextends it.

12.5 Six Types of "Figures"

There are, according to Longinus, six types of "figures":

a) amplification

b) inversions of word order

c) polyptota -accumulations, variations, and climaxes

d) particulars combined from the plural to the singular

e) interchange of persons- addressing the audience as "you"

f) periphrasis (circumlocution)--wordiness, circling around the issue rather than goingstraight to it; Longinus considers this especially dangerous

Longinus seems to fit squarely into the critical school described by T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent." He recommends, as a way to the sublime, "the imitation and emulation of previous great poets and writers" (a move which puts him more clearly into alignment with the Aristotelian view of poetry as an object-in-itself than to the Platonic view of poetry--and any other "mimetic" art-- as 3x removed from reality). He treats poetry as an agonistic process-- anticipating Bloom's anxiety of influence--speaking of Plato struggling "with Homer for the primacy." The poet, in evaluating his work, should ask "How would Homer and the other greats have expressed this or that matter? What would they think of my work? How will succeeding ages view my work?

By the word 'sublime' Longinus means "elevation" or "lofti-ness"—all that which raises style above the ordinary, and gives to it dis-tinction in its widest and truest sense. So, sublimity is "a certain distinc-tion and excellence in composition. " Both nature and art, says Longinus, contribute to sublimity in literature. "Art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains arthidden within her." (Longinus)

Longinus finds five principal sources of the sublime, the first two of which are largely the gifts of nature the remaining three the gifts of art (1) grandeur of thought, (2) capacity for strong emotion, (3) appropriate use of Figures, (4) Nobility of diction, and (5) dignity of composition or a happy synthesis of all the preceding elements.

12.6 The False and the True Sublime

Making a distinction between the false and the true sublime, Longinus says that the false sublime is characterised first, by timidity or bombast of language, whichis as great an evil as swellings in the body. "It is drier than dropsy." Secondly, the false sublime is characterised by puerility, which is a parade and pomp of language, tawdry and affected, and so frigid. Thirdly, the false sublime results when there is a cheap display of passion, when it is not justified by the occasion, and so is wearisome. True sublime, on the other hand, pleases all and "pleases always," for it expresses thoughts of universal validity— thoughts common to man of all ages and centuries—in a language which instinctively uplifts oursouls.

12.7 Critical examination of the Text – On the Sublime

The text of On the Sublime is in a fragmentary state. In addition to various lacunaesprinkled throughout the existing text, the work ends abruptly just as the author turnsto take up the topic of "emotions or passions, which we earlier promised to treat as themain topic of a separate work." Even with the text in such a fragmentary condition, thecareful and attentive reader will find a strong measure of coherence and integrity. (Itis here worth noting that editors of On the Sublime since the sixteenth century havedivided the text into forty-four sections, or chapters. The extant manuscripts of thetext do not stipulate chapter breaks.)

Longinus skilfully dramatizes the rhetorical situation of On the Sublime at the outset of the work, where he pitches the text as an epistolary address that involves an extended set of meditations directed to a friend saluted as "my dear PostumiusTerentianus" and "my dear friend." This friend, as Longinus recalls in the first sentence, once accompanied him in a study of "Caecilius [of Calacte]'s monograph on Great Writing"; but both friends found the work greatly lacking inthe treatment of its subject matter and in the attitude it took toward its readers. Longinus requires that "every specialized treatise ... should clarify its subject," and, second, "it should tell us how and by what methods we can attain it and make it ours." Both these aims Longinus intends to serve, and he requests that his friend and interlocutor assist him "with frank criticism of the points [he is] about to make." Longinus adopts a rather amiable, intimate, yet soberly critical attitude here and views his inquiry into the nature of the sublime or greatness in writing as a collaborative enterprise. His work, deliberately and intertextually dependent upon another work of the same title, appears to originate in a scene of collaborative critical reading; it also appeals to an act of critical reading as the measure of its success.

Though this rhetorical situation is most evident during the course of the first eight chapters, or sections, of On the Sublime, it nonetheless is apparent and appealed to throughout— even at the outset of the often troublesome forty-fourth and final chapter—as Longinus periodically returns to address his interlocutorand reader as well as to mention how and why he departs from what Caecilius has said in his treatise. The mise-en-scène unifies this five-stage rhetorical structure for what can be called the argument of the work. Even in its fragmentary condition the text of On the Sublime seems to respond productively to this imposition—or perhaps recovery—of a viable rhetorical organization. In his letter to his friend and critical interlocutor, Longinus rehearses the form of an expository argument, replete with a careful posing of the problem to be studied, possible methods of study, and a clearly segmented exposition of the stages of histhought.

The first of the five stages is the first chapter of the work. As already noted, Longinus here poses the rhetorical situation from which his work departs; yet he also succinctly limns his

own position on what constitutes greatness in writing. Longinus quickly concedes the topos, or commonplace, that "great passages have a high distinction of thought and expression to which great writers owe their supremacy and their lasting renown." What Longinus seeks to argue, though, goes beyond this commonplace view. Greatness, grandeur, excellence, nobleness, or sublimity in writing—the host of terms by which the Greek word hypsos can be rendered—does not involve mere persuasion or skillful arrangement of words and ideas for Longinus: "Great writing does not persuade; it takes the reader out of himself. The startling and amazing is more powerfulthan the charming and persuasive, ... [and] greatness appears suddenly; like a thunderbolt it carries all before it and reveals the writer's full power in a flash."In offering his definition of great writing, Longinus here departs dramatically from the rhetorician's usual concern with skillful invention, careful arrangement, and decorum.

The second stage of the rhetorical structure of On the Sublime issues sharply from this characterization of great writing. In the next five chapters of hiswork Longinus addresses the following question: Can greatness in writing be "a matter of art" and open to critical study under the terms offered at the outset? He refrains from the view that greatness, sudden and forceful and miraculous as it is, remains opaque to study and critical understanding. In a passage that became important to neoclassical writers, Longinus contends that "natural talent, though generally a law unto itself in passionate and distinguished passages, is not usuallyrandom or altogether devoid of method." Greatness involves "a matter of art" because method or study trains talent to make the most of itself. The neoclassical ideal of balance, of the judicious harmonizing of talent and method, nature and art, genius and critical knowledge, finds an important pretext here in Longinus's qualification of the potential unruliness of his sense of great expressive power.

Longinus then charts several of the errors and faults that occur in writing that fails to achieve greatness, gleaning passages that illustrate turgidity, puerility, false enthusiasm, and frigidity in discourse. This discussion can appear tedious and is often overlooked; yet Longinus tries to exemplify here severalways that an apparently artistic method has failed to nurture talent and yielded hollow, tawdry, even unseemly rhetoric instead. Longinus counsels the careful study of artistic expression; he argues that "clear knowledge and critical judgment of what is truly great" allows the discerning writer and reader to make and to understand effective rhetorical choices.

In the third stage of his argument (chapters 7 and 8) Longinus considers the pragmatic tests for and the possible sources of great expressive power. He first offers three experientially oriented tests for the presence of greatness and then classifies "five sources" that are "most productive of great writing." Longinus argues that social value, psychological impact, and canonical or institutional authority offer distinct ways in which to probe for and recognize great writing. Social value is implicated in the discerning judgment of great writing because a sound pragmatic test for greatness follows a socially focused measure of moral value: "nothing is noble which it is noble to despise." Sheer wealth, social status, and political power, for Longinus, do not embody greatness because "men admire those great souls who could possess them but in factdisdain them." Besides this implicitly Stoic test of value, Longinus advocates a second pragmatic test for greatness

or sublimity in writing. Whatever is memorable, whatever makes an enduring psychological impact upon a hearer or reader, constitutes great writing. In addition to the test of memory, Longinus espouses a third pragmatic test—the long-standing consensual agreement that tends to canonize or institutionalize writing as great. Greatness in writing purportedly "satisfies all men at all times," and "the agreed verdict ... acquires an authority so strong that the object of its admiration is beyond dispute."

Longinus then itemizes and justifies briefly five sources that produce sublimity or greatness in writing. The first two sources are attributed to "innate dispositions," and they involve "vigor of mental conception" and "strong and inspired emotion." Longinus does not discuss emotion further; his treatise ends just at the point where he turns to consider the topic of the passions. However,his digression on Caecilius's omission provides a clear sense of the direction that he might have taken: "nothing contributes to greatness as much as noble passion in the right place; it breathes the frenzied spirit of its inspiration upon the words and makes them, as it were, prophetic." This passage becomes a touchstone for the Romantic conception of sublimity as inspired diction and as a quality that is transcendental in import.

The three other sources of great writing for Longinus involve "artistic training" rather than an innate temperament. All three also owe greatly to the sorts of categories often discussed by classical rhetoricians. For Longinus "adequate fashioning of figures" (tropes), "nobility of diction" (diction), and "dignified and distinguished word arrangement" (composition) all yield significant sources for the production of sublime writing. All three, moreover, are studied at some length in subsequent chapters of the treatise. What Longinus has nonetheless managed to establish in the seventh and eighth chapters—the third stage of the rhetorical structure of his work—are forthright classifications of the possible tests and sources of great expressive power.

The fourth stage of his argument (chapters 9-43) is the largest one, sometimes rather gap ridden, comprising sequential analyses of four of the sources of great writing that Longinus has classified in chapter 8. Longinus does not treat emotion, but the other four receive substantial discussion. These four sources include, first, mental conception (chapters 9-15); second, fashioning of figures (chapters 16-29, 32, 37-38); third, diction (chapters 30-31, 43); and fourth, music, rhythm, and word arrangement (chapters 39-42). Chapters 33 through 36 are a digression on the question of how great but flawed writing can and should be recognized as superior to flawless yet moderate or humble writing.

These thirty-five chapters offer some of the most interesting writing and virtually all of the arresting examples and commentary found in the treatise.

As noted before, Longinus believes that "Great writing does not persuade; it takes the reader out of himself." He emphasizes the experience of the sublimeas a felt effect and as a show of great power from without, from beyond the realm of the audience. However, Longinus also indicates the lineaments of the particular kind of ecstasy and mastery that characterize the experience of the sublime. The experience of great writing involves a

sudden, ecstatic transport of the hearer or reader; but this delightful uplifting turns upon an exchange of roles between the speaker and listener, between the writer and reader. One who undergoes the experience of greatness is moved and uplifted as if he or she has spoken or written the words that transported, as if he or she were the creator ofthe words that are read or heard.

A good deal of Longinus's commentary upon and appraisal of his chosen examples throughout chapters 9 through 43 reflects this psychologically intricate conception of the experience of sublimity. For instance, in discussing the use of well-conceived and vivid images in two passages from Euripides, Longinus comments that "the poet himself sees the Furies, and very nearly compels his audience to see what he has imagined." Longinus insists that Demosthenes' imaginative conceptions seek to compel an audience to see and feel "an imaginative picture which conceals the actual argument by its own brilliance." The auditor sees as if through Demosthenes' or Euripides' eyes; and, as Longinus says of Demosthenes' oratory, "when two things are joined into one, the stronger diverts to itself the power of the weaker." There is a sudden fusion and subtle exchange of roles in the felt experience of great expressive power.

When Longinus turns to consider the same psychological model of the experience of the sublime in his discussion of figures or tropes and rhythmic composition as sources of greatness in writing, he stresses the manner in which Demosthenes' figures of speech impact "upon the minds of his hearers." Throughhis effective and inspired choice of tropes, Demosthenes "grips his audience and carries it along with him." Similarly, the notion of sudden, ecstatic transport "often makes the reader feel himself in the midst of the dangers described." As he quickly places his reader in the midst of three passages that dramatically exemplify his point, Longinus addresses the reader: "Do you see, my friend, how he [Herodotus] gets a hold on your mind and leads it through these places and makes you see what you only hear? Such passages, by addressing the reader directly, place him in the middle of the action." Similarly, about metaphors he notes that their "swift onrush naturally drives and sweeps everything before them; they make the comparisons appear quite inevitable; and the hearer who shares the inspiration of the speaker is not given time to examine the number of metaphors." The fifth and final source of great writing also shares in the same model of the experience of sublimity. The skillful and rhythmical arrangement of words,according to Longinus, "appeals not to the ear only but to the mind itself" and in so doing "instills the speaker's feelings, by the blended variety of its sounds, into the hearts of those near him so that they share his passions."

Longinus's accounts of the various sources of greatness in writing and the underlying qualities of the experience of sublimity also betray his sense of the violence or uncompromising affective force of truly great writing. Quite often Longinus speaks of superb figural language as being engaged in an assault upon the readers or hearers. For instance, in contrasting the different kinds of rhetorical greatness found in the Greek Demosthenes and the Roman Cicero, Longinus contends that "the tense greatness of Demosthenes is more suited to moments of intense and violent passion when the audience must be altogether swept off its feet," while "the right time for the Ciceronian copiousness is when the audience must be overwhelmed by a flood of words." Longinus portrays the

sort of affective stylistics involved in the experience of great writing as one of continual assault by the writer or orator upon the emotions and expectations of the audience. In chapter 34 he delights in the violent effects that Demosthenes achieves with rhetorical inversions, or hyperdata. But the question remains: why does Longinus employ terms of violent assault upon the emotions and expectations of a reader or an auditor, and how does this characterization link up with the psychology of the sublime experience? An answer may lie within the hidden art and thematics of Longinus's own choice of tropes or figures for expressing the power of greatness. Time and again he selects and skillfully forces upon his reader similes, images, and metaphors that surreptitiously suggest his desire to naturalize the experience of the sublime— that is to say, his desire to describe the effects of great writing as if those felt effects were the actions of nature itself.

In the impassioned metaphors of chapter 34, the awesome power of Demosthenes' oratory is likened not only to the intimidating din of thunder but also to the power of the sun. The passage places the scale of oratorical power among the most startling and violent of nature's displays. Elsewhere rhetorical and poetical greatness is likened to a flood, to underground vapors, to a river, and to the "gusts of a hurricane." The hidden art of Longinus's subtle weaving of similes, images, and metaphors seems to suggest, finally, that the writer or orator is to his or her audience what nature is to the whole of mankind. Both nature and the creator of great writing can create an experience of sudden transport and exhibit awesome control and mastery over the perilous and exhilarating effects of unleashed energy and light. The natural sublime of Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, William Wordsworth and the Romantics finds its source in this Longinian conception of the experience of greatness.

The role of the reader or auditor, though, needs further clarification. The experience of great writing may be likened to the awesome and violent displaysof nature's power, but the bearing of this concealed thematics upon the purported psychology of the sublime may not be clear. With regularity Longinus characterizes the "noble exaltation," "dignity of mind," and "high spirit" of the authors of great works, and he considers a great work "the echo of a noble mind" and the "outpouring of divine spirit." Indeed, the expressive power and passion commanded by such a speaker as Demosthenes appear "like dread gifts from the gods (for they cannot be called human)." The sudden, ecstatic transport into which the work of a noble mind can propel an audience also achieves a sense of greatness and transcendence that goes beyond the usual orbit of experience. The experience of the sublime allows, demands, imposes with sudden awesomeness a sense of one's fusion and intimate interconnection with the greatness outside as well as potentially within oneself.

For Longinus the very nature of the individual moves him or her to witness the great performances not only of the natural world but also of those "most ambitious actors," such as Homer, Plato, or Demosthenes, who summon individuals time and again to answer to that "invincible love" of transcendence that is the natural proclivity of a human being. Longinus expands this idea by writing:

Anyone who looks at life in all its aspects will see how far the remarkable, the great, and the beautiful predominate in all things, and he will soon understand to what end we have

been born. That is why, somehow, we are by nature led to marvel, not, indeed, at little streams, clear and useful though they be, but at the Nile, the Danube, or the Rhine, and still more at the Ocean. We may say of all such matters that man can easily understand what is useful or necessary, but he admires what passes his understanding.

This analysis leads to the fifth and final stage, presented in chapter 44, which is Longinus's much-discussed rhetorical set piece on the causes of the decline of rhetoric and great writing. In responding to the view that a "world-wide sterility of utterance" has descended upon the Roman Empire because democracy and freedom no longer flourish, Longinus asserts: perhaps it is not the peace of the world [PaxRomana] which destroys greattalents, but much more so this endless war which occupies our passions and, beyond that, the desires which surely rule our present world like an army of occupation and drive everything absolutely before them.

The tyranny that conquers and subdues greatness is not necessarily imperial Rome; yet the imperial presence nonetheless dictates the metaphors and similes through which Longinus names the tyrannies that block or destroy greatness. The"endless war" of the struggle for material gain and the "army of occupation" that people's mundane desires have become do more to sterilize greatness than the Roman legions now stationed in lands once plentiful with political diversity. "Weare the slaves of money, which is an insatiable disease in us all, and also the slaves of pleasure; these two violate our lives and our persons." The love and slavery of wealth and of selfish pleasures "breed ruthless tyrants in our souls: violence, lawlessness, and shamelessness." Such tyranny of the soul, body, and mind constricts and turns the self- inward: "great qualities of soul wither, waste away, and are no longer esteemed; and men come to admire what is mortal withinthem, for they have neglected the growth of the immortal."

Instead of yielding to the tyranny of one's own self-involved desires, Longinus seems to suggest that human beings need to be open to the liberating force of sublimity or greatness. The experience of the sublime feeds the soul witha sense of what goes beyond the mortal and the mundane; it reveals an unexpected pathway leading outward from the prison of selfhood. Nature's, the poet's, or even the orator's sublime violence intrudes as a self-annihilating liberation of the soul to greatness. On the Sublime seems not to posit an "Oedipal structure" between quotation and commentary, prior author and refiguring critic, as Neil Hertz argues in his 1983 essay, "A Reading of Longinus" (CriticalInquiry, March 1983), or to project a dispersion of the subject as Suzanne Guerlac maintains in "Longinus and the Subject of the Sublime" (1985). Longinus appears to espouse a Stoic view of the self and the world. He castigates decadence, servile self-contentment, and self-enslavement; and he laments the self-centered blockage of higher aspirations and "great qualities of soul" that might otherwise release themselves toward self-transcendence and greatness. Indeed, the phrase "the growth of the immortal" faintly echoes the conception of the soul and its immortality spun out by the figure of Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus (circa 350 B.C.). Instead of Socrates' myth of the soul and the growth of the wings of immortality through philosophical discourse and love, Longinus in On the Sublime advances the view that the experience of greatness is an avenue of access to that

which passes understanding. The sublime, for Longinus, is in several respects an intriguing literary and psychological reconception of Plato's philosophic rhetoric and Socrates' myth about the soul.

On the Sublime has been an influential model of close reading and the notion of organic unity, hallmarks of Longinian criticism that are evident throughout chapters 9 through 43, which have greatly influenced twentieth- century critics of literature. Allan H. Gilbert has stated in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden (1940) that "the method of the book [On the Sublime] has entered into all our judicial criticism of the details of literature. If Aristotle may be said to have determined our view of the structure of a literary work, Longinus has shown us how to approach an individual passage." In one of the most famous sections of the treatise, for instance, Longinus quotes in its entirety a lyric poem by Sappho that begins "Peer of gods he seemeth to me." He then proceeds to study with exacting precision the skillful composition and appropriate attention to detail shown by the poet. Longinus argues that it is Sappho's "selection of the most vital details and her working them into one whole which produce the outstanding quality of the poem." The poem is carefully contrived in order to produce a particular sort of experience, and the well-integrated effects involvedin that experience are both the poet's task to produce and the critic's job to understand and appreciate.

Longinus emphasizes the felt effects induced by great mental conceptions or figures of speech or well-chosen diction. Frequently such an emphasis produces a subtle and illuminating close reading of lines and phrases. He traces the techniques by which Sappho's poem enacts an astonishing fit of passion, one in which the lover undergoes the sudden shock of seeing her beloved as a "peerof gods" and herself succumbs to a series of violent transformations under his gaze. The lover loses a sense of her own boundaries and identity, as the manifest pronominal confusion makes clear, and is precipitately thrown into a rapid series of metaphors and images that present her experience as a series of natural cataclysms (raging fire, roaring waves, rampaging river, unsettling earthquake, the painful descent of autumn). Sappho's lover is herself a sudden "close reader" of the sublime, and she undergoes the violent felt effects of the greatness and self-transcendence that can befall one "lost in the love trance."

Finally, regarding the poem's organic structure or organic unity, Longinus asks "How does [Sappho] excel?" He immediately responds that her excellence has to do precisely with her organic conception and composition, "her skillful choice of the most important and intense details and [her] relating them to one another." Writers such as Sappho and Homer "have sifted out the most significant details on the basis of merit, so to speak, and joined them harmoniously without inserting between them anything irrelevant, frivolous, or artificial; such additions spoil the total effect."

This conception of organic structure and unified wholeness sounds much like that of Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus and that of Aristotle in his Poetics. The originality and critical importance of Longinus in this matter may lie in the direction toward which he refines the notion. Longinus recognizes that not all writing or oratory exhibits organic unity; however,

the utilization of organic structure and wholeness, both in the creation and in the critical reception of literary discourse, heightens the "dignity," "distinction," and extraordinary character of that discourse. In a passage that owes much to the same analogy that Socrates uses in the Phaedrus, Longinus writes that: [one of] the factors which give most dignity to discourse is structure, which corresponds to the arrangement of the limbs of the body. One limb by itself, cut off from the others, is of no value, but all of them together complete and perfect the composition of the whole. So it is with great expressions: scattered here and there, apart from each other, they lose their own value and undo the greatness of the whole, but when they form a whole in close association, joined together by the bonds of melodious word-arrangement, then in the rounded structure of the whole they find their voice.

Organic structure and unity, thus, is a combined and cumulative source of greatness in writing. It combines the sources of mental conception, appropriate diction, and fine word arrangement in order to engender the consummate figure of sublimity: the "voice" that appears suddenly yet resoundingly as the felt effect of the experience of well-bonded words. This voice that issues from within the wholeness of the words gathers up the limbs and scattered fragments of ordinary and mediocre articulations and infuses them with an expressive power that transports the reader out of the confines of selfhood toward that sudden flash of greatness found time and again in the works of affective genius.

On the Sublime is not mentioned or discussed by any Greco-Roman writer or later Latin scholar through the Latin Middle Ages. This strange lack of circulation and reception speaks incontrovertibly about the highly marginal status of the treatise's ideas during the fifteen centuries following its probable date of composition. The first modern edition of On the Sublime appeared in Europe in 1554, and a handful of other editions emerged during the next hundred years; and the reading and critical understanding of this masterwork of antiquity was fundamentally a product of the modern writers and critics who recognized the intellectual energy of this subtle, iconoclastic work.

12.8 Summary

Longinus's conception of the sublime had its heyday in English criticism in the late seventeenth through the middle eighteenth century, and over time its meaning exanded to include not only literature, but any aesthetic phenomenon -- even including nature itself, particularly mountains or desolate and striking landscapes -- that produced sensations of awe or even of pain in its audience. John Baillie describes this effect in his Essay on the Sublime (1747), "Vast Objects occasion vast Sensations, and vast Sensations give the Mind a higher Idea of her own Powers." The most important English work on the sublime is Edmund Burke's Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1756). Burke writes: Whatever is in any sort terrible ... is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. Critics found examples of the literary sublime in the Bible and in Shakespeare, but for most of the eighteenth century, Milton was the author who best embodied sublimity, especially in Paradise Lost: as Joseph Addison put it in Spectator 279, "Milton's chief

Talent, and indeed his distinguishing Excellence, lies in the Sublimity of his Thoughts."

Johnson concurs: Milton's power is the product of an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts   The characteristick quality of his poem is sublimity. Sublimity became a central concern not only in eighteenth-century criticism, but in eighteenthcentury literature, especially in the works of the so-called pre-Romantic poets -- Thomas Gray, William Collins -- and in the works of Gothic novelists -- Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis. The most important late eighteenth-century work on the sublime is Kant's Critique of Judgment (1790), which influenced early nineteenth-century English thought on the subject. The author of the Sublime defines sublimity (hypsos) in literature as "the echo of greatness of spirit"—that is, the moral and imaginative power of the writer that pervades his work. This is the first known instance in which greatness in literature is ascribed to qualities innate in the writer rather than his art. The author further suggests that greatness of thought, if not inborn, may be acquired by emulating great authors such as Homer, Demosthenes, and Plato. Illustrative quotations recorded in On the Sublime occasionally preserved work that would otherwise now be lost—for example, one of Sappho's odes.

12.9 Key Terms

- **Folkloric role:** Folk tradition explains the association with missing objects with a tale from the saint's days in Rome. It is said he was of short stature and, as such, had unimpeded view of the underside of tables in crowded parties. Due to this, he would find and return objects dropped on the ground by the other attendants.

- **Brazilian spiritism:** Brazilian medium Chico Xavier wrote *Brasil, Coração do Mundo, Pátria do Evangelho*, a psychographic book of authorship attributed to the spirit of Humberto de Campos. In the book, Saint Longinus is claimed to have been reincarnated as Pedro II, the last Brazilian emperor.

- **New rhetoric:** The new rhetoric introduces a fundamental change in the philosophical outlook. Insofar as it aims at directing and guiding human action in all of the fields in which value judgments occur, philosophy is no longer conceived as the search for self-evident, necessary, universally and eternally valid principles but, rather, as the structuring of common principles, values, and *loci*, accepted by what the philosopher sees as the universal audience. The way the philosopher sees this universal audience, which is the incarnation of his idea of reason, depends on his situation in his cultural environment.

12.10 Review Questions

1. What is Sublimity. Explain with refence to the text.
2. How has Longinus stressed on Sublimity in writing? Elucidate.
3. How has Longinus tried to write as per the need of the readers?

4. Comment on the analysis of the text On the Sublimity.

5. Discuss the writing style Longinus has proposed for all the writers.

12.11 Review Questions

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UNIT -13: LEGACY OF LONGINUS

STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Longinus Legacy and Timeline
13.4 Application in modern times
13.5 Summary: Points to remember
13.6 Key Terms
13.7 Review Questions
13.8   References

13.1 Objectives

- ➢ The learners shall know about:
    - Longinus and his literary contribution.
    - Longinus and His timeline.
    - Longinus theory and analysis.
    - Longinus theory application in modern times.

13.2 Introduction

Salim Faraji calls Longinus, the Patriarch Theodosius and the Empress Theodora (who commissioned Julian for the Nubian mission field) the "Monophysite Triumvirate" of the sixth century for their role in maintaining and expanding the Monophysite church. The Nubian mission to which they were all connected was "one of the earliest manifestations of imperial Christianity in Africa".

13.3 Longinus Legacy and Timeline

The English poet John Milton may well have been familiar both with Gerard Langbaine's Latin version of the text, an edition issued in 1636 at Oxford, and the first publication of Longinus in England. Milton, moreover, cited Longinus as one of several classical authorities on the matter of style in his 1644 treatise Of Education. However, it was the

publication of Nicolas Boileau'sFrench translation and edition of On the Sublime in 1674 that galvanized widespread interest in Longinus and his analysis of the nature of sublimity. This vernacular translation, as well as Boileau's preface, so popularized On the Sublime that it became a major classical basis for critical formulations of both the French and the English neoclassical ages. With Boileau the first modern reading and first critical appropriation of Longinus commences. Boileau emphasized and paraphrased what Longinus meant by the idea of the sublime: it is "the extraordinary and the marvelous which strikes us in terms of language, and causes a work to carry away, ravish, transport us" (translation by Ernest Dilworth in Boileau: Selected Criticism, 1965, p. 49). This characterization of the kind of eloquence that Longinus celebrates became a significant formulation for succeeding neoclassical authors. In the wake of Boileau, Longinus's ideas about the powers of sublimity became a counterpoint to and balance for the prevailing critical emphasis upon the rhetorical treatises by Aristotle and Horace.

Neoclassical criticism in England often honored Longinus as one of the most astute classical preceptors. Joseph Addison, for instance, relied upon On the Sublime to account for the grandeur and sublimity of Milton's Paradise Lost (1667); and Alexander Pope, in his Essay on Criticism (1711), echoed Boileau's formulations in praising Longinus as one of the model critics of antiquity. Longinus also figured prominently in the work of such less well-known neoclassical writers as Robert Lowth, who engaged in an extensive and influential study of the elevated style and sublimity of the poetry of the Hebrew Bible, and Edward Young, who in his Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) pitted genius against slavish imitation and strict adherence to the rules of artistic composition.

Though the neoclassical writer John Dennis was the first English critic to produce a general theory of the sublime on the basis of the work of Longinus, later-eighteenth-century writers such as Edmund Burke and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant developed more significant and influential philosophical critiques of sublimity—Burke in his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime (1757) and Kant in his Kritik der Urteilskraft (1790; translated as Critique of Judgment). Both writers contrasted the well-formed and tasteful features of what might be called the merely beautiful or the aesthetic with the astonishing and unsettling nature of the experience of the sublime. Though Burke privileges the idea of the sublime in his philosophical aesthetics and Kant seems to favor the beautiful in his philosophyof aesthetic judgment, both thinkers draw deeply upon the sense of greatness or sublimity found in On the Sublime. Both writers also favor Longinus's pragmatic critical orientation, one that focuses on the experiencer, the perceiver, the reader of the passages that demonstrate sublimity. Though Kant often takes Burke to task for his conceptions of both the beautiful and the sublime, Burke's pragmatic critical orientation and its appeal to the universality of the felt experience of sublimity still remains an aesthetic stance that Kant shares both with Burke and with Longinus.

Though perhaps less important for Romantic and modern critics andtheorists than he was for neoclassical and Enlightenment thinkers, Longinus continued to be read and appropriated during the same nineteenth-century period in which his historical identity was put in question. For the Romantics, Longinus was principally important for his attempts to

discover, if only fleetingly and ineffably, the singular quality that infuses the greatest poetry. For such poets as William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley, and especially for many of their critics and readers, the sublime was the quality that marked supreme poetic diction and prompted correspondingly grand emotion in the presence of inspired eloquence. Then from the latter half of the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, On the Sublime continued to influence the theory and practice ofmodern literary criticism. In "The Study of Poetry" (1880) Matthew Arnold recommends the choosing and use of literary "touchstones" for "detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them." This method owes much to the critical practice of Longinus, who detects the presence or absence of sublimity by garnering a selection of passages and testing them against one another. This close attention to textual passages and their qualities also carries over into the critical practice of the American "New Critics" and the Chicago "Neo-Aristotelians" of the twentieth century such as Elder Olson. Longinus has been variously read by these groups as exemplifying ways that critical readers can and should attend to the features and qualities of style in lyric poetry.

54BC	Quaestor Source: [Theodore John Cadoux , Robin J. Seager " Cassius Longinus,Gaius OCD]
53-51	Proquaestor Source: [Theodore John Cadoux , Robin J. Seager " Cassius Longinus, Gaius OCD] Cassius served under Marcus Licinius Crassus and repelled the Parthianattacks on Syria in 51, ended an insurrection in Judaea in 52.
49	Tribune
49	Civil war between Caesar and the Optimates saved him from being brought to trial for extortion in Syria. Cassius commanded part of Pompey's fleet.
48	Pharsalus, Cassius on Pompey's side.
47	Caesar pardons Cassius and makes him legate; Cassius may have plotted against him. [Source: "The Ides of March," by J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Historia: ZeitschriftfürAlte Geschichte*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Jan., 1958), pp. 80-94.]
44	Praetor peregrinus. He became one of the conspirators against Caesar.
43	After the murder of Caesar, Cassius left Rome for Syria where he defeated Publius Cornelius Dolabellawho had been assigned Syria by the Senate.

42	When Cassius was defeated by Mark Antony and ordered his freedman to kill him near Philippi. Brutus, whose half sisterJuniaTertia he had married, called him "the last of the Romans." He was buried Thasos.

13.4 Application in modern times

In the light of the context sketched above, Longinus' preoccupation with the sublime might be seen as a call for spiritual reorientation, a movement away fromrationality and merely technical competence, itself a reflex of materialist and pragmatic thinking, toward acknowledgment of a profounder and more authentic strain in human nature that, through its exercise of emotion and imagination, sees itself not in isolation but as part of a vaster and divine scheme. This call has been repeated endlessly in numerous guises in various literary periods. The themes raised by Longinus, and much of his mode of treating them, persist into our own day, in the realms of literature, politics, law, and the media: the idea that poetry or indeed prose can emotionally transport, rather than merely persuade, a listener; the idea of organic unity and totality; the nature of imitation; the connection between reason and imagination, reason and emotion, beauty and utility, art and genius, art and nature; and, most importantly, a recognition of the power of language – founded on grandeur of thougt and the skillful use of figures – to attain sublimity, thereby transforming our perception of the world.

13.5 Summary: Points to remember

The literary concept of the sublime became important in the eighteenth century. It is associated with the 1757 treatise by Edmund Burke, though it has earlier roots. The idea of the sublime was taken up by Immanuel Kant and the Romantic poets including especially William Wordsworth. The earliest text on the sublime was written sometime in the first or third century AD by the Greek writer (pseudo-) Longinus in his work On the Sublime (Περὶ ὕψους, Perì hýpsous). Longinus defines the literary sublime as "excellence in language", the "expression of a great spirit" and the power to provoke "ecstasy" in one's readers.[2] Longinus holds that the goal of a writer should be to produce a form of ecstasy. He in other words elucidates sublime: "Sublimity refers to a certain type of elevated language that strikes its listener with the mighty and irresistible power of a thunderbolt. A sublime passage can be heard again and again with equal pleasure." However, Longinus goes beyond this to define the ideal kind of audience. 1. The best audience for the sublime is a refined, cultivated one. 2. Only such an audience is able to judge the relative sublimity of a work. 3. This attitude (central to neoclassicism) is somewhat aristocratic and elitist, because the audience Longinus desires must be free from the low and vulgar thoughts that generally accompany rustic toil. 4. This attitude will not be seriously challenged until the Romantic Age.

13.6 Key Terms

- **Amplification:** This is a difficult concept in the treatise, as <u>Longinus</u> uses but never clearly defines it. He begins by criticizing the common definition of the term ("a manner of expression which enhances the subject" [20]) as too broad and says that amplification involves such devices as "pauses," "fresh starts," and "increasing the effect at every step" (19).

- **Asyndeton**: From the Greek for "not linked," this literary device leaves out connective words (like "and"), creating an urgent, breathless, passionate effect (31-33).

- **Frigidity:** Discussed at length on <u>Longinus</u> defines frigidity as using language or expressions that are unworthy of the thought being expressed. He calls it the opposite fault to puerility (7-8)

13.7 Review Questions

1. What are the five principles of Longinus?
2. What is the significance of Longinus?
3. What is the philosophy of Longinus?
4. What are the five sources of sublimity?
5. Distinguish between True sublimity and False sublimity.

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BLOCK - 4. NEO-CLASSICAL THEORY & CRITICISM

UNIT 14: Origin and Development of Neo – classicism
UNIT 15: Neo – Classicism in England: John Dryden
UNIT 16: Neo – Classicism and Other Writers: Samuel Johnson

UNIT -14: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEO – CLASSICISM

STRUCTURE

14.1 Objectives

> ➢ The learners shall know the following from this unit:
> - Definition of neo – classicism.
> - Origin and development of Neo – classicism.
> - French Neo – classicism.
> - French classicists

14.2 Introduction

In opposition to the frivolous sensuality of Rococo painters like Jean-Honoré Fragonard and François Boucher, the Neoclassicists looked back to the French painter Nicolas Poussin for their inspiration (Poussin's work exemplifies the interest in classicism
 in French art of the seventeenth century). The decision to promote "Poussiniste" painting became an ethical consideration—they believed that strong drawing was rational, therefore morally better. They believed that art should be cerebral, not sensual.

The Neoclassicists, such as Jacques-Louis David (pronounced Da-VEED), preferred the well-delineated form—clear drawing and modeling (shading). Drawing was considered more important than painting. The Neoclassical surface had to look perfectly smooth—no evidence of brush strokes should be discernible to the naked eye. France was on the brink of its first revolution in 1789, and the Neoclassicists wanted to express a rationality and seriousness that was fitting for their times. Artists like David supported the rebels through art that asked for clear-headed thinking, self-sacrifice to the State (as in *Oath of the Horatii*) and an austerity reminiscent of Republican Rome.

Neoclassicism was a child of the Age of Reason (the Enlightenment), when philosophers believed that we would be able to control our destinies by learning from and following the laws of nature (the United States was founded on Enlightenment philosophy). Scientific inquiry attracted more attention. Therefore, Neoclassicism continued the connection to the classical tradition because it signified moderation and rational thinking but in a new and more politically-charged spirit ("neo" means "new," or in the case of art, an existing style reiterated with a new twist.)

Neoclassicism is characterized by clarity of form, sober colors, shallow space, strong horizontal and verticals that render that subject matter timeless (instead of temporal as in the dynamic Baroque works), and classical subject matter (or classicizing contemporary subject matter).

14.3 Definition

Neoclassicism refers to a broad tendency in literature and art enduring from the early seventeenth century until around 1750. While the nature of this tendency inevitably varied across different cultures, it was usually marked by a number of common concerns and characteristics. Most fundamentally, neoclassicism comprised a return to the classical models, literary styles, and values of ancient Greek and Roman authors. In this, the neoclassicists were to some extent heirs of the Renaissance humanists. But many of them reacted sharply against what they perceived to be the stylistic excess, superfluous ornamentation, and linguistic over-sophistication of some Renaissance writers; they also rejected the lavishness of the Gothic and Baroque styles.

Many major Mediaeval and Renaissance writers, including Dante, Ariosto, More, Spenser and Milton had peopled their writings with fantastic and mythical beings. Authors such as Giraldi had attempted to justify the genre of the romance and the use of the "marvellous" and unreal elements. Sidney and others had even proposed, in an idealizing neo-Platonist strain, that the poet's task was to create an ideal world, superior to the world of nature. The neo-Classicists, reacting against this idealistic tendency in Renaissance poetics, might be thought of as heirs to the other major tendency in Renaissance poetics, which was Aristotelian. This latter impetus had been expressed in the work of Minturno, Scaliger and Castelvetro who all wrote commentaries on Aristotle's Poetics and stressed the Aristotelian notion of probability, as well as the "unities" of action, time and place.

However, whereas many Renaissance poets had labored toward an individualism of outlook, even as they appropriated elements of the classical canon, the neo-Classicists in general were less ambiguous in their emphasis upon the classical values of objectivity, impersonality, rationality, decorum, balance, harmony, proportion and moderation. Whereas many Renaissance poets were beginning to understand profoundly the importance of invention and creativity, the neo-Classical writers reaffirmed literary composition as a rational and rule-bound process, requiring a great deal of craft, labor and study. Where Renaissance theorists and poets were advocating new and mixed genres, the neo-Classicists tended to insist on the separation of poetry and prose, the purity of each genre and the hierarchy of genres (though, unlike Aristotle, they generally placed the epic above tragedy). The typical verse forms of the neo-Classical poets were the alexandrine in France and the heroic couplet in England. Much neo-Classical thought was marked by a recognition of human finitude, in contrast with the humanists' (and, later, the Romantics_) assertion of almost limitless human potential.

Two of the concepts central to neo-Classical literary theory and practice were imitation and nature, which were intimately related. In one sense, the notion of imitation — of the external world, and primarily, of human action — was a reaffirmation of the ideals of objectivity and impersonality, as opposed to the increasingly sophisticated individualism and exploration of subjectivity found in Renaissance writers. But also integral to this notion was imitation of classical models, especially Homer and Vergil. In fact, these two aspects of imitation were often identified, as by Pope. The identification was based largely on the concept of nature. This complex concept had a number of senses. It referred to the harmonious and hierarchical order of the universe, including the various social and political hierarchies within the world. In this vast scheme of nature, everything had its proper and appointed place. The concept also referred to human nature: to what was central, timeless and universal in human experience. Hence, "nature" had a deep moral significance, comprehending the modes of action that were permissible and excluding certain actions as "unnatural" (a term often used by Shakespeare to describe the murderous and cunning behavior of characters such as Lady Macbeth). Clearly, the neo-Classical vision of nature was very different from the meanings later given to it by the Romantics; this vision inherited something of the Mediaeval view of nature as a providential scheme but, as will emerge shortly, it was informed by more recent scientific views of nature rather than by Aristotelian physics. The neo-Classical writers generally saw the ancients such as Homer and Vergil as having already discovered and expressed the fundamental laws of nature. Hence, the external world, including the world of human action, could best be expressed by modern writers if they followed the path of imitation already paved by the ancients. Invention was of course allowed but only as a modification of past models, not in the form of a rupture.

The connection of neo-Classicism to recent science and what would eventually emerge as some of the core values of the Enlightenment was highly ambivalent and even paradoxical. On the one hand, the neo-Classical concept of nature was informed by Newtonian physics, and the universe was acknowledged to be a vast machine, subject to fixed analyzable laws. On the other hand, the tenor of most neo-Classical thought was retrospective and conservative. On the surface, it might seem that the neo-Classical writers shared with Enlightenment thinkers a belief in the power of reason. The neo-Classicists certainly saw literature as subject to a system of rules, and literary composition as a rational process, subject to the faculty of judgment (Pope uses the word "critic" in its original Greek sense of "judge"). But, while it is true that some neo-

Classical writers, especially in Germany, were influenced by Descartes and other rationalists, the "reason" to which the neo-Classical writers appeal is in general not the individualistic and progressive reason of the Enlightenment (though, as will be seen in a later chapter, Enlightenment reason could from other perspectives be seen as a coercive and oppressive force); rather, it is the "reason" of the classical philosophers, a universal human faculty that provides access to general truths and which is aware of its own limitations. Alexander Pope and others emphasized the finitude of human reason, cautioning against its arrogant and unrestricted employment. Reason announced itself in neo-Classical thought largely in Aristotelian and sometimes Horatian terms: an adherence to the requirements of probability and verisimilitude, as well as to the three unities, and the principle of decorum. But the verisimilitude or likeness to reality here sought after was different from nineteenth century realism that sought to depict the typical elements and the universal truths about any given situation; it did not operate via an accumulation of empirical detail or a random recording of so-called reality. It was reason in this Aristotelian sense that lay behind the insistence on qualities such as order, restraint, moderation and balance.

Interestingly, Michael Moriarty has argued that the neo-Classical insistence on adherence to a body of rules embodies an ideological investment which must be understood in terms of broader developments in the literary market. A specifically literary criticism, he urges, began to emerge as a specialized and professional discipline in the seventeenth century, with literature being identified as an autonomous field of study and expertise. Seventeenth century criticism addressed an expanded readership which it helped to create: this broader public ranged from the aristocracy of the court and the salons to the middle strata of the bourgeoisie. The critical ideology of this public was orientated toward pleasure and to evaluation based on polite "taste." The rise of periodical presses during the second half of the seventeenth century "provided a new channel for discourse about literature addressed to a non-scholarly social elite." But there was a reciprocal interaction: the habits of literary consumption modified critical discourse; for example, despite the epic's high theoretical status, the demands and tastes of an increasing theatre-going public generated far more criticism about drama. Along with these developments, a class of literary men newly emerged from bourgeois backgrounds, the nouveaux doctes, specialized in a specifically literary training, and focused on language, rhetoric and poetics. This mastery enabled them to establish a new, more respectable identity for themselves as men of letters, whereby they could offer polite society the kind of pleasure befitting its dignity. They defined this pleasure in Horatian terms, as necessarily conjoined with instruction; it was a refined pleasure, issuing from a conformity to rules. It was these rules, impersonally and sacredly embodied in ancient authorities such as Aristotle and Horace, and modern authorities such as the Academie Francaise, that consecrated the work as a product of art and which legitimated "the poet's status as a purveyor of pleasure" to the dominant groups.1

This general tendency of neo-Classicism toward order, clarity and standardization was manifested also in attempts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to regulate the use of language and the meanings of words. In France, the Academie Francaise was established for this purpose in 1635, and writers such as Francois de Malherbe argued that meanings should be stabilized in the interests of linguistic clarity and communication. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary was published in 1755. The impetus behind these endeavors was reflected in John Locke's theory of language, and his insistence, following Descartes, that philosophy should proceed by

defining its terms precisely, using "clear and distinct" ideas and avoiding figurative language. This ideal of clarity, of language as the outward sign of the operations of reason, permeated neo-Classical poetry which was often discursive, argumentative and aimed to avoid obscurity. This movement toward clarity has been variously theorized as coinciding with the beginnings of bourgeois hegemony, as reacting against a proliferation of vocabulary and meanings during the Renaissance, and as marking a step further away from a Mediaeval allegorical way of thinking toward an attempted literalization of language.

14.4 Origin and Development of Neo - Classicism

Many major medieval and Renaissance writers, including Dante, Ariosto, More, Spenser, and Milton, had peopled their writings with fantastic and mythical beings. Authors such as Giraldi had attempted to justify the genre of the romance and the use of the "marvelous" and unreal elements. Sidney and others had even proposed, in an idealizing Neo-Platonist strain, that the poet's task was to create an ideal world, superior to the world of nature. The neoclassicists, reacting against this idealistic tendency in Renaissance poetics, might be thought of as heirs to the other major tendency in Renaissance poetics, which was Aristotelian. This latter impetus had been expressed in the work of Minturno, Scaliger, and Castelvetro, who all wrote commentaries on Aristotle's Poetics and stressed the Aristotelian notion of probability, as well as the "unities" of action, time, and place.

However, whereas many Renaissance poets had labored toward an individualism of outlook, even as they appropriated elements of the classical canon, the neoclassicists in general were less ambiguous in their emphasis upon the classical values of objectivity, impersonality, rationality, decorum, balance, harmony, proportion, and moderation. Whereas many Renaissance poets were beginning to understand profoundly the importance of invention and creativity, the neoclassical writers reaffirmed literary composition as a rational and rule- bound process, requiring a great deal of craft, labor, and study. Where Renaissance theorists and poets were advocating new and mixed genres, the neoclassicists tended to insist on the separation of poetry and prose, the purity of each genre, and the hierarchy of genres (though, unlike Aristotle, they generally placed the epic above tragedy). The typical verse forms of the neoclassical poetswerethe alexandrine in France and the heroic couplet in England. Much neoclassical thoughtwas marked by a recognition of human finitude, in contrast with the humanists' (and,later, the Romantics') assertion of almost limitlesshuman potential.

The English Neoclassical movement, predicated upon and derived from both classical and contemporary French models, (see Boileau'sL'ArtPoetique (1674) and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711) as critical statements of Neoclassical principles embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, "correctness," "restraint," decorum, and so on, which would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Though its origins were much earlier (the Elizabethan Ben Jonson, for example, was as indebted to the Roman poet Horace as Alexander Pope would later be),

Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 untilthe end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of Lyrical Ballads (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassic period can be divided into three relatively coherent parts: the Restoration Age (1660-1700), in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences; the Augustan Age (1700- 1750), in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were presiding over the sophistication of the novel; and the Age of Johnson(1750-1798), which, while it was dominated and characterized by the mind and personality of the inimitable Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose sympathies were with the fading Augustan past, saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school — attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions — established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism.

To a certain extent Neoclassicism represented a reaction against the optimistic, exuberant, and enthusiastic Renaissance view of man as a beingfundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. Neoclassical theorists, by contrast, saw man as an imperfect being, inherently sinful, whose potential was limited. They replaced the Renaissance emphasis on the imagination, on invention and experimentation, andon mysticism with an emphasis on order and reason, on restraint, on common sense, and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. Theymaintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art, and saw art itself as essentially pragmatic — as valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional.

Hence their emphasis on proper subject matter; and hence their attempts to subordinate details to an overall design, to employ in their work concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace, which would facilitate the process of delighting, instructing, educating, and correcting the social animal which they believed man to be. Their favorite prose literary forms were the essay,the letter, the satire, the parody, the burlesque, and the moral fable; in poetry, the favorite verse form was the rhymed couplet, which reached its greatest sophistication in heroic couplet of Pope; while the theatre saw the development of the heroic drama, the melodrama, the sentimental comedy, and the comedy of manners. The fading away of Neoclassicism may have appeared to represent the last flicker of the Enlightenment, but artistic movements never really die: many of the primary aesthetic tenets of Neoclassicism, in fact have reappeared in the twentieth century — in, for example, the poetry and criticism of T. S. Eliot — as manifestations of a reaction against Romanticism itself: Eliot saw Neo-classicism as emphasising poetic form and conscious craftsmanship, and Romanticism as a poetics of personal emotion and "inspiration," and pointedly preferred the former The neoclassicists were by no means devoted to slavish imitation of the classics. La Bruyère indeed thought that the ancients had already expressed everything that was worth saying; and Pope, in one of his more insistent moments,

equated following the rules of nature with the imitation of Homer. But Ben Jonson,Corneille, Dryden, and many others were more flexible in their assimilation of classical values. Nearly all of them acknowledged the genius of Shakespeare, some the genius of Milton; Boileau recognized the contribution of an inexplicable element, the je ne sais quoi, in great art, and Pope acknowledged that geniuses could attain "a grace beyond the reach of art." Moreover, theneoclassicists attempted to develop and refine Aristotle's account of the emotionsevoked by tragedy in an audience, and an important part of their endeavor to imitate nature consisted in portraying the human passions. There raged at the beginning of the eighteenth century various debates over the relative merits of "ancients" and "moderns." The ancients were held to be the repository of good sense, natural laws, and the classical values of order, balance, and moderation. Such arguments were found in Jonathan Swift's The Battle of the Books (1704) and in the writings of Boileau and Pope. Proponents of the "modern" laid stress on originality of form and content, flexibility of genre, and the license to engage in new modes of thought.

14.5 French Neo – Classicism: Corneille, Boileau - Despereaux

Neoclassical literary criticism first took root in France from where its influence spread to other parts of Europe, notably England. It was Jean Chapelain who introduced into France the ideas of the Italian Aristotelian commentators Castelvetro and Scaliger. The French court during the reign of Louis XIV was a center of patronage for numerous poets and dramatists. The political conditions of relative peace, prosperity, and national unity after the religious wars of the sixteenth century, together with the growth of educated elites in the clergy and court aristocracy, proved ripe for the founding of the French Academy in 1635. The mission of the Academy, headed by Cardinal Richelieu, was partly to standardize language through the creation of a dictionary and grammar, as well aswork on rhetoric and poetics. The major figures of French neoclassicism were Corneille, Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine. Corneille's theories grew out of the need to defend his dramatic practice against strict classicists such as Scudéry and Jean Chapelain. The most prominent theorists were Dominique Bouhours, René Rapin, and Nicolas Boileau. Characteristically of the neoclassical tendency as a whole, Bouhours argued against excessive ornamentation and insisted on the principle of decorum. Boileau, perhaps the most influential French neoclassical critic, argued for retaining the strict divisions between classical verse forms.

14.5.1 Pierre Corneille (1606–1684)

Pierre Corneille, born in the French town of Rouen in Normandy, was primarily a playwright. Born into a middle-class family, and having failed in his initialendeavor as a lawyer, he launched into a stormy and controversial career in the theater. The most important text of his literary criticism, TroisDiscourssur le poèmedramatique (Three Discourses on Dramatic Poetry, 1660), was produced in response to the controversies he had ignited, to explain and justify his own dramatic practice. Those controversies had their

origin in the varied reception of Corneille's most renowned play, Le Cid, which appeared in 1637. While the play enjoyed great popularity withaudiences, it was attacked not only by critics but also by the French literary and political establishment. This attack was based on the play's alleged failure to observe the rules of classical theater as laid down by Aristotle and Horace. Critics claimed that the play violated the classical unities – of action, time, and place – as well as the Aristotelian precepts of probability and necessity; and in doing so, they argued, it undermined the morally didactic function of drama. Corneille responded to these charges both by writing further plays displaying his mastery of classical conventions and by producing his Three Discourses. Whilehe is conventionally regarded as a champion of neoclassical virtues in the tradition of François de Malherbe and Racine, the actual texts of his Discourses suggest that he is concerned to adapt classical precepts to modern requirementsof the tage and to provide a broader and more liberal interpretation of those precepts.

In his third Discourse, entitled "Of the Three Unities of Action, Time, and Place," Corneille attempts to explain the rationale behind his plays. Regarding the unity of action, Corneille resists any interpretation of this to mean that"tragedy should only show one action on the stage." He takes Aristotle's statement that a complete action should have a beginning, middle, and end to mean that these three parts are "separate actions which find their conclusion inthe principal one." And, just as these three parts are subordinated to the main action, so, Corneille urges, each of these three parts can contain subordinate actions. In other words, while he agrees that "there must be only one complete action," he insists that "action can become complete only through several others. . . which, by serving as preparation, keep the spectator in a pleasant suspense." He suggests that the end of each act leave us in the expectation of something which is to take place in the following one. So what Corneille is disputing is not that the action in a play should be complete, but the definition of a complete action; interestingly, his own definition attempts to develop the implication of Aristotle's for the connections between the acts of a play; it also makes the audience's response an integral component. In addition he develops Aristotle's view, that one event must not simply follow another but be caused by it according to necessity or probability, into a rule which is "new and contrary tothe usage of the ancients." This rule is that, not only should all parts of the action be closely and causally connected, but also they should "all have their source in the protasis" (the protasis being the introduction of events in the first act) (102– 103).

Aristotle had divided a play into two parts: the "complication" leading up to the "change of fortune" of the protagonist; and the "resolution," the remaining part of the play. While Corneille accepts this division, he states that the "complication depends entirely upon the choice and industrious imagination of the poet and no rule can be given for it" beyond the requirements of probability and necessity. Corneille adds that the poet should not engage in lengthy narrations providing background to the play's actual action; this will annoy and burden the spectator. Narrations should be used only to explain or comment on actions that have occurred within the play. Corneille reaffirms Aristotle's view that the deus ex machina should be avoided, since this provides a "faulty resolution" of a plot. On the other hand, he finds Aristotle's criticism of the flying chariot in Euripides' Medea harsh since, Corneille argues, the audience has been adequately prepared for this otherwise

improbable scene.

14.5.2 Nicolas Boileau- Despréaux (1636–1711)

The French poet, satirist, and critic Boileau had a pervasive influence not only on French letters (of the old-fashioned kind) but also on English and German poets and critics. His L'ArtPoétique (The Art of Poetry), first published in 1674, was translated into English by John Dryden. Boileau's text represents a formal statement of the principles of French classicism, and perhaps the most direct expression of neoclassical ideals anywhere. It drew heavily on Aristotle and Horace, and in its turn was a powerful influence on English neoclassical writers such as Pope; in fact, some of it is echoed very directly in Pope's Essay on Criticism. Boileau's text and authority enjoyed such prestige that he was known as the législateur du Parnasse, credited with the formation of French literary taste, fixing this taste through consistent criteria and extricating it from "unclassical" Spanish and Italian influences. Boileau helped the French public to appreciate theworks of his friends Racine and Molière. Above all, Boileau became the embodiment of classical rationality, "good sense," and proportion.

Like Pope's Essay on Criticism, Boileau's Art of Poetry embodies some of the vast intellectual and political changes that were already beginning to sweep over Europe. In some ways, it embodies a rejection of the entire feudal system; characteristically of neoclassical thinking, it virtually ignores the Middle Ages and seeks to restore the classical principles of reason and nature, together with the classical view of the human being as essentially social. Just as Molière's plays effect a balance between religious belief and rationalism, arguing for an enlightened rather than authoritarian religion, so Boileau's text is marked by a central affirmation of the importance of reason, as well as observation. To this extent, Boileau's neoclassicism, like Molière's and Pope's, exhibits surface similarities with emerging bourgeois philosophy and relatively modern ways of thinking. It reacts against Christian puritanism, submitting the claims of the latter to the judgment of reason. But, as in the case of these other authors, the "reason" espoused by Boileau is a classical view of reason as a common human faculty which perceives what is universally true. It is not the individualistic reason of bourgeois philosophy that rejects all authority and relies ultimately on the findings of individual sense-perception. Moreover, Boileau appeals directly in histext, as does Molière in Tartuffe, to the authority of the king (Louis XIV) as an enlightened and near-omniscient monarch who has extinguished "rebellion" and has brought order to all of Europe.

Like Pope's Essay, Boileau's text is written as a poem, in the tradition of Horace's Arspoetica, and offers advice to the poet in various genres such as tragedy, comedy, epic, and ode, as well as summaries of various aspects of literary history. The principle of reason is at the heart of Boileau's text, receiving an emphasis well beyond that in Horace's text and greater even than that in Pope's text. Boileau's most general imperative that the poet employ reason is contained in the lines: "Love reason then; and let whate'er you write / Borrow from her its beauty, force, and light" (I, ll. 37–38). Boileau is skillful in

drawing out the widely varied ramifications of the reliance on reason.

Hence, poetic control, moderation, the unities of time and place, and the imitation of classical examples are all associated by Boileau with the exercise of reason; later, in Pope's Essay, all of these virtues will be associated with following nature. For Boileau, reason also urges against the subjection of poetry to religious puritanism. He states: "Our pious fathers, in their priest-rid age, / As impious and profane abhorred the stage." But "At last right reason did his laws reveal, / And showed the folly of their ill-placed zeal" (III, ll. 79–80, 85–86). Boileau's point isthat religious zeal is misplaced in substituting angels, virgins, and saints for classical heroes. He also sees as misplaced the puritanical aversion to the use of poetic ornament. Ornament, he says, is indispensable to the poet's art. in his desire to return to classical models, he countenances even those aspects of classical paganism that directly contradict Christian teaching, on the grounds that the gospels are not a fitting subject for verse and that removal of classicalornament will impoverish a poem. As many critics have pointed out, Boileau betrays here some of his own limitations: he entirely bypasses the contributionsof medieval aesthetic theory and Christian notions of beauty. He is unable to envision a Christian mythology at all replacing classical mythology or even complementing it, as it does in Dante and Milton, whose work he does not seem to appreciate.

Like Pope after him, Boileau appeals to nature: "To study nature be your only care." The poet, he says, must know human nature and the "secrets of the heart." He must observe and be able to paint all kinds of people, at all stages in life. But even here, the following of nature is seen as obeying the rules of reason: "Your actors must by reason be controlled; / Let young men speak like young, old men like old" (III, ll. 390–391). Indeed, the poet must observe "exact decorum," which itself rests on a knowledge of human nature and on the exercise of reason: each person must be portrayed in his "proper character," which must be both self- consistent and consistent with the character's country, rank, and native customs (III, ll. 110–112, 121). Hence the poet must not only know human nature; he must also be an observer of various customs and ages; he must "Observe the town and study well the court" (III, l. 392). All of this emphasis on decorum is seen by Boileau as resting on the use of reason: "I like an author that reforms the age, / And keeps the right decorum of the stage, / That always pleases by just reason's rule" (III, ll. 422–424).

14.6 Summary

Ironically, neo-Classicism helped prepare the way for its own demise. One avenue toward this self-transcendence of neo-Classicism was through the concept of the sublime. The first century treatise called On the Sublime, attributed to "Longinus," had viewed the sublime as a form of emotional transport beyond the rational faculty. Boileau's translation of this text in 1674 was followed by flourishing discussions of the topic in England and Germany, which were often accompanied, as we shall see in the chapter on Kant, by an extensive examination of the concept of beauty. In fact, in England, the contrast "between sublimity and correctness had socio-political resonance, since the former was associated with the English subject's liberty, the latter with both the English and the absolutist French court" (CHLC, III, 552-553). Another legacy of the neo-Classicists was an examination of the notion of "taste" in terms of consensus

of qualified people. This notion of consensus prepared the way for an aesthetic orientated toward reader-response rather than mere adherence to an abstract body of rules**.**

14.7 Key Terms

- **Neoclassical:** Neoclassicism literally means 'new classicism' or a revival of classical values. The word is used as a style label and is applied to aspects of the arts of the later 18th and early 19th centuries. At that period there was a conscious revival and appropriation of classical models of art and architecture.

- **Apostles:** These were the 12 followers of <u>Christ</u>, called by him at the beginning of his ministry. They are named in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Matthew 10: 1-4). The first to be called were Andrew and his brother Simon (later called Peter), James and John, the sons of Zebedee, all of whom were fishermen, then Matthew, the tax collector, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddeus, Simon of Canaan and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, and hanged himself. He was replaced by Matthias (Acts of the Apostles 1).
- **New Testament:** The New Testament and Old Testament are two parts of the Bible. The Bible forms the basis of the faiths of Judaism and Christianity, whose adherents believe that it contains the word of God.

- **Georgian Poetry:** a poetic movement in England that lasted from 1910 to 1936 during the reign of George V.

14.8 Review Questions

1. What is Neo – classicism?
2. Trace the historical perspective of neo- classicism.
3. Comment on the literature of neo -classicism.
4. Describe the neo classical thoughts and its relevance in literature.
5. Distinguish between neo – classicism and it previous age of writing.

14.9 References

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UNIT 15: NEO -CLASSICISM IN ENGLAND AND JOHN DRYDEN

STRUCTURE

15.1 Objectives

> ➢ This unit enables the learner to:

- Know about England and neo-classicism.

- Know about the write John Dryden in particular.

- Dryden and nature of poetry.

- Definition of Drama.

15.2 Introduction

Neoclassicism began in Rome but spread throughout Europe as students of the arts were influenced by Greco-Roman artistic principles. It occurred around the same time as the Age of Enlightenment, an intellectual movement that dominated thinking in Europe in the 18th century. It lasted into the 19th century and for a time, competing with Romanticism. It's possible to see the effects and influence of neoclassicism on architecture to this day. The literary period ended when William Wordsworth published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798.

Literary neoclassicism is noted for attempts to imitate the style of the Romans and Greeks. Writing from this period is noted for its accuracy and order, as well as its direct and clear structure. Writers sought to portray their characters as flawed, and very human, something that's today seen in stark contrast to previous Renaissance attitudes in which humankind was depicted in God's image– as perfect. The writers and artists of the period emphasized control and restraint, something that spilled over into politics at the time. By using restraint, the poets, novelists, and playwrights believed that they could imitate the structures of Greco-Roman literary works. The writers of the period most commonly engaged with satire, essays, fables, rhyming poems with couplets, parodies, and more.

15.3 John Dryden (1631–1700)

John Dryden occupies a seminal place in English critical history. Samuel Johnson called him "the father of English criticism," and affirmed of his Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668) that "modern English prose begins here." Dryden's critical work was extensive, treating of various genres such as epic, tragedy, comedy and dramatic theory, satire the relative virtues of ancient and modern writers, as well as the nature of poetry and translation. In addition to the Essay,he wrote numerous prefaces, reviews, and prologues, which together set the stage for later poetic and critical developments embodied in writers such as Pope, Johnson, Matthew Arnold, and T. S. Eliot.

Dryden was also a consummate poet, dramatist, and translator. His poetic output reflects his shifting religious and political allegiances. Born into a middle- class family just prior to the outbreak of the English Civil War between King Charles I and Parliament, he initially supported the latter, whose leaders, headed by Oliver Cromwell, were Puritans. Indeed, his poem Heroic Stanzas (1659) celebrated the achievements of Cromwell who, after the execution of Charles I bythe victorious parliamentarians, ruled England as Lord Protector (1653–1658). However, with the restoration of the dead king's son, Charles II, to the throne in 1660, Dryden switched sides, celebrating the new monarchy in his poem AstreaRedux (Justice Restored). Dryden was appointed poet-laureate in 1668 andthereafter produced several major poems, including the mock-heroic "Mac Flecknoe" (1682), and a political satire Absalom and Achitophel (1681). In addition, he produced two poems that mirror his move from Anglicanism to Catholicism: "ReligioLaici" (1682) defends the Anglican Church while The Hind and the Panther, just five years later, opposes Anglicanism. Dryden's renowned dramas include the comedy Marriage a la Mode (1671) and the tragedies Aureng- Zebe (1675) and All for Love, or the World Well Lost (1677). His translations include Fables, Ancient and Modern (1700), which includes renderings of Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer.

15.3.1 Dryden as a critic

Dryden was both a writer and a critic and he had rather a dogmatic bent. Most of his critical interpretations are found in the prefaces to his own works. In Dryden we find an interest in the general issues of criticism rather than in a close reading of particular texts. We call Dryden a neoclassical critic, just as Boileau. Dryden puts emphasis on the

neoclassical rules. His best-known critical work, An Essay on Dramatic Poesy, partly reflects this tension in Dryden's commitments. Its dialogue form has often been criticized as inconclusive, but actually, as in most dialogues, there is a spokesman weightier than the others. Dryden carried out his critical thoughts effectively, stating his own ideas but leaving some room for difference of opinion. Neander's overall statement on the literary standards is that, the norms can be added to make the work ideal, but the norms will not improve a work which does not contain some degree of perfection. And asDryden believes, we may find writers like Shakespeare who did not follow the rules but are nevertheless obviously superior to any "regular" writer. Shakespearedisconcerts Dryden; he recognises his superiority but within himself he would feel closer affiliations with Ben Jonson. In Dryden, then, we find a "liberal" neo- classicist, although he is most coherent (a trait of classicism) when he is dealing with that which can be understood and reduced to rule.

Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy is written as a debate on drama conducted by four speakers, Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander. These personae have conventionally been identified with four of Dryden's contemporaries. Eugenius (meaning "well-born") may be Charles Sackville, who was Lord Buckhurst, a patron of Dryden and a poet himself. Crites (Greek for "judge" or "critic") perhaps represents Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law. Lisideius refers to Sir Charles Sedley, and Neander ("new man") is Dryden himself. The Essay, as Dryden himself was to point out in a later defense of it, was occasioned by a public dispute with Sir Robert Howard (Crites) over the use of rhyme in drama.5 In a note to the reader prefacing the Essay, he suggests that the chief purpose of his text is "to vindicate the honour of our English writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French" (27). Yet the scope of the Essay extendsfar beyond these two topics, effectively ranging over a number of crucial debates concerning the nature and composition of drama.

15.3.2 Dryden on the nature of Poetry

Dryden agrees in general terms with Aristotle's definition of poetry as a process of imitation though he has to add some qualifiers to it. The generally accepted view of poetry in Dryden's day was that it had to be a close imitation of facts past or present. While Dryden has no problem with the prevalent neo-classical bias in favour of verisimilitude (likeness/fidelity to reality) he would also allow in more liberties and flexibilities for poetry. In the The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy he makes out a case for double-legged imitation. While the poet is free to imitate "things as they are said or thought to be", he also gives spirited defence of a poet's right to imitate what could be, might be or ought to be. He cites in this context the case of Shakespeare who so deftly exploited elements of the supernatural and elements of popular beliefs and superstitions. Dryden wouldalso regard such exercises as 'imitation' since it is drawing on "other men's fancies".

15.3.3 Dryden on the function of Poetry

As we know, Plato wanted poetry to instruct the reader, Aristotle to delight, Horace to do

both, and Longinus to transport. Dryden was a bit moderate and considerate in his views and familiar with all of them. He was of the opinion thatthe final end of poetry is delight and transport rather than instruction. It does not imitate life but presents its own version of it. According to Dryden, the poet is neither a teacher nor a bare imitator – like a photographer – but a creator, one who, with life or Nature as his raw material, creates new things altogether resembling the original. According to him, poetry is a work of art rather than mere imitation. Dryden felt the necessity of fancy, or what Coleridge later would call "the shaping spirit of imagination".

15.4 An Essay on Dramatic Poesy: An Introduction

John Dryden's An Essay on Dramatic Poesy presents a brief discussion on Neo- classical theory of Literature. He defends the classical drama saying that it is an imitation of life and reflects human nature clearly. An Essay on Dramatic Poesy is written in the form of a dialogue among fourgentlemen: Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius and Neander. Neander speaks for Dryden himself. Eugeniusfavours modern English dramatists by attacking the classical playwrights, who did not themselves always observe the unity of place. ButCrites defends the ancients and points out that they invited the principles of dramatic art paved by Aristotle and Horace. Crites opposes rhyme in plays and argues that though the moderns excel in sciences, the ancient age was the true ageof poetry. Lisideius defends the French playwrights and attacks the Englishtendency to mix genres.

Neander speaks in favour of the Moderns and respects the Ancients; he is however critical of the rigid rules of dramas and favours rhyme. Neander who isa spokesperson of Dryden, argues that 'tragic-comedy' (Dryden's phrase for what we now call 'tragi-comedy') is the best form for a play; because it is closer to lifein which emotions are heightened by mirth and sadness. He also finds subplots as an integral part to enrich a play. He finds single action in French dramas to be rather inadequate since it so often has a narrowing and cramping effect.

Neander gives his palm to the violation of the three unities because it leads to the variety in the English plays. Dryden thus argues against the neo-classical critics. Since nobody speaks in rhyme in real life, he supports the use of blank verse in drama and says that the use of rhyme in serious plays is justifiable in place of theblank verse.

15.5 Definition of Drama

Dryden defines Drama as:

"Just and lively image of human nature,
representing its passions and humours, and the
changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the
delight and instruction of mankind."

According to the definition, drama is an 'image' of 'human nature', and theimage is

'just' and 'lively'. By using the word 'just' Dryden seems to imply that literature imitates (and not merely reproduces) human actions. For Dryden, 'poetic imitation' is different from an exact, servile copy of reality, for, the imitation is not only 'just', it is also 'lively'.

When the group talks about the definition of Drama Lisidieus expresses his views about Drama as "a just and lively Image of Humane Nature." And then each character expresses his views about Drama and they compare French Drama and English Drama and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of French and English Drama. The debate goes on about the comparison between ancient writers and modern writers. They also discuss the importance of "Unity in FrenchDrama". So far as the Unities of Time, Place and Action are concerned French Drama was closer to the classical notions of Drama. With the influence ofPlatonic Dialogues Dryden had designed the group that further discusses the Playwrights such as Ben Jonson, Molière, and Shakespeare with a deeper insight. Crites offers an objection specifically to the use of rhyme as he privileges the verisimilitude of the scene while citing Aristotle. On the other hand, Neanderfavours the natural rhyme since that, according to him, adds artistry tothe plays. It was Twilight when the four friends had their final speech at the Somerset-Stairs and then the four friends parted along their separate ways.

15.6 Violation of the Three Unities

In an age of pseudo- classic criticism, with its precise rules and definitions, Dryden had the boldness to defend the claims of genius to write according to its own convictions, without regard for the prescription and rules which had been laid down for good writing. He cleared the ground for himself by brushing away all the arbitrary bans upon freedom of judgment and refused to be cowed down by the French playwrights and critics.

15.7 Dryden's Defense

Dryden's liberalism, his free critical disposition, is best seen in his justification of the violation of three unities on the part of the English dramatists and in his defense of English tragi-comedies. As regards the unities, his views are as under:

    a)   The English violation of the three unities lends greater copiousness (existing in large amounts, profuse in speech) and variety to the English plays. The unities have narrowing and cramping effects on the French plays, and they are often betrayed into absurdities from which English plays are free.

    b)   The English disregard of the unities enables them to present a more 'just' and 'lively' picture of human nature. The French plays may be more regular but they are not as lively, not so pleasant and delightful as that of English. e.g., Shakespeare's plays which are more lively and just images of life and human nature.

c) The English when they do observe the rules as Ben Jonson has done in The Silent Woman, show greater skill and art than the French. It all depends upon the 'genius' or 'skill' of the writer.

d) There is no harm in introducing 'sub-plots', for they impart variety, richness, and liveliness to the play. In this way the writer can present a more 'just' and 'lively' picture than the French with their narrow and cramped plays.

e) To the view that observance of the unities is justified on the ground that (i) their violation results in improbability , (ii) that it places too great a strain on the imagination of the spectators , and (iii) that credibility is stretched too far, Dryden replies that it is all a question of 'dramatic illusion'. Lisideius argues that "we cannot so speedily recollect ourselves after a scene of great passion and concernment to pass to another of mirth and humour, and to enjoy it with any relish". Neander questions this assumption and replies to it by saying why should he imagine the soul of man more heavy than his senses? "Does not the eye pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time?" What Neader implies by this is that gratification of sense is primary while that of the soul is secondary and that sensory perception helps in dramatic illusion.

In Dryden's text, this compromise subsumes a number of debates: one of these concerns the classical "unities" of time, place, and action; another focuses on the rigid classical distinction between various genres, such as tragedy and comedy; there was also the issue of classical decorum and propriety, as well as the use of rhyme in drama. All of these elements underlie the nature of drama. In addition, Dryden undertakes an influential assessment of the English dramatic tradition, comparing writers within this tradition itself as well as with their counterparts in French drama.

Dryden's other essays and prefaces would seem to confirm the foregoing comments, and reveal important insights into his vision of the poet's craft. In his 1666 preface to Annus Mirabilis, he states that the "composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit; and wit . . . is no other than the faculty of imagination inthe writer" (14). He subsequently offers a more comprehensive definition: "the first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving, or moulding, of that thought, as the judgment represents it proper to the subject; the third is elocution, or the art of clothing or adorning that thought, so found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words: the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and the accuracy in the expression" (15). Again, the emphasis here is on wit, imagination, and invention rather than exclusively on the classical precept of imitation.

In fact, Dryden was later to write "Defence of An Essay on Dramatic Poesy," defending his earlier text against Sir Robert Howard's attack on Dryden's advocacy of rhyme in drama. Here, Dryden's defense of rhyme undergoes a shift of emphasis, revealing further his modification of classical prescriptions. He nowargues that what most commends rhyme is the delight it produces: "for delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy: instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights" (113). And

Dryden states: "I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live" (116). We have come a long way from Aristotle, and even from Sidney, who both regarded poetry as having primarily a moral or ethical purpose. To suggest that poetry's chief or only aim is to delight is to take a large step toward the later modern notion of literary autonomy. Dryden goes on to suggest that while a poet's task is to "imitate well," he must also "affect the soul, and excite the passions" as well as cause "admiration" or wonder. To this end, "bare imitation will not serve." Imitation must be "heightened with all the arts and ornaments of poesy" (113).

15.8 Summary

As of the first decade of the 21st century, contemporary Neoclassical architecture is usually classed under the umbrella term of New Classical Architecture. Sometimes it is also referred to as Neo-Historicism or Traditionalism. lso, a number of pieces of postmodern architecture draw inspiration from and include explicit references to Neoclassicism, Antigone District and the National Theatre of Catalonia in Barcelona among them. Postmodern architecture occasionally includes historical elements, like columns, capitals or the tympanum.

For sincere traditional-style architecture that sticks to regional architecture, materials and craftsmanship, the term Traditional Architecture (or vernacular) is mostly used. The Driehaus Architecture Prize is awarded to major contributors in the field of 21st century traditional or classical architecture, and comes with a prize money twice as high as that of the modernist Pritzker Prize.

15.9 Key Terms

- *Mac Flecknoe* (full title: *Mac Flecknoe; or, A satyr upon the True-Blue-Protestant Poet, T.S.* s a verse mock-heroic satire written by John Dryden. It is a direct attack on Thomas Shadwell, another prominent poet of the time.

- *Marriage à la Mode* is a Restoration comedy by John Dryden, first performed in London in 1673 by the King's Company. It is written in a combination of prose, blank verse and heroic couplets.

- *Amphitryon* is an English language comedy by John Dryden which is based on Molière's 1668 play of the same name which was in turn based on the story of the Greek mythological character Amphitryon as told by Plautus in his play from ca. 190-185 B.C.

15.10 Review Questions

1. Trace out Dryden's early life and age.

2. comment on Dryden's writing style.

3. What are the key features of Dryden's work? Discuss.

4. Comment on the few of Dryden's work in literature.

5. Discuss whole of Age of Dryden.

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UNIT 16: NEO -CLASSICISM AND OTHER WRITERS: SAMUEL JOHNSON

STRUCTURE

16.1 Objectives

➢ This unit shall enable the learners to:
- Life and times of Samuel Johnson
- Theory and analysis of Preface
- Legacy of Samuel Johnson
- Application in modern times

16.2 Introduction

Samuel Johnson, known as **Dr. Johnson**, (born Sept. 18, 1709, Lichfield, Staffordshire, Eng.—died Dec. 13, 1784, London), English man of letters, one of the outstanding figures of 18th-century England. The son of a poor bookseller, he briefly attended the University of Oxford. He moved to London after the failure of a school he had started. He wrote for periodicals and composed poetry, including *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), the first work he published under his name. In 1755, after eight years of labour, he produced *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), the first great English dictionary, which brought him fame. He continued to write for such periodicals as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and he almost single-handedly wrote and edited the biweekly *The Rambler* (1750–52). *Rasselas* (1759) was his only long work of fiction. In 1765 he produced a critical edition of William Shakespeare with a preface that did much to establish Shakespeare as the centre of the English literary canon. Johnson's travel writings include *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). His *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets* (1779–81) was a significant critical work. A brilliant conversationalist, he helped found the Literary Club (1764), which became famous for its members of distinction, including David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, and Joshua Reynolds. His aphorisms helped make him one of the most frequently quoted of English writers. The biography of Johnson written by his contemporary James Boswell is one of the most admired biographies of all time.

16.3 Other Writers:

16.3.1 Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

An Essay on Criticism, published anonymously by Alexander Pope in 1711, is perhaps the clearest statement of neoclassical principles in any language. In its broad outlines, it expresses a worldview which synthesizes elements of a Roman Catholic outlook with classical aesthetic principles and with deism. That Pope was born a Roman Catholic affected not only his verse and critical principles but also his life. In the year of his birth occurred the so-called "Glorious Revolution": England's Catholic monarch James II was displaced by the Protestant King William III of Orange, and the prevailing anti-Catholic laws constrained many areas of Pope's life; he could not obtain a university education, hold public or political office, or even reside in London. Pope's family, in fact, moved to a small farm in Windsor Forest, a neighbourhood occupied by other Catholicfamilies of the gentry, and he later moved with his mother to Twickenham. However, Pope was privately

taught and moved in an elite circle of London writers which included the dramatists Wycherley and Congreve, the poet Granville, the critic William Walsh, as well as the writers Addison and Steele, and the deistic politician Bolingbroke. Pope's personal life was also afflicted by disease: he was a hunchback, only four and a half feet tall, and suffered from tuberculosis. He was in constant need of his maid to dress and care for him. Notwithstanding such social and personal obstacles, Pope produced some of the finest verse ever written. His most renowned publications include several mock- heroic poems such as The Rape of the Lock (1712; 1714), and The Dunciad (1728). His philosophical poem An Essay on Man (1733–1734) was a scathing attack on human arrogance or pride in failing to observe the due limits of human reason, in questioning divine authority and seeking to be self-reliant on the basis of rationality and science. Even An Essay on Criticism is written in verse, following the tradition of Horace's Arspoetica, and interestingly, much of the philosophical substance of An Essay on Man is already formulated in this earlier poem, in its application to literature and criticism. While An Essay on Man identifies the chief fault of humankind as the original sin of "pride" and espouses an ethic based on an ordered and hierarchical universe, it nonetheless depicts this order in terms of Newtonian mechanism and expresses a broadly deistic vision.

Indeed, Pope's poem has been variously called a study and defense of "nature" and of "wit." The word "nature" is used twenty-one times in the poem; the word "wit" forty-six times. Given the numerous meanings accumulated in the word "nature" as it has passed through various traditions, Pope's call for a "return to nature" is complex, and he exploits the multiple significance of the term to generate within his poem a comprehensive redefinition of it. Among other things, nature can refer, on a cosmic level, to the providential order of the world and the universe, an order which is hierarchical, in which each entity has its proper assigned place. In An Essay on Man Pope expounds the "Great Chain of Being," ranging from God and the angels through humans and the lower animals to plants and inanimate objects. Nature can also refer to what is normal, central, and universal in human experience, encompassing the spheres of morality and knowledge, the rules of proper moral conduct as well as the archetypal patternsof human reason.

The word "wit" in Pope's time also had a variety of meanings: it could refer in general to intelligence and intellectual acuity; it also meant "wit" in the modern sense of cleverness, as expressed for example in the ability to produce a concise and poignant figure of speech or pun; more specifically, it might designate a capacity to discern similarities between

different entities and to perceive the hidden relationships underlying the appearances of things. In fact, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, "wit" was the subject of a broad and heated debate. Various parties contested the right to define it and to invest it with moral significance. A number of writers such as Nicolas Malebranche and Joseph Addison, and philosophers such as John Locke, argued that wit was a negative quality, associated with a corrupting imagination, distortion of truth, profanity, and skepticism, a quality opposed to "judgment," which was a faculty of clearand truthful insight. Literature generally had come to be associated with wit and had been under attack from the Puritans also, who saw it as morally defective andcorrupting. On the other side, writers such as John Dryden and William Wycherley, as well as moralists such as the third earl of Shaftesbury, defendedthe use and freedom of wit. Pope's notions of wit were worked out in the context of this debate, and his redefinition of "true" wit in Essay on Criticism was a means not only of upholding the proper uses of wit butalso of defending literature itself, wit being a mode of knowing or apprehension unique to literature.

It would be facile to dismiss Pope's Essay on Criticism as an unoriginal work, as a hotchpotch of adages drawn from the likes of Aristotle, Horace, Quintilian, Longinus, and Boileau. While the isolated insights offered by Pope may not be original, the poem as a whole undertakes a number of endeavors that, in their poetic unification, might well be viewed as novel. To begin with, Pope is not merely delineating the scope and nature of good literary criticism; in doing this, he redefines classical virtues in terms of an exploration of nature and wit, as necessary to both poetry and criticism; and this restatement of classicism is itself situated within a broader reformulation of literary history, tradition, and religion. Above all, these three endeavors are pursued in the form of a poem: the form of the work exemplifies and enacts much of its overt "meaning." And its power far exceeds its paraphrasable meaning: this power rests on the poetic effects generated by its own enactment of classical literary dispositions and its own organic unity.

While much of Pope's essay bemoans the abyss into which current literary criticism has fallen, he does not by any means denounce the practice of criticism itself. While he cautions that the best poets make the best critics ("Let such teach others who themselves excell," l. 15), and while he recognizes that some critics are failed poets (l. 105), he points out that both the best poetry and the best criticism are divinely inspired:

Both must alike from Heav'n derive their Light,

These born to Judge, as well as those to Write.

(ll.13–14)

Pope specifies two further guidelines for the critic. The first is to recognize the overall unity of a work, and thereby to avoid falling into partial assessments based on the author's use of poetic conceits, ornamented language, and meters, aswell as those which are biased toward either archaic or modern styles or based onthe reputations of given writers. Finally, a critic needs to possess a moral sensibility, as well as a sense of balance and proportion, as indicated in these lines: "Nor in the Critick let the Man be lost! / Good-Nature and Good-Sense must ever join" (ll. 523–525). In the interests of good nature and good sense, Pope urges the critic to adopt not only habits of self-criticism and integrity ("with pleasure own your Errors past, / And make each Day a Critick on the last," ll. 570–571), but also modesty and caution. To be truthful is not enough, he warns; truth must be accompanied by "Good Breeding" or else it will lose its effect (ll. 572–576). And mere bookish knowledge will often express itself in showiness, disdain, and an overactive tongue: "Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread. / Distrustful Sense with modest Caution speaks" (ll. 625–626). Pope ends his advice with this summary of the ideal critic:

> But where's the Man, who Counsel can bestow,
>
> Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know?
>
> Unbiass'd, or by Favour or by Spite;
>
> Not dully prepossest, nor blindly right;
>
> Tholearn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere;
>
> . . . Blest with a Taste exact, yet unconfin'd;
>
> A Knowledge both of Books and Humankind;
>
> Gen'rous Converse; a Soul exempt from Pride;
>
> And Love to Praise, with Reason on his Side? (ll. 631–642)

As we read through this synthesis of the qualities of a good critic, it becomesclear that they are primarily attributes of humanity or moral sensibility rather than aesthetic qualities. Indeed, the only specifically aesthetic quality mentioned here is "taste." The

remaining virtues might be said to have a theological ground, resting on the ability to overcome pride. Pope effectively transposes the languageof theology ("soul," "pride") to aesthetics. It is the disposition of humility – an aesthetic humility, if you will – which enables the critic to avoid the arrogant parading of his learning, to avoid falling into bias, and to open himself up to a knowledge of humanity.

Pope's specific advice to the critic is grounded on virtues whose application extends far beyond literary criticism, into the realms of morality, theology, and art itself. It is something of an irony that the main part of his Essay on Criticism is devoted not specifically to criticism but to art itself, of which poetry and criticism are regarded as branches. In other words, Pope sees criticism itself as anart. Hence most of the guidance he offers, couched in the language of nature and wit, applies equally to poetry and criticism. Not only this, but there are several passages which suggest that criticism must be a part of the creative process, that poets themselves must possess critical faculties in order to execute their craft in a self-conscious and controlled manner. Hence there is a large overlap between these domains, between the artistic elements within criticism and the critical elements necessary to art. While Pope's central piece of advice to both poet and critic is to "follow Nature," his elaboration of this concept enlists the semantic service of both wit and judgment, establishing a close connection – sometimes indeed an identity – between all three terms; wit might be correlated with literature or poetry; and judgment with criticism. Because of the overlapping natures of poetry and criticism, however, both wit and judgment will be required in each of these pursuits.

Pope's final strategy in the Essay is to equate the classical literary and critical traditions with nature, and to sketch a redefined outline of literary history from classical times to his own era. Pope insists that the rules of nature were merely discovered, not invented, by the ancients: "Those Rules of old discover'd, not devis'd, / Are Nature still, but Nature Methodiz'd" (ll. 88–89). He looks back to a time in ancient Greece when criticism admirably performed its function as "the Muse's Handmaid," and facilitated a rational admiration of poetry. But criticism later declined from this high status, and those who "cou'd not win the Mistress, woo'd the Maid" (ll. 100–105). Instead of aiding the appreciation of poetry, critics, perhaps in consequence of their own failure to master the poetic art, allowed the art of criticism to degenerate into irrational attacks on poets. Pope's advice, for both critic and poet, is clear: "Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem; / To copy Nature is to copy Them" (ll. 139–140).

16.3.2 Aphra Behn (1640–1689)

AphraBehn was a pioneer in many respects. Because of her family circumstances and her husband's early death, she was obliged to support herself as a writer – thefirst woman to do so. She is one of the founders of the English novel; her extended stay in Surinam inspired her to write Oroonoko (1688), the first novelto oppose slavery. And her experience as a female playwright exposed her to the enormous obstacles faced by a woman in this profession, resulting in her highly unorthodox and controversial views about drama. These views are expressed largely in the prefaces to her plays, such as The Dutch Lover (1673), The Rover (1677), and The Lucky Chance (1687). If figures such as Pierre Corneille took a step away from the authority of classical rules of drama by appealing to experience, AphraBehn's appeal to experience – to specifically female experience – was far more radical. Moreover, she (perhaps unwittingly) elevates to a newly important status the performative dimensions of drama, such as the ability and integrity of the actors.

In the "Epistle to the Reader" which prefaces The Dutch Lover, Behn strikes a tone of utter defiance. She defends the value of drama by contrasting it favorably with traditional learning as taught in the universities. This learning, she says, amounts to "more absolutely nothing than the errantest Play that e'er was writ."8 Having said that, she equally denies that poets, especially dramatic poets, "can bejustly charged with too great reformation of mens minds or manners." It is unrealistic, and lacks any foundation in experience, to expect drama to perform a moral function. Behn's own, carefully unstudied, opinion is that drama represents the best entertainment that "wise men have"; to discourse formally about itsrules, as if it were "the grand affair" of human life, is valueless. Behn's own purpose, in writing her play The Dutch Lover, was "only to make this as entertaining as I could," and the judges of her success will be the audience (Behn,I, 223).

She asserts that women, if given the same education as men, are just as capable of acquiring knowledge and in as many capacities as men. Moreover, successful plays, she points out, do not rest on the learning which is men's point of advantage over women, citing Shakespeare and Jonson as examples. Further, given that "affectation hath always had a greater share both in the actions and discourse of men than truth and judgment have," women might well reach the heights attained by men (Behn, I, 224). The classical rules of drama she dismisses in a breath: these "musty rules of Unity, . . . if they meant anything, they are enough intelligible, and as practicable by a woman" (Behn, I, 224). With no

apology, she ends with: "Now, Reader, I have eas'd my mind of all I had to say" (Behn, I, 225).

In her preface to The Lucky Chance, written some fifteen years later, Behn states that she will defend her comedy against "those Censures that Malice, and ill Nature have thrown upon it, tho' in vain."9 It is the very success of her play, she exclaims, that caused critics to "load it with all manner of Infamy." And they heap upon it, she says, "the old never failing Scandal – That 'tis not fit for the Ladys" (Behn, III, 185). She hastens to point out that many works of poetry have long treated the subject of women in an indecent fashion, but the offense is overlooked "because a Man writ them." She taunts the hypocritical critics: "I make a Challenge to any Person of common Sense and Reason . . . to read any of my Comedys and compare 'em with others of this Age, and if they can find one Word that can offend the chastest Ear, I will submit to all their peevish Cavills." She admonishes these critics not simply to condemn her work because it is a woman's, but to "examine whether it be guilty or not, with reading, comparing, or thinking" (Behn, III, 185). What Behn effectively does here is to place the virtues of good judgment, critical reading, and thinking beyond the pale of traditional masculine learning and the conventional male literary establishment, which have both, on account of their transparent bias and maliciousness, forfeited their right to speak with authority. Behn presents another voice, a woman's voice, speaking not from a position below that establishment but rather from above; she takes no great pains to dislodge male assumptions about women writers; rather, she appropriates for women's use the categories of common sense and reason, extricating them from the tradition of male prejudice in which they have been misused and abused. However, the status of her "feminism" is unclear. For one thing, she was politically conservative, a consistent supporter of the royalists as against the English Parliament. Furthermore, she does not see herself as outside the male literary tradition, and indeed, pleads to be included in it. Or does she? These are her words: "All I ask, is the Priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me . . . to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in, to take those Measures that both the Ancient and Modern Writers have set me" (Behn, III, 187).

It would be unrealistic to expect her, writing in 1687, to be talking of a female tradition; but these final statements need to be read in the context of her having scorned both male learning and classical rules of literary composition. And her originality, surely, lies as much in the way she speaks as in what she speaks: her texts adopt a tone and a style unprecedented in the history of literary criticism which was defiant, unapologetic, and

placing herself entirely outside of thetraditional canons of male learning and literature.

16.4 Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Of his numerous achievements, Samuel Johnson is perhaps best remembered for histwo-volume *Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1755. Of almostequal renown are his *Lives of the English Poets* (1783) and his eight-volume edition ofShakespeare (1765). His most famous poem is *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), aspeculation on the emptiness of worldly pursuits. He also wrote drama and a fictionalwork, *The History of Rasselas*(1759), as well as numerous essays in periodicals such as The *Rambler*, the *Adventurer*, and the *Idler*. In 1737 Johnson moved from his nativetown of Lichfield to London, which became the center of his literary life; he moved inan intellectual circle that included the conservative thinker Edmund Burke, the painterJoshua Reynolds, and the economist Adam Smith. Johnson's own biography wasrecorded by his friend James Boswell, who published his celebrated *Life of SamuelJohnson* in 1791.

An integral dimension of Johnson's literary output and personality was his literarycriticism, which was to have a huge impact on English letters. His famous "Preface" to,and edition of, Shakespeare's plays played a large part in establishing Shakespeare'sreputation; his account of the lives of numerous English poets contributed to theforming of the English literary canon and the defining of qualities such as metaphysicalwit; his remarks on criticism itself werealso to have an enduring impact. His criticalinsights were witty, acerbic, provocative, sometimes radical, and always grounded onhis enormous range of reading.

Johnson's classical commitment to reason, probability, and truth wascomplemented by his equally classical insistence on the moral function of literature.In a brief essay written for the *Rambler* No. 4 (1750), he applauded contemporaryromance fiction for moving beyond the stock, unrealistic themes of earlier romance,which had been filled with giants, knights, ladies in distress, and imaginary castles.Modern romances, he states, "exhibit life in its true state."11 Hence, modern writersrequire not only the learning that is to be gained from books but also "that experiencewhich can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from general converse,and accurate observation of the living world" (*Rambler*, 10). However, given the audiencefor these modern romances, says Johnson, the prime concern

of the author should notbe verisimilitude but moral instruction. These books are chiefly addressed to "theyoung, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, andintroductions into life" (*Rambler*, 11). Johnson acknowledges that "the greatest excellencyof art" is to "imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts ofnature, whichare most proper for imitation" (*Rambler*, 12–13). Hence the "realism"that Johnson advocates is highly selective, constrained by moral imperatives: while theauthor must indeed adhere to probability, he must not represent everything; hemustnot "confound the colors of right and wrong," and must indeed help to "settle theirboundaries." Vice must always produce disgust, not admiration; and virtue must beshown in the most perfect form that probability will allow (*Rambler*, 14–15). Johnson'sposition appears to be solidly entrenched within the tradition of classical realism: likeAristotle, he desires literature, even the newly emerging genre of the novel, to expresstruth in general and universal terms, rather than being tied down by the need torepresent a multitude of "accidental" events and circumstances; in this way, theauthor's choice of material and manner can be circumscribed by moral imperatives.

Many of these issues are taken up in more detail in Johnson's renowned "Preface" tohis edition of Shakespeare's plays. Three basic concerns inform this preface: how apoet's reputation is established; the poet's relation to nature; and the relative virtues ofnature and experience of life as against a reliance on principles established by criticismand convention. Johnson begins his preface by intervening in the debate on the relativevirtues of ancient and modern writers. He affirms that the excellence of the ancientauthors is based on a "gradual and comparative" estimate, as tested by "observationand experience.For the unities of time and place, however, Shakespeare had no regard, a point onwhich Johnson defends Shakespeare by questioning these unities themselves. LikeCorneille, he views these unities as having "given more trouble to the poet, thanpleasure to the auditor".Johnson sees these unities as arising from "the supposednecessity of making the drama credible.

16.5 Life and times of Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson was born on September 18, 1709 (N.S.) in the country town of Lichfield in Staffordshire, the son of Michael Johnson, aged 50, a bookseller and stationer, and his wife Sara, aged 37. The elder Johnson was prone, as his son would be, to bouts of melancholy, but he was a man of some local repute — at the time of Johnson's birth, he was Sheriff of the city. Johnson, a sickly child, was not expected to live: in 1711, at the age

of two, he was taken, nearly blind, partially deaf, suffering from scrofula and a tubercular infection, to be touchedfor the "King's Evil" by Queen Anne, the last of the Stuarts to rule England. No miraculous cure, however, took place.

In 1716 Johnson, sensitive, clumsy, and precocious, entered the Lichfield Grammar School which was headed by the scholarly but brutal John Hunter, who beat his students, as he said, "to save them from the gallows." Later in life Johnson would insist that had he not been beaten he would have done nothing,but under Hunter's tutelage he learned Latin and Greek and began to write poetry. In 1725 at the age of sixteen, a very provincial Johnson came for a six-month visit with his cousin, Cornelius Ford, a sophisticated and somewhat rakish former Cambridge don, and became aware for the first time of the existence of the larger intellectual and literary world represented by Cambridge and London.

In 1726 Johnson left school and went to work in his father's bookshop, which was failing: he spent the next two years were unhappy ones, but during this time he continued — avidly if unsystematically — to study English and classical literature. In 1728, with a small legacy of forty pounds left to his mother upon the death of a relative, he was — very unexpectedly — able to enter Pembroke College at Oxford. At Oxford, however, he was unable to keep himself adequately supplied with food or clothing — a problem which he would have for many years — and though he occasionally displayed considerable erudition symptoms of the melancholia which would haunt him for the remainder of his life were already beginning to manifest themselves. He paid, in consequence, little attention to his studies, and in 1789, extremely depressed and too poor to continue, he left Oxford without taking a degree.

Johnson's Latin translation of Pope's "Messiah," written at Oxford, was published in 1731, but by that time Johnson, poor, in debt, depressed, partially blind, partially deaf, scarred by scrofula and smallpox, found himself (understandably enough) fearing for his sanity. In December of that year his father died, a virtual bankrupt.

In 1732 Johnson found employment as an usher at Market Bosworth Grammar School. On a visit to Birmingham, he made the acquaintance of Henry Porter and his wife Elizabeth. The following year, lying in bed during another lengthy visit to a friend in Birmingham, Johnson dictated an abridged English version of a French translation of a travel book — A Voyage to Abyssinia — which had been written by a seventeenth-century Portuguese Jesuit. It became hisfirst published book, and he earned five guineas by it.

In 1735, aged twenty-five, Johnson married his "Tetty," the by-now- widowed Elizabeth Porter, aged forty-six. With his wife's dowry of £700, Johnson established, in the following year, an ill-fated private academy at Edial, near Lichfield: boarding pupils included David Garrick, who would become the most famous actor of his day, and one of Johnson's closest friends. By 1737 the academy had proved a failure, and Johnson, determined to make his fortune by writing, left for London, accompanied by Garrick.

In 1738, living in London in extreme poverty, Johnson began to write for Edward Cave's The Gentleman's Magazine, and published his "London," animitation of Juvenal's satire on the decadence of ancient Rome, for which he receives ten guineas. He also made the acquaintance of Richard Savage, another impoverished poet of dubious reputation. A year later, Samuel Johnson, who had never met Johnson but who had admired his "London," attempted to get him an M. A. degree from Trinity College in Dublin so that he could become headmaster at a school: the attempt, however, failed, and Johnson was forced to continue his life of poverty and literary drudgery in (metaphorically speaking) Grub Street.

Between 1740 and 1743 he edited parliamentary debates for the Gentleman's Magazine: when, years later, he was complimented for his impartial approach to his task, he stated, characteristically, that though he "saved appearances tolerably well," he nevertheless "took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it."

In 1744 Richard Savage ended a miserable existence in a Bristol jail. Johnson was moved to write a Life of Savage — remarkable for its honest portrayal of the strenghs and weaknesses of his friend's character — whichbecame the first of Johnson's prose works to attract the attention of the reading public.

1745 saw the publication of Johnson's "Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth." The following year he signed a contract with a group of publishers and (alotting himself, intially, three years) undertook the enormous task of compiling an English dictionary which would be analogous to that which had been produced, in French, by the forty members of the French Academy. He addressed his "Plan of a Dictionary" to the Earl of Chesterfield, who would proveto be a most unsatisfactory patron.

In 1748, with six assistants, Johnson moved into a large house in Fleet Street and began work upon his dictionary. In 1749 his great but melancholy "The Vanity of Human Wishes" appeared, and Garrick produced Johnson's tragedy Irene at Drury Lane: though Johnson made a small profit, the play provedunsuccessful.

Between 1750 and 1752, writing two a week, he produced the more than two hundred Rambler essays. In 1752, his wife Tetty died. Two years later Johnson returned to Oxford, where he became acquainted with Thomas Warton, the future Poet Laureate. The following year, with Warton's help, Johnson received an M. A. degree from Oxford. In the same year his great Dictionary of the English Language was finally completed and published, and, though he was still very poor, his literary reputation was finally established. During this period he made new friends of the much younger Joshua Reynolds, Bennet "Lanky" Langton, and TophamBeauclerk.

In 1756 Johnson produced his "Proposals for a New Edition of Shakespeare," which would not, however, appear until 1765, and continued his activities as a journalist, editing, writing prefaces, and contributing articles to journals. Briefly arrested for debt, he was bailed out by Samuel Richardson. Between 1758 and 1760, he wrote another series of essays, The Idler, for a weekly periodical. In 1759 his mother Sarah died, and, in a somber mood, he wrote the moral fable Rasselas to pay, as he said, for her funeral.

In 1762, upon the succession to the throne of George III, Johnson was provided (much to his satisfaction, but much, also, to his embarrassment, for he was an unrepentant old Tory, and, with Whig abuses in mind, had defined"pension" in his dictionary as "pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country") with a pension of £300 per year. For the first time in his life he was not forced to scrape for money, and though his personal appearance was still remarkably and unavoidably uncouth he became one of the most prominent literary lions in polite society: when several young ladies, encountering him at a literary soiree, surrounded him "with more wonder than politeness," and contemplated his odd figure "as if he had been some monster from the deserts of Africa," Johnson is said to have remarked "Ladies, I am tame; you may stroke me."

In 1763 he met James Boswell (aged twenty-two) for the first time, and after he got over the fact that Boswell was Scottish (Johnson abhorred the Scots — hence his famous definition, in his dictionary, of "oats": "A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people") the two got on very well together. 1764 brought the formation of the Literary Club, whose members included Johnson, Reynolds, and Edmund Burke, as well as (eventually) David Garrick and Boswell.

In 1765 Johnson's edition of Shakespeare's plays, with its splendid and perceptive preface, was finally published, and he received an honorary LL.D. from Trinity College in Dublin. He also met the wealthy Henry and Hester Thrale, with whom he would spend much of his

time during the next sixteen years, talking brilliantly but writing little‹"No one but a blockhead," he once remarked, "writes but for money."

In 1769 Boswell, by now an Edinburgh lawyer, married, and remained in Scotland until 1772. Between 1770 and 1775 Johnson produced a series offiercely but characteristically opinionated political pamphlets. In August of 1773, though he had always despised Scotland, Johnson undertook his memorable trip to the Hebrides with Boswell. In July of 1774, Johnson went to Wales with the Thrales. During that same year Oliver Goldsmith, one of the few contemporaries whom Johnson genuinely admired, died, and Johnson felt a tremendous sense of loss.

In 1775 Johnson published his *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. During the same year he received an honorary LL.D. from Oxford, and visited to France (which he finds worse than Scotland) with the Thrales. He reacted furiously to the American Revolution, characterizing the rebellious colonists as "a race of convicts." In 1776 he travelled with Boswell to Oxford, Ashbourne, and Lichfield, where he stood bareheaded in the rain in the market- place before the stall which had housed his father's bookshop, in order to atone for a "breach of filial piety" committed fifty years before.

In 1778 he made the acquaintance of Fanny Burney, aged twenty-four, and soon to be the sucessful authoress of*Evelina*. In the following year David Garrick, Johnson's old pupil and close friend, died, and he was again shaken. In 1781, after Johnson's *The Lives of the English Poets* had been published, Henry Thrale died. Johnson consoled his widow and, though he ought perhaps to have known better, contemplated marrying her. In 1783, however, his health began to fail, and he suffered a stroke. The following year, partially recovered, he broke with Mrs. Thrale when she announced her intention of marrying Gabriele Piozzi. Johnson, frail and troubled by gout, asthma, dropsy, and a tumour, found that his his life-long fear of death had begun to preoccupy him, but he faced it bravely, as he had faced all adversities. On December 13 he died, aged seventy-five: he was buriedin Westminster Abbey, with appropriate ceremony, on December 20.

16.6 Theory and analysis of Preface

In his preface to his edition of the collected works of Shakespeare, Johnson begins by

noting that we often seem to cherish the works of the past and to neglect the present. Praises, he writes, are often "without reason lavished on the dead" (320) as a result of which it sometimes seems that the "honoursdue only to excellence are paid to antiquity" (320). Everyone, Johnson suggests, is "perhaps . . . more willing to honour past than present excellence; and the mind contemplates genius through the shades ofage" (320). Time is the test of genius, Johnson contends: To works . . . of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed they have often examined and compared; and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. . . . [I]n the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind. (320)

With this test in mind, Johnson suggests that Shakespeare meets these criteriaand "may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and earn the privilegeof established fame and prescriptive veneration" (321) because he has "long outlived his century, the term commonly used as the test of literary merit" (321). That he deserves such acclaim can be verified by "comparing him with other authors" (321). The question which arises, given the fallibility of "human judgment" (321), is "by what peculiarities of excellence Shakespeare has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen?" (321).

Johnson argues that Shakespeare's perhaps most important skill concerns accuratecharacterisation: he offers "representations of general nature" (321) rather than of "particular manners"(321) peculiar to individuals or particular places and times. In a view of Shakespeare that has come to be constantly regurgitated, he praises the Bard's characterisation in particular for its fidelity to human nature in general:

Shakespeare is above all 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 thecustoms of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities ofstudies and professions . . .; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by theinfluence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated.   In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

139

(321) Where other dramatists offer "hyperbolic or aggravated characters" (322), Shakespeare's "scenes are occupied only be men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion" (322).

Characterisation "ample and general" (322) in this way, that is, his "adherence to general nature" (322), is supplemented by appropriate strokes of individuality: "no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. [T]hough some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant"(322).

However, Johnson hastens to add, Shakespeare "always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very carefully of distinctions superinduced and adventitious"(322). Even when dealing with supernatural matters, Johnson stresses, Shakespeare "approximates the remote, and familiarises the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it werepossible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned" (322). All in all, Shakespeare "has notonly shewn human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which itcannot be exposed" (322). Whatever his subject matter, as Shakespeare'spersonages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified byparticular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to al times and to allplaces; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personalhabits, are only superficial dies, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations fo true passionare the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with thebody that exhibits them. (323-324)

As such, his "drama is the mirror of life" (322) from which other writers can learn much simply "byreading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate thetransactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions" (322). Moreover, if his characterisation is realistic, so too are his dialogues. Johnson, the editor of thefirst dictionary of the English language, argues that Shakespeare has captured the enduring spirit of theEnglish language: there isin every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology soconsonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as toremain settled and unaltered; this style is probably to be sought in the commonintercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition ofelegance. The polite are always catching

140

modish innovations, and the learned departfrom established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making better; those who wish fordistinction forsake the vulgar [B]ut there is a conversation above grossness andbelow refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gatheredhis comic dialogue. (324)

The speech of each of Shakespeare's characters is "so evidently determined by the incident whichproduces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit offiction, but to havebeen gleaned by diligent election out of common conversation, and commonoccurrences" (321). Johnson then turns his attention to the criticisms commonly made of Shakespeare's plays, notleast that he did not follow the prescribed rules. Firstly, he deals with the view that Shakespeare is guiltyof blurring the genres of tragedy and comedy which ought to be distinct. Johnson argues that the ancientpoets, out of the "chaos of mingled purposes and casualties" (322) and "according to the laws whichcustom had prescribed" (322), had "selected, some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; somethe momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some th terrors of distress andsome the gaieties of prosperity" (322). It was for this reason that there "rose two modes of imitation,known by the names of tragedy and comedy, compositions intended to promote different ends bycontrary means, and considered little allied" (322).

More recently, Johnson contends, there has beena tendency to divide Shakespeare's work into tragedies, comedies and histories but that these are notdistinguished "by any very exact or definite ideas" (323). For these, comedy was defined simply as an"action which ended happily to the principal persons, however serious or distressful through itsintermediate incidents" (323). To be a tragedy, similarly, "required only a calamitous conclusion" (323),as a result of which "plays were written, which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies today, andcomedies tomorrow" (323). Histories were viewed as plays consisting of a "series of actions, with noother than chronological succession, independent on each other" (323). Histories, Johnson argues, are"not always very nicely distinguished from tragedy" (323).Johnson argues that Shakespeare's plays, however, through "all these denominations of thedrama" (323), are neither tragedies nor comedies in the strict sense of these terms, butcompositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature whichpartakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion andinnumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which theloss of the one is the gain of the other. (322)

Shakespeare has "united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in onecomposition" (323) as a result of which almost all hisplays are "divided between serious and ludicrouscharacters" (323). Shakespeare's "mode of composition" (323) is always the same: an "interchange ofseriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another" (323).Johnson justifies Shakespeare's "mingled drama" (323) on the grounds that the mixture of sorrowand joy is more realistic and, thus, morally instructive:there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature; . . . the end of poetry is toinstruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alteration of exhibition and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life. (323) In response to the "specious" (323) view that the "change of scenes" (323) in this way causes the "passions" (323) to be "interrupted in their progression" (323) and "wants at last the power to move" (323), Johnson argues that the"interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much, but that the attention may be easily transferred" (323). All "pleasure persists in variety" (323).

Johnson then proceeds to list all the defects which many have detected in Shakespeare's plays. The most important of these is his failure to respect the unities of action, time and place. Johnson is on Shakespeare's side in these respects. With regard to the unity of action, Johnson argues that the laws applicable to tragedies and comedies are not applicable to Shakespeare's histories. All that is required of such plays is that the "changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is sought" (325). In the other plays, there is unity of action: "his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence" (325). The "end of the play is the end of expectation" (325). With regard to the unities of time and place, Johnson argues that these "are not essential to a justdrama" (327) even though they arise from the "supposed necessity of making the drama credible" (325). The argument is that the "mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs fromthe resemblance of reality" (326) as a result of which the failure to depict onstage one location and a duration corresponding to the length of the audience's presence in the auditorium is dramatic heresy.

All this does not matter, Johnson argues, because "spectators are alwaysin their senses and know . . . that the stage is only a stage" (326). Vraisemblance is not adversely affected, firstly, by changes in location: the "different actionsthat complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athen, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?" (326), he asks. Secondly, he argues, timeis "obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation" (326). All in all, the "delight of tragedy proceeds from the consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more" (my emphasis; 326). "Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind" (326).

16.7 A critical examination of the text- "Preface" to Plays of William Shakespeare

Shakespeare is such a poet and dramatist of the world who has been edited and criticized by hundreds of editors and critics Dr. Samuel Johnson is one of them. But among the literary criticisms about Shakespeare, ''Johnson's edition was notable chiefly for its sensible interpretation's and critical evaluations of Shakespeare as a literary artist.'' As a true critic in his Prefaceto *Shakespeare,* Johnson has pointed out Shakespeare's merits or excellences as well as demerits. Let us now discuss Shakespeare's merits as stated by Johnson.

16.7.1 Merits and demerits of Shakespeare in Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare

Shakespeare's greatness lies in the fact that he is ''the poet of nature''. Jonson says,

> ''Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to the reader a faithful mirror of human nature.''

His writings represent the ' general nature', because he knows *''Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature.''* Therefore his characters are *''the genuine progeny of common humanity.'' ''In the writing of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a*

species.'' Thus Johnson indicates the universal aspects of Shakespeare's writings. Shakespeare's dialogue *''is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligentselection out of common conversation and common occurrences".*

Shakespeare's treatment of love proves his following realism. Dramatists in general give an excessive importance to the theme of love. But to Shakespeare *''love is only one of many passions, and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life.''* In Shakespeare's *Macbeth, King Lear, Julius Caesar*, loveinterest hardly has any place.

Johnson further comments on Shakespeare's characterization.He says,

> ''Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion.''

On the contrary, other dramatists portray their characters in such a hyperbolic or exaggerated way that the reader can not suit them to their life.

Johnson defends Shakespeare for his mingling of the tragic and comic elementsinhis plays on grounds of realism 'exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature.'' Because, Shakespeare's plays express ''the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another, in which at the same time, the reveler is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friends,(in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the floric of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.'')

> ''The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing.'' And the mingled drama can convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy, for it best represents the life.''

Johnson regards Shakespeare's mingling of tragedy and comedy as a merit, because he can not ''recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.''

> ''Shakespeare always makes nature predominance over accident. His story requires Romans but he thinks only on men.''

In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, Dr. Samuel Johnson brings out the excellences first, then he

turns to his demerits. Johnson does not consider him a faultless dramatist- even he takes the faults ''sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit.'' That is Shakespeare's faults are serious enough to overwhelm the merits if they had only belonged to other dramatists. Discussion of Shakespeare's demerits will better show the merits of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's first defect is –

''He sacrifices virtue to convenience and is so much more careful to please then to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose.''

Moreover, he lacks poetic justice-'' he makes no just distribution of good or evil.'' Here we can not agree with Johnson. He himself called Shakespeare a 'poet of nature'. But now he can not come out of the tradition of his age- explicit moralizing or didacticism. Actually, Shakespeare gives us a picture of life as whatever he sees. Didacticism which is expected from a true artist can not be a basic condition of art. Thus here we see Johnson's dualism in evaluating Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's plot construction has also faults. According to Johnson, the plots are often 'loosely formed' and 'carelessly pursued'. ''He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the development of the plot provides to him." Moreover, ''in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected.'' This charge is, to some extent true. The readers loose dramatic interest in the second half of *Julius Caesar*. But *The Merchant of Venice* shows a perfect sense of plot construction.

Johnson's another charge against Shakespeare is regarding distinction of time and place. He attributes to a certain nation or a certain period of history, the customs, practices and opinions of another. For example, we ''find Hector quoting Aristotle'' in Troilus and Cressida. However, Johnson regards that it is not a fault of Shakespeare to violate laws of unities'established by the joint authority of poets and critics'. Rather this violation proves''the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare''. Actually a drama indicates successive actions. Therefore, just as they man be represented at successive places, so also they may be represented at different periods, separated by several years. And so, Shakespeare violates the unities of time and place. And according to Johnson''the unities of time and place are not essential to a just drama'', and ''they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction''. On the other hand the plays scrupulously following the unities are just ''the product of superfluous and ostentatious art.'' However,

Shakespeare observes the unity of action. Shakespeare's another faults in the eye of Johnson is his over fondness for quibbles. ''A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it.'' But to say Johnson here sacrifices his strong common sense for the sake of an eloquent metaphor. Shakespeare's comic dialogue is often coarse. The gentlemen and the ladies in comic scenes, show little delicacy or refinement and are hardly to be distinguished from the clowns. His tragic plays become worse in proportion to the labour he spends on them.His narration shows an undue pomp of diction and unnecessary verbiage and repetition.His declamations of set speeches are generally cold and feeble.

What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He no sooner begins to arouse the readers sympathy than he counteracts himself. Johnson in the *Preface to Shakespeare* holds that the mingled dramas of Shakespeare are not only effective but also fulfill the proper function of drama much better than pure comedy or tragedy. Shakespeare, in Arnold's view, incurred the biggest censure "by mixing comic and tragic scenes in all his works. And this very faculty of Shakespeare made him-"Even nobler than both the Greek and the Roman dramatists"

Referring to the charge that Shakespeare has mixed the comic and tragic scenes, Johnson points out that the Shakespeare's play are not in a "rigorous sense," either tragedies or comedies, but composition of a distinct kind. Shakespeare's plays exhibit the real state of earthly life which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled in various degrees and endless combination. Shakespeare says Johnson has united the power of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind but in one composition. In other words, Shakespeare was equally at home in writing tragic and comic plays and he could combine comic and tragic elements in one and the same play. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and Ludicrous characters and they sometimes produce sorrow and sometimes laughter.

This was a practice contrary to "the rules of criticism". But Johnson says that there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The object of literature is to give instruction by pleasing. A play in which the comic and the tragic have been mingled, is capable of conveying all the instructions that tragedy or comedy aims at because such a play is closer to the reality of life than either pure tragedy or comedy. The mingling of tragic and comic scenes does diminish or weaken the vicissitudes of passion that the dramatist aims at. There are many people who welcome comic relief after a scene

producing the feeling of melancholy.

Now we should look at the historical background of the matter. It is true that, on the whole, the ancient classical dramatists had kept tragedy and comedy strictly apart from each other. Neo-classical drama of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Italy, France and even England tried to observe the line of demarcation between tragedy and comedy. But Shakespeare was a romantic, not a neo classical dramatist. The free use of tragedy and comedy in the same play is one of the most striking and familiar features in the work of Shakespeare and other romantic playwrights of his time. Romantic drama reveals in variety of effect, while tragic comedy or the mixed play was, according to Addison, one of the most monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poets thoughts.

Neo-classic criticism showed a curious tendency to out Greek the Greeks in strictness. Aristotle indeed says that tragedy represents an action which is serious: and Greek tragedy in practice has little comic relief; yet it has some. We find some comic elements in Homer himself. Homer's gods are sometimes used for a comic purpose, as well as men like Thersites or Irus. For the middle Ages, the mixture of tragic and comic was as natural as breathing, and it produced their best dramatic work. The greatest Elizabethan tragedies were half the child of comedy, not only because Polonius in Hamlet, the Porter in Macbeth, and thefool in Lear produce some of their most striking scenes. Johnson, it must be pointed out, justifies tragic-comedy on conflicting grounds.

In the twentieth century, T.S.Eliot has argued that, though human nature may permanently crave for comic relief, it does not follow that this craving should e gratified. Eliot upholds the doctrine of 'the unity of sentiments,' T. S. Eliot also said that the desire for comic relief springs from a lack of the capacity for concentration.

There is no reason why a tragedy must be absolutely laughter less and there is equally no reason why a tragedy should not be laughter less. Perhapsonly one rule remains valid about humor in tragedy, namely that humor must not clash with the tone of the whole. It is extraordinary how seldom this fault isfound in Shakespeare. Mercutio and Thersites, Pandarus and Polonius, the Grave diggers and the Porter and Cleopatra's clown are certainly not out of place in the plays in which Shakespeare had depicted them.

Johnson is undoubtedly a critic of neo-classical school. However in his defence both of Shakespeare's disregard of the unities of time and place and Shakespeare's mingling of

tragic ad comic elements. Johnson seems to deviate from the rigid stand which neo-classicism adopted. Strictly speaking, neo-classic theory did not permit the mingling of tragic and comic in the same play. But it is possible to argue that Johnson defends such mingling on the fundamentally neo- classic ground that the imitation of general human nature not only permits but demands it. Shakespeare's plays, combining comedy and tragedy, show real human nature which "partakes of joy and sorrow."

Through the "Preface to Shakespeare," Samuel Johnson points out different important matters to consider while evaluating a literary work. Particularly one of the reasons of this preface is to display scaffold by scaffold what Shakespeare has done in order to begin to "assume the dignity of an ancient" (,). Johnson justifies with a variety of arguments why Shakespeare's work deserves to be considered a piece of art. In order to attain that, Johnson discloses what, as he considers, literary criticisms must do.

There are plenty of "big epigrams" concerning literary criticism all through the preface. As a man of letters and considered an authority most of themare not followed by a quote or an argument more than what his experience in the field can provide. In this essay some of them will be shown so that Johnson's meaning of it can be determined and bound as far as this can be done.

Already after his preface's opening the following lines are read: "The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. Immediately followed by these words: "While an author is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best." Clearly the second sentence confers an ironic sense to the first one. Which means that it is not that the former line establishes what the ideal contend is but the real one. Johnson calls his audience to refine and make their literary analysis deeper, which in this case means not to praise an author because of its antiquity and perhaps to be sensible to new forms of art. So already in the second paragraph of the preface Johnson has told us what is not supposed to be done by a critic. The acute reader will immediately ask not what it is supposedly to be done then, but, in order to establish precepts to do a deep and useful analysis, what kind of work is it going to be on the table.

Johnson, who is a step ahead, begins his next paragraph establishing the game's rules " to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience." Concisely, he classifies "works" into those that have

demonstrative and scientific principles and those rise by observation and experience. Once this is known he strongly determinesthe way to evaluate them 'no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem" and "frequent comparisons." So, since art is not objective apparently for him the most adequate factor to consider is comparison. To enlighten this point, the author gives his reader an example of an antique whose work has become part of humankind's knowledge. Johnson presents Homer as an author who has gone through nation-to-nation, century-by-century and that is what makes him grand. But, as if Johnson was reading our minds, he kindly tells the reader why is it that comparison is the most important tool for literarycriticism.

Frequent comparisons from different scholars through time lead to better understanding and deepening of what it is studied and when a literary work is better understood, probably if it is worth it, it will be more appreciated, since the secret of its structured is more revealed. Johnson is completely sure about this when he expresses with the following words ''what has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood".

According to Johnson, another fundamental factor to value literature is whether it conveys pleasure or not. Something is "praised only as pleasure is obtained" [1, p. 4] These words raise some questions about pleasure. How does a work of literature convey pleasure? Why do some of them convey more pleasure than others? And this is where Johnsons, while talking about Shakespeare's workvalue proposes some characteristics that maybe are not only in Shakespeare but in other creations that make them valuable. Therefore these characteristics could be used as parameters to do literary criticism as well.

General nature, progeny of common humanity and passions are some of the characteristics that the work of Shakespeare presents. As Johnson establishes these are some of the main topics that he develops magnificently and that make his work worth of belonging to posterity. In this terms it is natural that literary criticism generally deals with those subjects. That is why a good piece of art develops probably one or some of them in an original and sophisticated way.

From Johnson's preface another important variable, which could be interpreted that which should be considered by a critic could be is credibility. 'The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible." [1, p. 14] 'The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it

departs from the resemblance of reality." With these word Johnson locates credibility as a basic factor for literature in order tobe good.

Finally it could be concluded that to Johnson literary criticism , which has the aim of evaluating works appealing wholly to observation and experience, should consider: comparison, understanding, topics like passions or common humanity, credibility among others in order to know how praise literature. Iwould say that for him the most important factor is to understand the considered work by different means, comparison, credibility or general topics. Definitely, "Preface to Shakespeare", intentionaly done by Johnson in order to justify what he establishes about Shakespeare, is a revelation of what literary criticism means to him.

16.7.2 Johnson's points to remember in Preface to Shakespeare

Shakespeare's characters are a just representation of human nature as they deal with passions and principles which are common to humanity. They are also trueto the age, sex, profession to which they belong and hence the speech of one cannot be put in the mouth of another. His characters are not exaggerated. Even when the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life.

Shakespeare's plays are a storehouse of practical wisdom and from them can be formulated a philosophy of life. Moreover, his plays represent the different passions and not love alone. In this, his plays mirror life.

Shakespeare's use of tragic comedy: Shakespeare has been much criticized for mixing tragedy and comedy, but Johnson defends him in this. Johnson says that in mixing tragedy and comedy, Shakespeare has been true to nature, because even in real life there is a mingling of good and evil, joy and sorrow, tears and smiles etc. this may be against the classical rules, but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. Moreover, tragic-comedy being nearer to life combines within itself the pleasure and instruction of both tragedy and comedy.

Shakespeare's use of tragicomedy does not weaken the effect of a tragedy because it does not interrupt the progress of passions. In fact, Shakespeare knew that pleasure consisted in variety. Continued melancholy or grief is often not pleasing. Shakespeare had the power to move, whether to tears or laughter.

***Shakespeare's comic genius*:** Johnson says that comedy came natural to Shakespeare. He seems to produce his comic scenes without much labour, and these scenes are durable and hence their popularity has not suffered with the passing of time. The language of his comic scenes is the language of real life which is neither gross nor over refined, and hence it has not grown obsolete.

Shakespeare writes tragedies with great appearance of toil and study, but there is always something wanting in his tragic scenes. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy instinct.

16.7.3 Johnson's defense of Shakespeare's use of unities:

Shakespeare's histories are neither tragedy nor comedy and hence he is not required to follow classical rules of unities. The only unity he needs to maintainin his histories is the consistency and naturalness in his characters and this he does so faithfully. In his other works, he has well maintained the unity of action. His plots have the variety and complexity of nature, but have a beginning, middleand an end, and one event is logically connected with another, and the plot makesgradual advancement towards the denouement.

Shakespeare shows no regard for the unities of Time and place**,** and according to Johnson, these have troubled the poet more than it has pleased his audience. The observance of these unities is considered necessary to provide credibility to the drama. But, any fiction can never be real, and the audience knows this. If a spectator can imagine the stage to be Alexandria and the actors to be Antony and Cleopatra, he can surely imagine much more. Drama is a delusion, and delusion has no limits. Therefore, there is no absurdity in showing different actions in different places.

As regards the unity of Time, Shakespeare says that a drama imitates successive actions, and just as they may be represented at successive places, so also they may be represented at different period, separated by several days. The only condition is that the events must be connected with each other.

Johnson further says that drama moves us not because we think it is real, but because it makes us feel that the evils represented may happen to ourselves. Imitations produce pleasure or pain, not because they are mistaken for reality, butbecause they bring realities to mind. Therefore, unity of Action alone is sufficient, and the other two unities arise from false assumptions. Hence it isgood that Shakespeare violates them.

16.8 Faults of Shakespeare

Shakespeare writes without moral purpose and is more careful to please than to instruct. There is no poetic justice in his plays. This fault cannot be excused bythe barbarity of his age for justice is a virtue independent of time and place.

Next, his plots are loosely formed, and only a little attention would have improved them. He neglects opportunities of instruction that his plots offer, in fact, he very often neglects the later parts of his plays and so his catastrophes often seem forced and improbable. There are many faults of chronology and many anachronisms in his play.

His jokes are often gross and licentious. In his narration, there is much pomp of diction and circumlocution. Narration in his dramas is often tedious. His set speeches are cold and weak. They are often verbose and too large for thought. Trivial ideas are clothed in sonorous epithets. He is too fond of puns and quibbleswhich engulf him in mire. For a pun, he sacrifices reason, propriety and truth.He often fails at moments of great excellence. Some contemptible conceit spoils the effect of his pathetic and tragic scenes.

Merits of Shakespeare: He perfected the blank verse, imparted to it diversity and flexibility and brought it nearer to the language of prose.

16.9 Legacy of Samuel Johnson

Shakespeare endures. Though four hundred-odd years and countless playwrights have come and gone, the works William Shakespeare continue to enthrall us. Every student studies him. Some love him; many hate him. Still, all know him. Outside the classroom, too, Shakespeare continues to shape the culture of the western world. His plays grace the stage each season, with such diverse company as Sophocles and Jeff Goode. They are produced in every imaginable context. Critics continue to analyze their facets. Indeed, critics dedicate tomes to critiquing their peers' observations of his works. Each year, a new crop of his plays are, with a few intermittent exceptions, butchered by Hollywood. Surprisingly enough, however, those films continue to draw crowds. Surely, Shakespeare's endurance attests to his literary merit. Even in the eighteenthcentury, the Bard's votaries defended his worth by citing the longevity of his appeal. Dr. Samuel Johnson, however, warned against such short-sighted estimations of greatness by reminding his contemporaries that all too often "praises are without reason lavished on the dead,

and…the honours do only to excellence are paid to antiquity" (Johnson 8). Still, Johnson proclaims

Shakespeare's merits. With his publication *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1765, Johnson made his contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism. As with much of his work, Johnson left his own indelible mark on the field. His edition remains relevant today because it continues to affect the way critics approach Shakespeare.

Johnson was not the first editor of Shakespeare; nor was he by any means the last. Though he defended the methodology of his edition itself quite well, its legacy in modern literature is, on the whole, indirect. The critical material that accompanies his edition continues to have a much more direct effect on Shakespeare as he is interpreted today. To use Johnson's own criterion, his Preface and annotation can be called great because "frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favor" (Johnson 9). An understanding of the criticism itself is, of course, necessary to any understanding of its endurance. The notes with which Johnson sprinkled his edition, though indisputably important, are too diverse to be treated with any justice here. Johnson's more comprehensive Preface has retained its influence to the present day.

There are four easily distinguished sections in Johnson's Preface; in the first, he explicates Shakespeare's virtues after explaining what merit, if any, can be determined by the Shakespeare's enduring popularity. Johnson walks the middle ground with his critique of antiquity. He neither fully embraces longevity as a litmus test of quality nor rejects it as meaningless. Rather, he points out that those works which have withstood the test of time stand out not because of their age alone, but because, with age, those works have "been compared with other works of the same kind" and can therefore be "stiled excellent" (Johnson 9). He proceeds thence to elevate Shakespeare as the poet of nature. "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature" (10). It is Shakespeare's realism, Johnson argues, that distinguishes him from other playwrights. In his characterization and dialogue, Shakespeare "overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition," striking at the center of humanity (14). The nature captured by Shakespeare's characters is exhibited in the "ease and simplicity" of their dialogues (12). Indeed, Johnson points out, the distinctions of character stressed by such critics as Voltaire and Rhymer impose only artificial burdens on the natural genius of Shakespeare. Johnson goes further in his defense of the Bard's merit, extending his argument from the characters within his plays to the genre of the plays themselves. In the strictest, classical sense of the

terms, Johnson admits, Shakespeare's works cannot be fairly called comedies or tragedies. For this too, his plays earned harsh criticism from Johnson's contemporaries. Johnson, though, sees in the mixture of sorrow and joy a style which "approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life" (15). By acknowledging the basis of such criticism, Johnson frees himself to turn the argument on its head. He holds up the tragicomedies of Shakespeare as distinctly natural; in their "interchange of seriousness and merriment," they hold up "a faithful mirror of manners and of life" (15, 10). This, of course, is paramount to literary success to Johnson. His praise for Shakespeare, which centers on the Bard's sublunary approach to character, dialogue, and plot, does not blind him to the poet of nature's weaknesses.

Johnson airs Shakespeare's imperfections without hesitance. In doing so, though, he does not weaken his arguments; he simply establishes his credentials as a critic. As Edward Tomarken points out, "for Johnson, criticism requires, not intrusive sententiae, but evaluative interpretations, decisions about how literature applies to the human dilemma" (Tomarken 2). Johnson is not hesitant to admit Shakespeare's faults: his earlier praise serves to keep those flaws in perspective. Even without that perspective, however, Johnson's censure of Shakespeare is not particularly harsh. For the most part, Johnson highlights surface-level defects in the Bard's works: his "loosely formed" plots, his "commonly gross" jests, and— most ironically—his "disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution" (Johnson 19, 20). The most egregious fault Johnson finds in Shakespeare, though, is thematic. Unsurprisingly, Johnson exhibits emphatic distaste for Shakespeare's lack of moral purpose. Johnson argues that he "sacrifices virtue to convenience" (19). In leading "his persons indifferently through right and wrong" and leaving "their examples to operate by chance," Shakespeare has abandoned his duty as an author as the righteous Johnson would have that duty defined (19). This is, in his eyes, Shakespeare's greatest flaw, though it does not supercede his other merits. In the third section of his Preface, Johnson ceases his attack on Shakespeare, and returns to his defense. Johnson begins by refuting the reproach wrought by adherents to the unities, which had "elicited from French criticism a tiresome unanimity" (Stock 76). Though they have lost their prominence, Shakespeare's deviation from the unities of action, time, and place earned him substantialcensure. Johnson defends Shakespeare's employment of unity of action, though he admits that Shakespeare deviates slightly in to allow his plots to concur with nature. He goes further, though, and summarily dismisses the value of the unities,whose importance, he contends, "arises from the supposed necessity of making the

drama credible" (Johnson 23). Such credibility is impossible, however, since the very nature of drama is beyond the reach of reason. "Spectators," Johnson points out, "are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players" (24). The imagination of the audience, stretched by the play itself, is not incapable of further activity. By reversing the entire paradigm through which the unities are used, Johnson changes Shakespeare's fault into a praiseworthy asset. Johnson also praises Shakespeare within his context. Given the Bard's unimpressive educational background, the quality of his work is astounding. Education alone, however, could not produce Shakespeare's works, which have "a vigilance of distinction which books and precepts cannot offer" (35). It is that observation which makes him the poet of nature, and frees his works from many forms of criticism. Johnson extends his consideration of context to the national level. At a time in which the English had no model of literary excellence, Shakespeare produced just such a model. In his context, then, Johnson purports that Shakespeare's achievement is phenomenal. Johnson's defends Shakespeare as having fulfilled the "first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity, and compelling him that reads his work to read it through" (Johnson 30). His advocacy of Shakespeare in the first section, coupled with his rigorous defense in the third, all but insist that Shakespeare's merits heavily outweigh his faults.

In the final quarter of the Preface, Johnson reviews the work of previous editors of Shakespeare, and after critiquing his predecessors, Johnson explains his own editorial methodology. Clearly, Johnson felt that no extant edition could beconsidered authoritative, for he undertook to create his own. He opens by lamenting Shakespeare's complete disregard for the preservation of his plays.

Had the Bard released an authorized edition of his works during his lifetime, Johnson points out, the "negligence and unskilfulness" of eighteenth century editors would not have "corrupted many passages perhaps beyond recovery" (Johnson 39, 40). Still, Johnson proves willing add praise to his condemnation as he comments on the particular approaches of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, and Warburton. Rowe, whose edition appeared in 1709, focused little on "correction or explanation," but whose emendations were used by successive editors (40). Johnson acknowledges that his approach to Shakespeare was suitable for his context. Johnson grants more praise to Pope, who he says illustrated to readers the "true state of Shakespeare's text" (41). In doing so, Popeedited the plays heavily, even distinguishing between the legitimate and the forgeries. For Pope

Johnson retained an editor's notes in full, an indication of the high regard in which Johnson held him.

Not all of Johnson's predecessors faired as well as Pope, though. Johnson is—not altogether surprisingly—harsh with Theobald, who attacked Pope's edition. Johnson characterizes him as "a man of narrow comprehension…with no native and intrinsicksplendour of genius" (Johnson 42-43). Still, Johnson acknowledges that "what little he did do was commonly right" (43). Of his notes, Johnson retains those from his second edition which were not corrected by successive editors. Johnson rigorously defends his fourth predecessor, Hanmer, whose attempts to add form to Shakespeare's meter had been attacked. Johnson, however, stresses Hanmer's great care in annotation, and reaffirms his merit as an editor. Warburton, the most recent of the Bard's editors, earns more sever censure from Johnson's pen. Johnson criticizes, first and foremost, Warburton's overconfidence, "which presumes to do, by surveying the surface, what labour only can perform, by penetrating the bottom" (45). Johnson also attacks him for his weak notes and his insight into the plays inconsistent. As to his own edition, Johnson acknowledges his debt to his five predecessors, saying "not one left Shakespeare without improvement" (49). He also points out that he tended to look before even Rowe's edition in an effort to find the most authoritative text possible. In an effort to maintain plays' integrity, Johnson confines his "imagination to the margin," commenting on the text with as little modification as possible. Still, with a plethora of available sources, Johnson's work as an

editor was still significant. In the end, he released the most comprehensive edition of Shakespeare's works of the eighteenth century.

Johnson's edition of Shakespeare was greeted with mix of adulation and criticism. Even from the beginning, however, the Preface "monopolized critical attention" (Sherbo 46). The misconception that the Preface itself constitutesJohnson's edition persists even today. Between Johnson's time and our own the Preface has been both exalted and condemned. Many of his contemporaries showered Johnson's edition with great praise, singling out the Preface as "a fine piece of writing" containing "much truth, good sense, and just criticism" (Colman qtd. in Sherbo 47). Johnson's "comprehensive views and comprehensive expression…made the essay a classic" (Elledge 1136). Other critics subjected the Preface to further scrutiny, looking beyond the surface criticism at Johnson's methods of approaching Shakespeare. Thus William Kenrick, for example, focused extensively on

Johnson's "treatment of the unities and the whole question of dramatic illusion" (Sherbo 48). Kenrick's review was not altogether positive, however. In fact, he bitterly censures Johnson, accusing him of "having acted, in the outrage he hath committed on Shakespeare, just like other sinners, not only by doing those things he ought not to have done, but by leaving undone those things he ought to have done" (Kenrick xv). In *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Boswell singles out the Preface, hailing it as a work "in which the excellencies and defects of that immortal bard are displayed with a masterly hand" (130-131). His dismissal of the rest of the work, however, betrays some hint of disappointment in the edition as a whole. Certainly, even in Johnson's lifetime, there were vocal critics besides Kenrick. John Hawkins dismissed it as unimpressive: "Much had been expected from it, and little now appeared to have been performed" (qtd. in Sherbo 48). Still, Hawkins acknowledges that Johnson's edition of Shakespeare formed the basis of subsequent editions. Critics of the nineteenth century were generally harsh as well. Charles Knight, for example, granted in 1867 that Johnson's work had "influenced the public opinion up to this day;" he immediately adds, though, that "the influence has been for the most part evil" (qtd. in Sherbo 49). By the end of the nineteenth century, the critical thought on the Preface tended toward the unimpressed.

Johnson has regained some stature in the past hundred years, however. Slowly, critics began to see in his Preface a "conclusive summing up by a strong, wise, and impartial mind" (Smith qtd. in Sherbo 49). Other critics found value in more specific aspects of Johnson's work. T.S. Eliot praised his lucidity in identifying Shakespeare's genre: "The distinction between the tragic and the comic is an account of the way in which we try to live; when we get below it, as in *King Lear*, we have an account of the way in which we do live" (Eliot 296). Eliot shared Johnson's distaste for the superficialdistinctions through which Shakespeare's plays had been labeled tragic, comic, and historic. Rather, he saw that, in the interchange tragic and comic scenes, Shakespeare produces literature that is true to life. Indeed, Charles Warren points out that "Eliot in his susceptibilities sounds a little like Dr. Johnson," whom he praised in various ways (6). Arthur Sherbo, editor of *Johnson on Shakespeare*, saw that, despite its weaknesses, the Preface is still worthy of study:

Where Johnson deviated from the traditional criticism of various aspects of Shakespeare's art he was often wrong…But this does not detract from the merited fame of the Preface as a magnificent restatement of the eighteenth century's thinking on Shakespeare. (Sherbo 60)

Such a view of Johnson is best described as qualified praise; he acknowledges its

weaknesses without ignoring its strengths. Donald Green echoes Sherbo's praises, stressing that Johnson gave the eighteenth century's critics "their first really effective and memorable expression" (Greene, *Samuel Johnson* 185). More recently, also, Johnson has earned the recognition of modern critics. In his analysis of Shakespeare's depictions of reality, for example, A.D. Nuttall commends Johnson's approach to the Bard as poet of nature. Johnson, he says, "finds in Shakespeare's adherence to nature a profound and ordered uniformity" (67). Indeed, in many ways, the importance that Nuttall prescribes to realism is similar to that of Johnson. In his conclusion, he points out their mutual dislike for "the pastoral convention," in favor of forms less "insulated from this varying world" (185, 193). Nuttall embraces Shakespeare's version of reality, which he sees as an unconscious challenge to transcendentalism. Edward Tomarken, too, defends the Preface. Never denying that it is a "largely derivative work," Tomarken argues that it directly links the criticism of the eighteenth century to that of today (3). He points out that it "speaks directly to us, raising new questions and presenting new resolutions for modern Shakespereans, theoreticians, and literary critics in general" (3). Today's critics have generally looked beyond the origins of the work to its original methodological contributions, where they have found much value.

More than any other modern critic, however, Harold Bloom has fully embraced Johnson's approach to Shakespeare. Arguably today's preeminent scholar of Shakespeare, Bloom singles out Johnson as "the foremost of interpreters" and "first among all Western literary critics" (Bloom 2). Such praise for Johnson, particularly in reference to his edition of Shakespeare, is almost unprecedented. He sees Johnson's contribution to both literary criticism generally and Shakespearean criticism specifically as indispensable. He defines "Johnson's vitality as a critic" by noting that he is "always sufficiently *inside* Shakespeare's plays to judge them as he judges human life, without ever forgetting that Shakespeare's function is to bring life to mind" (2). Bloom's tribute to Johnsonian criticism is not mere lip service, however; he integrates Johnson's principles into his own approach to Shakespeare's works. Bloom echoes Johnson's focus on creativity, stressed not only in the Preface to Shakespeare, butalso in the Lives of the Poets, where Johnson points out that Milton's work "is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it is not the first" (Johnson qtd. in Greene, *Critical Edition* 716). For Bloom, Shakespeare's ingenuity is of prime importance, and his invention was not only literary, but linguistic: "Early modern English was shaped by Shakespeare: the *Oxford English Dictionary* is made in his image" (Bloom 10). Bloom also incorporates Johnson's notion of Shakespeare as the

poet of nature into his own work, calling Hamlet "art's tributeto nature" (4). Bloom's focus in examining Shakespeare is, in fact, his "originality in the representation of character" (17). On the whole, Bloom is simultaneously a distinctly modern and distinctly Johnsonian critic. Johnson was among the first of the Bard's editors. His Preface, however, betrays his reliance on his few predecessors. Nevertheless, his edition has affected the study of Shakespeare since its publication in 1765. Whether praised or censured, critics have garnished Johnson's edition—its Preface, in particular—with much attention. Johnson did not begin the study of Shakespeare, nor did he set an unchallenged precedent in the field. Still, Johnson's approach to the poet of nature has survived until the present. Certainly, Johnson's Preface does not enjoy the same popular appeal as Shakespeare's works. As long as scholars continue to examine Shakespeare, however, Johnson's work will remain important. Truly, Shakespeare endures. So does Johnson.

16.10 Samuel Johnson a Timeline

1709

Samuel Johnson is born in Lichfield, England to Michael and SarahJohnson.

1728

Johnson enrolls in Pembroke College, Oxford. Unable to continue payinghis bills, he withdraws little more than a year later.

1731

"Messia," Johnson's Latin translation of Alexander Pope's "Messiah" ispublished in Husbands's Miscellany, the first of his works to see print.

1735

Johnson marries Elizabeth (Jervis) Porter, a widow twenty years his senior. With the inheritance from her late husband, he opens a grammar school. Attracting few pupils, he is forced to close it in January 1737.

1737

With his friend and former pupil David Garrick, Johnson sets off forLondon to pursue a career as an author.

1738

Johnson's poem *London*, his first important literary work, is publishedanonymously.

1746

Johnson begins work on his dictionary, and writes *A Short Scheme for Compiling a New Dictionary of the English Language*, published the following year.

1749

David Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre performs Johnson's tragedy *Irene*. Johnson publishes his poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.

1750

Johnson issues the first of his twice-weekly series of essays entitled *The Rambler*. It will continue for two years, totaling 208 installments, all but seven written by Johnson.

1752

Elizabeth Johnson dies. Johnson never remarries.

1755

After nine years of labor, *A Dictionary of the English Language* is published.

1759

Johnson writes *The Prince of Abyssinia* (better known as *Rasselas*), in just one week's time, to pay the expenses of his mother's final illness and funeral.

1762

Johnson is granted a royal pension of £300 per year.

1763

Johnson meets James Boswell for the first time.

1764

Sir Joshua Reynolds founds the Club, its membership drawn from Johnson's circle of friends.

1765

Johnson publishes his long-awaited edition of the works of Shakespeare.

1773

Boswell and Johnson tour Scotland together; the trip forms the basis of Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and Boswell's *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (1785).

1779

Johnson publishes the first volumes of his *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the*

Works of the English Poets, completed in 1781.

1784

Johnson dies on December 13th, at age 75. He is buried in WestminsterAbbey the following week.

16.11 Application in modern times

A large part of Johnson's criticism consists in rejecting what he sees as logical absurdities both in criticism or in literature. His common sense leads him some times into narrowness, because he tends to interpret poetical or critical conventions too literally; no doubt he also does away with a lot of nonsense and rubbish.

One main critical statement is the preface to his edition of Shakespeare's works. His judgement on Shakespeare is similar to Dryden's. He recognises his greatness in spite of being unable to reduce him to his principles, and in spite of his admiration is often narrow in judging him: he complains that Shakespeare is not moral enough, that he cares so much to please and to portray life that he seems at times to be writing without moral purpose. He also complains that Shakespeare has no sense of geography or history, and too often puts high- sounding speeches in situations where they are out of tune. And he has a pernicious love for puns which makes him spoil his best effects. Shakespeare is ready to abandon all artistic purpose for the sake of wordplay. Besides, he adds, Shakespeare's plays are incorrectly designed and he does not submit to decorum. But Shakespeare remains the greatest: with all his defects, he is a force of nature which no careful writer han hope to surpass.

However, Johnson was the one who rejected once and for all the doctrine of the unities; Shakespeare, he says, was right in paying no attention to them. Johnson rejects classical dramatic doctrine in the name of common sense, the same common sense that was said by Dryden and Pope to have established it. He maintains the unity of action, but sacrifices the unities of time and place to the higher pleasures of variety and instruction, which are best attained without them. He also accepts tragicomedy, as being more pleasurable than both tragedy and comedy, and having the same didactic potential. "I am almost frightened at my own temerity," Johnson says.

His main work in practical criticism is found in The Lives of the Poets (1777), dealing with Savage, Cowley, Milton, Gray, Dryden and Pope, among many others. There is a

balance of biography and criticism in this work, as Johnson is interested not merely in the poet, but in the man as a whole. This is already revealing of a new attitude towards poetic creation. We may note that he is sound enough while writing on neoclassical poets, seeing their defects as well as their merits, but that his prejudices as a Royalist make him undervalue Gray, who was a democrat and a pre-Romantic, and Milton, a Puritan and regicide.

> Didacticism is still important for Johnson. Fiction he defines as "truth invested with falsehood." Witness also his definition of poetry:
>
> 2. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason.
>
> In an essay on fiction Johnson grounds critical judgement on morality. Realism can be dangerous if it is not moral. Not everything in nature is fit for representation: art must imitate only those parts of nature which are fit for imitation. The artist must polish real life and offer us an ideal image. Vice, if it is shown, must inspire disgust.

Johnson may have endorsed the principles of Neoclassicism, but in reality he is a transitional critic, and he is not alien to the influence that empiricist philosophy has on critical thought in this age. And his personal taste often revealsa sensitivity towards detail, the picturesque and the individual (for example, biography and personal morality, as opposed to philosophy) which appears obscured in his theories. There is often a gap between Johnson's theoretical concepts and his actual critical judgements: his judgements seem to be independent of the theories he is supposed to be applying. For instance, he repeats the traditional Neoclassic view of style as ornament. He defends the ideas of different levels of style, of specifically poetic diction. But in practice he also holds a different, more modern conception of style. In Johnson's practical criticism, style is seen as a way of perceiving the world. This can be seen above all in his rejections of poetic clichés and worn-out, trite expressions which derive from previous literature and not from personal experience.

This is in the line of the general shift form a conceptual, taxonomic view of style (that best exemplified by Ramism) to the perceptual, experiential view of literature which is foreshadowed in the concern of the late 17th century for a more intelligible and persuasive oratorical style, a view which is developed by the aestheticians of the 18th century and

surfaces in the Romantic movement. Poetry makes familiar things new and new things familiar (Cf. Horace, butWordsworth and Shklovski too) by creating an image of a mind in action. Johnson says that art is imitation, and that we can imitate either the objectperceived or the process of perception. His criticism of the metaphysical poets is that their works imitate neither the object nor its impression. This "mimetic principle" is often used by Johnson as a criterion of unity, when he is opposingthe intrusion of mannered styles.So, Johnson is superficially a neoclassical critic, above all in his explicit theoretical statements. But in his personal taste and his practical criticism, we can see that he is in fact a transitional critic, just like many others which will be dealt with now. "His stylistic criticism, and probably in some degree his personal taste,reveal the strain of a contradiction which he did not perceive." This is to a certainextent the contradiction of his age; we will see now the emergence of this new literary standard in the aesthetic though of many other writers apart from Johnson.

16.12 Summary

Samuel Johnson was born in 1709 in Lichfield, Staffordshire. The son of a bookseller, he rose to become one of the greatest literary figures of the eighteenth century, most famously compiling *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Poverty and illness followed Johnson for much of his life. He contracted scrofula (also known as the King's Evil) as a baby, which resulted in poor hearing and eyesight and left him noticeably scarred. Johnson attended the local grammar school in Lichfield and went on to Pembroke College, Oxford. However, he was to leave after just 13 months as his parents could no longer afford the fees. In 1735, he married a widow, Elizabeth Porter, and set up a school at Edial; it failed within months. With this behind him, Johnson took one of the few remaining pupils - the soon-to-be star of the London stage, David Garrick - and walked to the capital to seek fame and fortune. Johnson worked as a hack writer for many years, writing and editing articles for Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*. He received some critical success with his early poem *London* (1738) and his biography of the wayward poet, Richard Savage (1744) but Johnson's big opportunity came in 1746 with the commission to write the *Dictionary*. Johnson lived in 17 different places in London, but moved to Gough Square in order to work on the *Dictionary*, which was finally published in 1755. From then on Johnson's fame was assured and he was known as 'Dictionary Johnson', although he still suffered some financial difficulty.

Johnson's written work was immense and varied. He completed a critical edition of the works of William Shakespeare and created biographies and critical appraisals of 52 English poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for his *Lives of the Poets*. He also wrote literary criticism and was a prolific essayist, for two years being the almost sole contributor to *The Rambler*, as well as writing for *The Idler* and *The Adventurer*.

16.13 Key Terms

- **Journalism:** The term was originally applied to the reportage of current events in printed form, specifically newspapers, but in the late 20th century it came to include electronic media as well.

- **literary criticism:** Discipline concerned with philosophical, descriptive, and evaluative inquiries about literature, including what literature is, what it does, and what it is worth. The Western critical tradition began with Plato's *Republic* (4th century BCE). A generation later, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, developed a set of principles of composition that had a lasting influence. European criticism since the Renaissance has primarily focused on the moral worth of literature and the nature of its relationship to reality.

- **Pamphlet:** Unbound printed publication with a paper cover or no cover. Among the first printed materials, pamphlets were widely used in England, France, and Germany from the early 16th century, often for religious or political propaganda; they sometimes rose to the level of literature or philosophical discourse.

16.14 Review Questions

1. Discuss the works of Samuel Johnson.
2. Trace the background of Johnson's works.
3. Comment on the works of Samuel Johnson.
4. Elucidate the timeline of Samuel Johnson.
5. Figure out the contribution of Samuel Johnson in English Literature.

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