

GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, KOVILPATTI – 628502

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STUDY MATERIAL FOR III B.A ENGLISH

LITERARY CRITICS AND APPROACHES

SEMESTER – V, ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

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UNIT – I

PLATO

AS A LITERARY CRITIC:

Plato is a disciple of Socrates. When he started his career, literature declined and philosophy and oratory were on demand, so Plato discussed much of philosophy and less of literature and its value in society. He is not a professional critic. His philosophical thoughts are discussed in his famous work “Dialogues”. This book is in the form of dialogues between Aristotle and his disciples including Plato.

His View of Art

Literature is an art like painting and sculpture. Art, according to Plato, is an idea. Ideas are the ultimate reality. Things are made as ideas before they take a form or shape. A tree is an imitation of an image in idea, so a tree is a copy. Art reproduces this first copy, so it is twice removed from reality. The things are imperfect copies and art is more imperfect. So art takes men far away from reality and this is dangerous.

His Attack of Poetry

Plato attacks poetry and poets for the following reasons:

1. Poetry is twice removed from reality and it makes men believe in the imperfection.
2. The poet writes a poem not because he thought for a long time but because he is inspired suddenly. This suddenness cannot be truthful. Poetry contains profound truth but poetry

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fails in the test of reason. It cannot take the place of philosophy and it cannot make better citizen.

3. Poetry affects the emotions and not the reason. It appeals to the heart and not to the intellect. Emotions are temporary and they cannot be safe guides to men.

4. Poetry is non-moral in character. It treats both virtue and vice alike. It does not teach moral to the readers. It corrupts human beings.

Function of Poetry

Poetry is not just to offer pleasure. It should teach some morals. It should contribute to the knowledge. A poet should also be a good teacher.

His Comments on Drama

Drama, according to Plato, is a branch of poetry. Drama is different from poetry in the following ways:

1. Drama is to be staged. Its approval and disapproval depends upon the audience. To convince the audience dramatists use some cheap techniques like quarrels, lamentations, thunder and sounds of animals. These techniques are a shame in our normal life. Such plays should be censored.

2. Audience while watching characters who are cowards, knaves and criminals tend to become one such character. They lose their individuality. Such characters must not be there in a play. A play should have good characters.

3. Plato is against the pleasure a tragedy and comedy gives. Tragedy offers pleasure to the audience. Human beings are full of feelings like anger, fear, grief, etc., when they are in

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excess there is pleasure. In comedy, people laugh when a coward act like a brave man or when a criminal acts like an honest man. These characters are not to be laughed at but they should be pitied. A comic character must be lovable.

His Observations on Style

Plato lived in the age of oratory. He gives rules for the spoken language which could also be applied for the written word. A speaker must be thorough in the knowledge. He must be sure of what he has to say. It must impress the hearers. Next a speaker must be naturally gifted and he must be constantly in practice. His speech must follow a natural sequence. Finally a speaker must know the psychology of his audience.

Conclusion

Plato condemns poets. He distinguishes poetry with life. He is highly moralistic and he believes in art for life sake. His observations of tragedy and comedy are important contributions. He is the first to see art as an imitation.

ARISTOTLE

AS A LITERARY CRITIC:

Aristotle is Plato's disciple. He is also known as the tutor of Alexander the Great. He has written many critical treatises but only two, "Poetics" and "Rhetoric", are remaining. "Poetics" deals with the art of poetry and "Rhetoric" deals with the art of speaking. "Poetics" is a short book for about 50 pages, containing 26 small chapters. The first four chapters and the 25th talk

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about poetry, the 5th is about comedy, epic and tragedy and the following 14 chapters to tragedy and the next three to poetic diction, the next two to epic and the last to a comparison of epic and tragedy.

His Observation of Poetry

It's Nature – Aristotle, like Plato, calls a poet an imitator. He compares a poet with a child, who imitates the elders, similarly a poet is a grown up child. It is not twice removed from reality; instead, it talks about the permanent truth. He compares poetry with history. History says what has happened, poetry is more philosophical and it says what may happen. Poetry is therefore higher than history.

It's Function – poetry's major function is pleasure. It gives pleasure to the reader and the poet by its imitation and rhythm. If the poem teaches along with giving pleasure it is a superior poem.

It's Emotional Appeal – Poetry appeals more to emotions. Tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear – pity at the sufferings and fall of the hero and fear of the worst that he may face. These emotions end in purgation or catharsis. These emotions help the mind to calm down.

Observation on Tragedy

It's Origin – Poetry imitates two kinds of action: the noble and the bad. Noble or good action leads to epic and the bad action leads to satire. From these actions, arise tragedy and comedy. Epic and tragedy are superior to satire and comedy. Tragedy is more superior to epic.

Its Characteristics – Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is an imitation of an action that is

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serious, complete . . . in language embellished...in the form of action and not narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. It should have a beginning, middle and an end. A plot should have reasonable length. It should neither be short nor be long. A tragedy must have rhythm, harmony and song. They must be employed as occasion demands. A tragedy must also have action, which distinguishes it from epic. In epic, a narrator tells the story and in tragedy, the tale is told by moving characters.

It's Constituent Parts – Tragedy has six parts: plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle. Plot is the arrangement of incidents. It is very important in a tragedy than characters. Without action, there would not be any characters. Characters determine men's qualities. Thought is what a character thinks or feels during his career in the play. To accomplish all these, a writer uses diction and song. Spectacle is the stage mechanics that present the play for the audience.

Structure of the Plot – the plot is the soul of a tragedy. It must have three unities. Unity of action is the first unity. Actions in the life of the hero which are connected with one another and appear together. There may be more actions in every man's life but a tragedy must give what is necessary. There should be only one plot or only one man's life must be discussed. Unity of time comes next. A tragedy must take place within a single revolution of sun and epic does not have this limit. A tragedy, on stage, must happen within 24 hours, if not it may appear unnatural. Unity of place is the last unity. A tragedy must happen in a single place. A writer should not shift place quite often. A tragedy should arouse pity and fear and there must be purgation at the end. A

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tragedy should end in an unhappy way, so that we get the true tragic pleasure. A plot can be divided into two – complications and denouement. The complications are the events that form a knot and the denouement unties it. The complications include the beginning to the point where there is a turn for good or ill; the denouement extends from the turning point to the end.

Simple and Complex Plot – In a simple plot there is no complications. In a complex plot there is peripeteia and anagnorsis. Peripeteia is reversal of situation and anagnorsis is recognition or discovery. Reversal of situation means reversal of intention – we do something and the opposite happens (killing an enemy and find him to be a friend). Anagnorsis is a change from ignorance to knowledge. A tragedy must not have a simple plot but it should have a complex plot.

Tragic Hero – a tragic hero must produce fear and pity among the audience. He cannot be a good man neither a bad man. He should be a man whose is not too good but with some errors or tragic flaw.

Observations on Comedy

Not much is said about comedy. Comedy has its roots in satire. Satire ridicules personalities and comedy ridicules general vices. By vices, Aristotle does not mean men with wickedness but with some defect or ugliness. This defect or ugliness provides laughter, which leads to no harm or pain. Comedy is more like poetry, which talks about what may happen.

Observations on Epic

Its Nature and Form – Epic originated earlier than tragedy and comedy. It is an outcome of hymns and songs sung in praise of gods. In its nature, it is more like tragedy but in form it is

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different. An epic should also a beginning, middle and an end. The structure of the plot is also the same; it must have a complication and denouement. It has the unity of action that should lead to catharsis. It has parts like tragedy – plot, character, thought and diction. It is different from tragedy because a poet narrates it. It could be lengthier than a tragedy. An epic could be grand and it could be episodic. An epic can be marvelous or improbable. It can have supernatural elements.

Epic and Tragedy – Aristotle considers tragedy as higher than epic. Epic is superior because it appeals to refined audience. It achieves its effects without the visual effect. But tragedy is more superior because it appeals to the cultivated audience by bringing in action.

Observations on Style

Aristotle talks about style in his “Rhetoric”. A good writing should have clearness and propriety. The aim of writing is to communicate so the writer must be clear. But as the meanings to be conveyed are different from time to time the mode of writing or propriety must be different. The writers must use current words to attain dignity and charm. He should also use archaic words, foreign words and newly coined words. He is free to use metaphors. A prose writer should avoid ambiguous punctuations and multiple clauses. There are two styles of prose writing – loose and periodic. Loose style is made up of series of sentences. In periodic style each sentence is a complete whole with a beginning, middle and an end. Loose style is formless and unintelligible. Periodic style has a form.

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UNIT – II

PHILIP SIDNEY AS A LITERARY CRITIC

Among the English critics, Philip Sidney holds a very important place. His Apology for Poetry is a spirited defence of poetry against all the charges laid against it since Plato. He considers poetry as the oldest of all branches of learning and establishes its superiority. Poetry,

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according to Sidney, is superior to philosophy by its charm, to history by its universality, to science by its moral end, to law by its encouragement of human rather than civic goodness. Sidney deals with the usefulness of other forms of poetry also. (The pastoral pleases by its helpful comments on contemporary events and life in general, the elegy by its kindly pity for the weakness of mankind, the satire by its pleasant ridicule of folly, the lyric by its sweet praise of all that is praiseworthy, and the epic by its representation of the loftiest truths in the loftiest manner).

Reply to four charges

Stephen Gosson in his School of Abuse, levelled four charges against poetry.

They were:

- (i) A man could employ his time more usefully than in poetry
- (ii) It is the ‘mother of lies’
- (iii) It is immoral and ‘the nurse of abuse’
- (iv) Plato had rightly banished poets from his ideal commonwealth.

Sidney gallantly defends all these charges in his ‘Apology for Poetry’. Taking the first charge, he argues that poetry alone teaches and moves to virtue and therefore a man cannot better spend his time than in it. Regarding the second charge, he points out that a poet has no concern with the question of veracity or falsehood and therefore a poet can scarcely be a liar. He disposes of the third charge saying that it is a man’s wit that abuses poetry and not vice versa. To the fourth charge, he says that it is without foundation because Plato did not find fault with poetry

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but only the poets of his time who abused it.

His Classicism

Sidney's Apology is the first serious attempt to apply the classical rules to English poetry. He admires the great Italian writers of Renaissance (Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch). All his pronouncements have their basis either on Plato or Aristotle or Horace. In his definition of poetry he follows both Aristotle and Horace: 'to teach and delight'. Sidney insists on the observance of the unities of time, place and action in English drama. He has no patience with the newly developed tragi-comedy. (His whole critical outlook in the unities and the tragi-comedy was affected by the absence of really good English plays till his time). He also praises the unrhymed classical metre verse. Poetry according to him is the art of inventing new things, better than this world has to offer, and even prose that does so is poetry. Though he has admiration for the classical verse he has his native love of rhyme or verse. His love of the classics is ultimately reconciled to his love of the native tradition.

The Value of his Criticism

Though Sidney professes to follow Aristotle, his conception of poetry is different from Aristotle's. To Aristotle, poetry was an art of imitation. To Sidney, it is an art of imitation for a specific purpose: it imitates 'to teach and delight'. (Those who practise it are called makers and prophets).

Sidney also unconsciously differs with Aristotle in the meaning he gives to imitation.

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Poetry is not so much an art of imitation as of invention or creation. (It creates a new world altogether for the edification and delight of the reader). This brings him again close Plato. According to him, the poet imitates not the brazen world of Nature but the golden world of the Idea itself. So, Plato's chief objection to poetry is here answered in full. Sidney makes poetry what Plato wished it to be – a vision of the idea itself and a force for the perfection of the soul.

DRYDEN

AS A LITERARY CRITIC:

John Dryden was a major essayist of the English literary tradition. His works are so praiseworthy that Samuel Johnson, a contemporary of Dryden and himself a major critic, called him 'the father of English criticism' along with commenting that English prose starts with Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poesy.

Along with his wide-ranging criticism of epic, poetry, plays, etc., he also wrote plays, prefaces, prologues. His contribution to the field of criticism influenced writers like Pope, Johnson, Mathew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, etc. And he is mostly famous for his poetic works like "Mac Flecknoe", Absalom and Achitophel, etc., and his dramatic works like All for Love, Aurang-zebe, and Marriage a la Mode.

Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poesy explicitly states in the begin that its aim is to have our English writers to stay away from those who prefer French over English. The essay is a debate on the use of rhyme in the drama that took place originally between Sir Robert Howard and John

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Dryden.

However, there are four characters in the essay: Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander, which are originally identified as Charles Sackville, who was a patron of Dryden and poet himself, Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law, Sir Charles Sedley, and Neander, Dryden himself, respectively.

In neoclassical times, supporters of ancients believed that modern society has corrupted the man and society, and looked for answers in the old texts. Moderns, on the other hand, were breaking away or abandoning the old ideals completely. They saw the modern world as the development of human nature because of Renaissance ideals. Other issues that the essay deals with are the classical model of 'unities of time, place and action', the classical distinction of genres such as tragedy and comedy, etc.

The essay shows a shift in the definition of drama from classical to modern with Lisideius defining it. A mention of delight, humour and representation of human nature are found missing in the classical definition of drama. So, a movement towards a modern kind of drama is evident.

On the other hand, Crites argues that everything / every rule that we know about drama is told to us by Aristotle, Horace and others. He believes that we have nothing new to offer except calling our wit to be superior. In his opinion, modern plays are failures.

By calling moderns to be the ones who don't indulge in mere imitation of the ancients, Eugenius becomes the first to defend the moderns. Modern do not follow ancients in order to

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create something, they have nature and humans to draw inspirations from. He believes that with the wisdom of the ancients, we also have our own experiences of the world to understand it.

On the point of French versus English, Lisideius prefers French and Neander (Dryden) defend the English. Lisideius argues that French drama follows all the unities, provides a variety of emotions. He argues that French has the right way of dividing the time among narration, action, dialogue.

Dryden, in his support of English drama, doesn't refute any claim made by Lisideius in favour of the French; on the other hand, argues that all that is considered erroneous in the English drama is actually a virtue that surpasses traditional techniques.

UNIT – III

DR. JOHNSON

AS A LITERARY CRITIC:

Dr. Johnson wrote no critical treatise but he influenced his age no more than any other English critics of the past. His critical work consists of a dozen papers in "The Rambler", the remarks on poetry in "Rasselas", "The Preface to the Plays of Shakespeare" and "The Lives of the Poets". According to him, criticism should rest on surer foundations.

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There were the rules of the ancients and those of the neo – classicists. But they were subject to change for ‘every new genius produces some innovation which subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established’ says Dr.Johnson. They could be divided into two categories – the fundamental and indispensable, based on nature and reason; and those that were ‘merely useful and convenient’, deriving their force from earlier practice. No writer could bypass the former. But he was free to follow or not to follow the latter. To know whether a work has followed these essential principles or not, Johnson subjects the work to the test of time. The general and continued approbation of mankind is the best evidence of its merit. No doubt, Johnson is a neo – classical critic but never stands for a blind reverence to authority, ancient or modern. He is for liberty.

Historical Approach:

Literature according to Johnson is not written to a fixed pattern but is conditioned by the writer’s age and environment. Though Dryden and Pope have attributed the success of writers to the genius of the age, Johnson for the first time makes it an essential principle of criticism. To judge rightly of an author, he says that we must transfer ourselves to his time and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries and what were his means of supplying them. The historical estimate is an important factor in the real estimate of an author. George Watson says that Johnson is an unambiguously historical critic and the true father of historical criticism in English.

In his “Life of Milton” Johnson writes about poetry. He says that poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason. In this definition he

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combines both the nature of the poetic art (that it imitates truth or life) and its function (that it affords pleasure). In the imitation of truth it is guided by reason and in affording pleasure by imagination. Johnson says in “The Preface to Shakespeare” that the end of writing is to instruct and the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. The truth of poetry is universal truth and it has a universal appeal. It ‘pleases many and pleases long!’

On kinds of Poetry, Versification and Poetic Diction:

Following the French neo-classicists, Johnson considers the epic superior to all other forms of verse. Epic poetry teaches the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts. Among the verse forms the Pastoral and the Pindaric ode made the least impression on him. According to him, these forms of poetry may not please the readers of the modern age. As regards the versification, he is for regular metres and rhymes. Since metre or rhythm alone is insufficient to make a verse musical, he prefers the heroic couplet to all other stanza forms. He also defines the language of poetry. ‘Not all words are fit for poetry’, says Johnson. ‘Words too familiar or too remote’ defeat the purpose of a poet. Hence he excludes words of both these categories from the language of poetry. He says that ‘a simile to be perfect must both illustrate and ennoble the subject’.

On Drama:

Johnson considers the different aspects of the dramatic art: its nature, the unities, dramatic pleasure and the tragic - comedy. Drama must hold up ‘a faithful mirror of manners and of life’. It should present ‘human sentiments in human language’. A great play is not a story of a

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few men in one particular age, but through them, of all men in all ages: the actions, thoughts and passions.

Among the three unities, Johnson says that only the unity of action is justified by reason, the union of the events of the plot into an inseparable whole. He accounts for the pleasure in drama as the natural human pleasure in imitation. He follows a very realistic approach on the tragic - comedy. There are two natural grounds to justify it: the alternation of pleasure and pain in a play pleases by its variety and it reflects life.

Practical Criticism:

Johnson is the first English critic to attempt a systematic work in the field of practical criticism. His “Lives of the Poets” is a biographical - cum - critical account of fifty two poets from Cowley to Gray covering a period of a hundred years. It is as much a history of the English poetry of this period as a work of criticism.

The Value of his Criticism:

Johnson is the last great critic of the neo - classical school. He has a code of conduct both for the writer and the critic. In his historical approach to an author’s work he questions the validity of the same rules for all ages. He pleads for suitable adjustments in them in the light of the author’s environment. His other test of excellence – ‘the general and continued approbation of mankind’ (which he applies to Shakespeare) also disposes of the necessity of rules. Neo – Classicism stresses the means – the rules, as they are called – no less than the end. Johnson’s test

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stresses the end only.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

AS A LITERARY CRITIC

William Wordsworth belongs to the period that witnessed a Romantic revolt against the Neo-classical movement. Wordsworth himself was highly influenced by the spirit of the French Revolution and the writing of Rousseau who challenged everything that interfered with the natural right and liberty of man.

Wordsworth's contribution to literary criticism lies chiefly in his preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* published by him and his friend Coleridge first in 1798. Wordsworth in his preface discusses the question of poetic diction or the language fit for poetry which had been the topic of heated discussion among the neo-classical and earlier writers. The neo-classical writers rejected low words and phrases as unfit for poetic use. Dr. Johnson added to his list the use of technical words. To the neo classical writers, the diction of poetry differed from that of prose by its happy combination of words or figures of speech.

Wordsworth recommended the use of a simpler diction. In the **Preface of the Lyrical Ballads**, he says that his principal object in these poems is to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them, throughout as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination in order to present even, ordinary things in an unusual aspect. He rejected the

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personification of abstract ideas. He also ruled out any distinction between the language of poetry and that of prose. But later, he contradicted himself stating that the selection of the language spoken by men must be made with true taste and feeling.

The second part of his preface contains the concept of poetry. To begin with, he defines poetry as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’. But as such spontaneity gives no room for the selection of language really used by men. He modifies the definition saying that the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings should take its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. In this process the emotion originally aroused by the sight was recreated in contemplation. This emotion then empowers the mind driving away contemplation and the result in poetry. But by spontaneity in poetry, Wordsworth did not mean a total rejection of workmanship.

To Wordsworth, the poet is a man speaking to men. So poetry should have a definite purpose apart from delighting the reader. Poetry is the pursuit of truth of man’s knowledge of himself and the world around him. Scientific truth benefits us materially whereas the poetic truth becomes part of our existence. The poetic truths are felt in the blood and felt along the heart. So Wordsworth says, ‘Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science’.

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UNIT – IV

MATTHEW ARNOLD

AS A LITERARY CRITIC

Arnold's work as a literary critic began with the 1853 "Preface to the Poems". In it, he attempted to explain his extreme act of self-censorship in excluding the dramatic poem "Empedocles on Etna". With its emphasis on the importance of subject in poetry, on "clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style" learned from the Greeks, and in the strong imprint of Goethe and Wordsworth, in his critical theory. George Watson described the preface, written by the thirty-one-year-old Arnold, as "oddly stiff and graceless when we think of

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the elegance of his later prose."

Criticism began to take first place in Arnold's writing with his appointment in 1857 to the professorship of poetry at Oxford, which he held for two successive terms of five years. In 1861 his lectures *On Translating Homer* were published, to be followed in 1862 by *Last Words on Translating Homer*, both volumes admirable in style and full of striking judgments and suggestive remarks, but built on rather arbitrary assumptions and reaching no well-established conclusions. Especially characteristic, both of his defects and his qualities, are on the one hand, Arnold's unconvincing advocacy of English hexameters and his creation of a kind of literary absolute in the "grand style," and, on the other, his keen feeling of the need for a disinterested and intelligent criticism in England.

Although Arnold's poetry received only mixed reviews and attention during his lifetime, his forays into literary criticism were more successful. Arnold is famous for introducing a methodology of literary criticism somewhere between the historicist approach common to many critics at the time and the personal essay; he often moved quickly and easily from literary subjects to political and social issues. His *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888), remains a significant influence on critics to this day. In one of his most famous essays on the topic, "The Study of Poetry",

Arnold wrote that, "Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry". He considered the most important criteria used to judge the value of a poem were "high truth" and "high

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seriousness”. By this standard, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales did not merit Arnold's approval.

Further, Arnold thought the works that had been proven to possess both “high truth” and “high seriousness”, such as those of Shakespeare and Milton, could be used as a basis of comparison to determine the merit of other works of poetry. He also sought for literary criticism to remain disinterested, and said that the appreciation should be of “the object as in itself it really is.”

T.S. ELIOT

AS A LITERARY CRITIC

Eliot is one of the greatest literary critics of England from the point of view of the bulk and quality of his critical writings. His five hundred and odd essays occasionally published as reviews and articles had a far-reaching influence on literary criticism in the country. His criticism was revolutionary which inverted the critical tradition of the whole English speaking work.

As a critic Eliot has his faults. At times he assumes a hanging-judge attitude and his statements savor of a verdict. Often his criticism is marred by personal and religious prejudices blocking an honest and impartial estimate. Moreover, he does not judge all by the same standards. There is didacticism in his later essays and with the passing of time his critical faculties were increasingly exercised on social problems. Critics have also found fault with his style as too full of doubts, reservations and qualifications.

Still, such faults do not detract Eliot’s greatness as a critic. His criticism has

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revolutionized the great writers of the past three centuries. His recognition of the greatness of the Metaphysical poets of the 17th century resulted in the Metaphysical revival of the 20th century. The credit for the renewal of interest in the Jacobean dramatists goes to Eliot. He has restored Dryden and other Augustan poets to their due place. His essay on Dante aroused curiosity for the latter middle ages. The novelty of his statements, hidden in sharp phrases, startles and arrests attention. According to Eliot, the end of criticism is to bring readjustment between the old and the new. He says:

“From time to time it is desirable, that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and the poems in a new order.” Such critics are rare, for they must possess, besides ability for judgment, powerful liberty of mind to identify and interpret its own values and category of admiration for their generation. Eliot’s criticism offers both reassessment and reaction to earlier writers. He called himself “a classicist in literature”. His vital contribution is the reaction against romanticism and humanism which brought a classical revival in art and criticism. He rejected the romantic view of the individual’s perfectibility, stressed the doctrine of the original sin and exposed the futility of the romantic faith in the “Inner Voice”. Instead of following his ‘inner voice’, a critic must follow objective standards and must conform to tradition. A sense of tradition, respect for order and authority is central to Eliot’s classicism. He sought to correct the excesses of “the abstract and intellectual” school of criticism represented by Arnold. He sought to raise criticism to the level of science.

Poetry was an expression of the emotions and personality for romantics. Wordsworth said

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that poetry was an overflow of powerful emotions and its origin is in “Emotions recollected in tranquility”. Eliot rejects this view and says that poetry is not an expression of emotion and personality but an escape from them. The poet is only a catalytic agent that fuses varied emotions into new wholes. He distinguishes between the emotions of the poet and the artistic emotion, and points out that the function of criticism is to turn attention from the poet to his poetry.

Eliot’s views on the nature of poetic process are equally revolutionary. According to him, poetry is not inspiration, it is organization. The poet’s mind is like a vessel in which are stored numerous feelings, emotions and experiences. The poetic process fuses these distinct experiences and emotions into new wholes. In “The Metaphysical Poets”, he writes:

“When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary”.

Perfect poetry results when instead of ‘dissociation of sensibility’ there is ‘unification of sensibility’. The emotional and the rational, the creative and the critical, faculties must work in harmony to produce great work of art. Critics stressed that the aim of poetry is to give pleasure or to teach morally. However, for Eliot the greatness of a poem is tested by the order and unity it imposes on the chaotic and disparate experiences of the poet. Eliot devised numerous critical concepts that gained wide currency and has a broad influence on criticism. ‘Objective co-relative’, ‘Dissociation of sensibility’, ‘Unification of sensibility’ are few of Eliot clichés hotly debated by critics.

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UNIT - V

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

THE MORAL APPROACH

Paul Elmer More: It is the critic's duty, to determine the moral tendency of literary works and to judge them on that basis. The greatest critics are "discriminators between the false and the true, the deformed and the normal; preachers of harmony and proportion and order, prophets of the religion of taste."

Critics taking a moral or philosophical approach usually describe or evaluate a work in terms of the ideas and values it contains. This often means examining a work's ideas and values—both those expressed directly by the narrator or character and those implied by the overall design and content—in relation to a particular ethical, philosophical, or religious system.

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Some critics will also evaluate the quality of a work's ideas and values by determining how well these fit certain criteria (such as truth, usefulness, clarity, consistency, or complexity). Besides looking at ideas, critics may also examine the moral effect or value of a work in a more general way, considering how the images, events, characters, and even style in a work affect its readers as moral beings.

Take this quote from the critic Matthew Arnold: "What [readers] want is something to animate and ennoble them—not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams." That word "ennoble" is essential. Arnold thought literature should make you want to be a better person—a more moral one. Two of his criteria when assessing a work were "high seriousness" and "high truth." He wanted stories that searched for the meaning of life. He wouldn't like romance novels or summer action movies; he'd see them as capricious and pointless, since they are more about having fun than thinking deep thoughts.

This form of moralism goes all the way back to classical antiquity—Plato, Aristotle, Horace, the whole gang. Plato, for example, had strong feelings about the purpose of literature. He thought it had the power to affect its readers' feelings and behaviours, so the only good kind was the kind that showed characters doing good and noble things. On one hand, it's cool that he thought stories were so powerful. On the other, one can imagine how boring reading would be in his world.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Psychological Criticism: This approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. Fundamental figures in psychological criticism include Sigmund Freud, whose “psychoanalytic theories changed our notions of human behaviour by exploring new or controversial areas like wish-fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression” as well as expanding our understanding of how “language and symbols operate by demonstrating their ability to reflect unconscious fears or desires”; and Carl Jung, whose theories about the unconscious are also a key foundation of Mythological Criticism.

Psychological criticism has a number of approaches, but in general, it usually employs one (or more) of three approaches:

An investigation of “the creative process of the artist: what is the nature of literary genius and how does it relate to normal mental functions?”

The psychological study of a particular artist, usually noting how an author’s biographical circumstances affect or influence their motivations and/or behaviour. The analysis of fictional characters using the language and methods of psychology

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH:

Sociological Criticism: This approach “examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received,” exploring the relationships between the artist and society. Sometimes it examines the artist’s society to better understand the author’s literary works; other times, it may examine the representation of such societal elements within the

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literature itself.

One influential type of sociological criticism is Marxist criticism, which focuses on the economic and political elements of art, often emphasizing the ideological content of literature; because Marxist criticism often argues that all art is political, either challenging or endorsing (by silence) the status quo, it is frequently evaluative and judgmental, a tendency that “can lead to reductive judgment, as when Soviet critics rated Jack London better than William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, and Henry James, because he illustrated the principles of class struggle more clearly.” Nonetheless, Marxist criticism “can illuminate political and economic dimensions of literature other approaches overlook.”

THE FORMALISTIC APPROACH

Formalist Criticism: This approach regards literature as “a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms.” All the elements necessary for understanding the work are contained within the work itself. Of particular interest to the formalist critic are the elements of form—style, structure, tone, imagery, etc.—that are found within the text. A primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text’s content to shape its effects upon readers.

The formalistic approach to literature examines a text by its "organic form" - its setting, theme, scene, narrative, image and symbol. It is often referred as "a scientific approach to literature," because it advocates methodical and systematic readings of texts. Excluding any external elements or outside information (i.e. author's personal life or the social, historic

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background of the time the text was written or the reader's bias) in criticism, the formalistic approach aims to analyze merely the text itself. Therefore, all interpretations must be supported by evidences found in the text.

Intentional fallacy:

Formalistic practitioners believe the intentional fallacy, which states that an author's intention (plan or purpose) in creating a work of literature, is irrelevant in analyzing or evaluating a work of literature because the meaning and value of a literary work must reside in the text itself, independent of authorial intent.

Effective fallacy:

Formalistic practitioners believe the effective fallacy, which states that the meaning or value of a work may be determined by its effect on the audience, is irrelevant; they think evaluation of a piece of literature cannot be based solely on its emotional impacts. Literary criticism must concentrate on the qualities of the work itself that produce such effects. Famous formalistic critics include I.A. Richards, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate.

A Brief History of Formalistic Approach

The formalistic approach has dominated the American literary scene for most of the twentieth century, when this approach was called the New Criticism, and has retained its great influence in academic quarters. Developed in the 1920's - 1930's and peaked in the 1940's - 1950's, the New Criticism replaced the traditional literary approach by rejecting impressionism,

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moral tones, and philological studies; traditionally, scholars and professors "surrounded" literature rather than closely examining it by its form. The New Criticism practitioners valued poetry rich in ambiguity, irony, and intention, and wanted to make literary criticism a science. Even though current literary theorists tend to criticize the formalistic approach for its "narrowmindedness," they cannot deny that it has left a lasting impression on American literary scholarship.

THE ARCHETYPAL APPROACH

Archetype, (from Greek *archetypos*, "original pattern"), in literary criticism, a primordial image, character, or pattern of circumstances that recurs throughout literature and thought consistently enough to be considered a universal concept or situation.

The term was adopted and popularized by literary critics from the writings of the psychologist Carl Jung, who formulated a theory of a "collective unconscious." For Jung, the varieties of human experience have somehow been genetically coded and transferred to successive generations. These primordial image patterns and situations evoke startlingly similar feelings in both reader and author.

The Canadian literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye was influential in extending the use of the term archetype to specifically literary contexts. Archetypal criticism has been

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connected with another group of thinkers more closely allied to its Jungian roots, including Maud Bodkin and James Hillman.