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**LEARNING RESOURCES**

**LITERARY CRITICISM**

## AN APOLOGY FOR POETRY -PHILIP SIDNEY

### **Introduction:**

Sir Philip Sidney was an Elizabethan courtier, statesman, soldier, poet, and patron of scholars and poets. He was considered the ideal gentleman of his day. His *Astrophel and Stella* is considered the finest Elizabethan sonnet cycle.

Philip Sidney in his "Apology for Poetry" reacts against the attacks made on poetry by the puritan, Stephen Gosson. To, Sidney, poetry is an art of imitation for specific purpose. It is imitated to teach and delight. According to him, poetry is simply a superior means of communication and its value depends on what is communicated. Literature has the power to reproduce an ideal golden world not just the brazen world.

### **Gosson's Charges on Poetry and Sidney's Response:**

Stephen Gosson makes charges four charges on poetry. His first charge is that poetry is the waste of time and it corrupts people. Sidney answers him by saying that poetry is the source of knowledge and a civilizing force. No learning is so good as that which teaches and moves to virtue and that nothing can both teach and amuse so much as poetry does. In certain societies, poetry was the main source of education. Sidney recollects ancient Greek society that respected poets. The poets are always to be looked up. So, poetry is not waste of time. Gosson's second charge is that poetry is the mother of lies. Sidney answers that poet does not lie because he never affirms that his fiction is true and can never lie. The poetic truths are ideal and universal. Therefore, poetry cannot be a mother of lies. It is the oldest of all branches of learning and removes ignorance.

The third charge of Gosson is that poetry is a nurse of abuse. Sidney rejects this charge saying it is people who abuse poetry. Abuses are more nursed by philosophy and history than by poetry, by describing battles, bloodshed, violence etc. On the contrary, poetry helps to maintain morality and peace by avoiding such violence and bloodsheds. Moreover, it brings light to knowledge.

The last crude attack of Gosson on poetry is that Plato had rightly banished the poets from his ideal world. Sidney makes it clear that Plato in his "Republic" wanted to banish the abuse of poetry and not the poets. Plato himself was not free from 'poeticity', which one can find in his "Dialogues". Plato never says that all poets should be banished. He called for banishing only those poets who are inferior and unable to instruct the children.

### **Poetry's Superiority over Philosophy and History:**

Sidney has an exalted conception of the nature and function of poetry. It is the first light-giver to ignorance. It had been nourished before any other art or science. The first philosophers and historians were poets. Certain supreme works as the *Psalms* of David and the *Dialogues* of Plato are in reality poetical. Among the Greeks and the Romans, the poet was regarded as a sage or prophet; and no nation, however primitive or barbarous, has been without poets, or has failed to receive delight and instruction from poetry. The philosopher teaches by precepts, and the historian by examples. The poet conduces most to virtue because he employs both precept and example . The philosopher teaches virtue by differentiating virtue and vice in abstract argument without clarity or beauty of style. The historian teaches virtue by showing the experience of past ages. But he is tied down to the particular truth of things and not to general possibilities.

The poet alone accomplishes the dual task. The philosopher teaches the learned only. But the poet teaches all. So, Plutarch calls the poet as "the right popular philosopher." He seems only to promise delight, and moves men to virtue unawares. The poet improves upon history, he gives examples of vice and virtue for human imitation. He makes virtue succeed and vice fail. Poetry does not imitate nature. The reader imitates the example of perfection presented to him by the poet. He is thus made virtuous. Poetry, therefore, conduces to virtue, the end of all learning, better than any other art or science.

### **Greatness of Poetry:**

For Sidney, art is the imitation of nature but it is not slavish imitation as Plato views. Rather it is creative imitation. Nature is dull, incomplete and ugly. Artists turn dull nature into golden colour. They employ their creative faculty, imagination and style of presentation to decorate the raw materials of nature. For Sidney, art is a speaking picture having spatio-temporal dimension. For Aristotle human action is more important but for Sidney nature is important.

Artists create art considering the level of the readers. The only purpose of art is to teach and delight. Sidney favours poetic justice that is possible in poet's world, where good are rewarded and wicked are punished.

The poet teaches men how to behave under all circumstances. Moral philosophy teaches virtues through abstract examples. History teaches virtues through concrete examples but both are defective. Poetry teaches virtue by example as well as by percept. It blends both abstract and concrete. The poet creates his own world where he gives only the inspiring things. Thus poetry holds its superior position to that of philosophy and history.

In his golden world, the poet presents ideal heroes and corrupt evils. Didactic effect of a poem depends up on the poet's power to move. It depends upon the affective quality of poetry. Among the different forms of poetry, epic is the best, as it portrays and inspires heroic deeds. It inspires people to become courageous and patriotic.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus Sidney stands for the universal and timeless quality of poetry.

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## **ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY JOHN DRYDEN**

### **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.

"An Essay on Dramatic Poesy" is written in the form of a dialogue among four gentlemen: Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius and Neander. Neander speaks for Dryden himself. With the influence of Platonic Dialogues Dryden had designed the group. 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.

### **Dryden's 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.”

Drama is an ‘image’ of ‘human nature’, and the image 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’. Lisidieus expresses his views about Drama as “a just and lively image of Human Nature.”

### **Violation of the Three Unities:**

In an age of pseudo-classicism, with its precise rules and definitions, Dryden had the boldness to defend the claims of genius to write according to one’s own convictions. He wanted not to give much importance to the prescription and rules, laid down for good writing. He cleared the arbitrary restrictions on freedom of judgment and refused to be follow the French playwrights and critics. His liberalism and free critical disposition is seen in his justification of the violation of three unities on the part of the English dramatists.

The English violation of the three unities lends greater copiousness and gives profuse variety to the English plays. The unities have narrowing and cramping effects on the French plays. But, by violating the three unities, the English plays are free from certain absurdities. 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 lively.

Shakespeare’s plays are more lively and just images of life and human nature. 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. There is a common opinion that violation of three unities results in improbability. Dryden replies that it is all a question of ‘dramatic illusion’. Gratification of sense is primary while that of the soul is secondary and that sensory perception helps in dramatic illusion.

As far as the unity of place is concerned, the Ancients were not the ones to insist on it so much as the French, and that insistence has caused some artificial entrances and exits of characters.

While the unity of time suggests that all the action should be portrayed within a single day, the English plays attempt to use long periods of time, sometimes years. In terms of place, the setting should be the same from beginning to end. The English, on the other hand, try to have all kinds of places, even far off countries, shown within a single play. The third unity, that of action, requires that the play "aim at one great and complete action", but the English have all kinds of sub-plots which destroy the unity of the action.

### **Moderns Versus Ancients:**

Eugenius says that "the moderns have profited by the rules of the ancients" but moderns have "excelled them." Among the ancients, there are some discrepancies in the applications of the Unities. There are four parts in Aristotle's method: the entrance, the intensifying of the plot, the counter-turn, and the catastrophe. As regards the action, the ancients make it transparent, everybody already having known what will happen. The Romans borrowed from the Greeks. The Ancients portrayed many emotions and actions but they neglected love, "which is the most frequent of all passions" and known to everyone. Shakespeare and Fletcher offer "excellent scenes of passion."

Crites defends the ancients and raises objections to modern plays. The Moderns are still imitating the Ancients. They use their forms and subjects. They rely on Aristotle and Horace. They add nothing new. They do not follow their good advice closely either, especially with respect to the Unities of time, place and action.

### **Superiority of French Drama over English Drama:**

Lisideius speaks in favour of the French. He agrees with Eugenius that in the last generation the English drama was superior. Then they had their Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher. But English drama has decayed and declined since then. In the present age, it flourishes in France and not in England. The French have Corneille (1606-84), and the English have no dramatist equal to him. The French are superior to the English for various reasons:

- ✚ The French dramatists follow the Ancients. They favour the Unity of time and they observe it so carefully. When it comes to the Unity of Place, they are equally careful. In most of their plays, the entire action is limited to one place. The Unity of Action is even more obvious. Their plays are never over-loaded with sub-plots as is the case with the English plays. The attention of the English playwrights is constantly diverted from one action to the other, and has its due effects. This fault of double-action gives rise to another fault till the end. No drama in the world is as absurd as the English tragic-comedy. The French plays also have much variety but they do not provide it in such a bizarre manner. The English are guilty of the folly, while the French are not.
- ✚ The Plots of the French tragedies are based on well-known stories with reference to the theory and practice of the Ancients. But these stories are transformed for dramatic purposes; in this regard they are superior even to the Ancients. So their stories are mixture of truth with fiction, based on historical invention. They both delight and instruct, at one and the same time. But the English dramatists for example Shakespeare, do not modify and transform their stories for dramatic purpose. In order to satisfy the human soul, the drama must have verisimilitude (likeness to reality). The French plays have it, while the English do not.
- ✚ The French do not burden the play with a fat plot. They represent a story which will be one complete action, and everything which is unnecessary is carefully excluded. But the English burden their plays with actions and incidents which have no logical and natural connection with the main action so much so that an English play is a mere compilation. Hence the French plays are better written than the English ones.
- ✚ The English devote considerable attention to one single character, and the others are merely introduced to set off that principal character. But Lisideius does not support or favour this practice. In the English plays, one character is more important than the others, and quite naturally, the greater part of the action is concerned with him. Since in real life it is not so it is only very proper and reasonable that it should be so also in the drama. In French plays, very correctly the other characters are not neglected. Also, unlike in the English plays in the French plays such narrations are made by those who are in some way or the other connected with the main action. Similarly the French are more skilled than the Ancients.
- ✚ Further, the French narrations are better managed and more skilful than those of the English. The narration may be of two kinds. The action of the play which is dull and



boring, and is often not listened to by the audience. The narration of things happening during the course of the play. While French are able to avoid the representation of scenes of bloodshed, violence and murder on the stage, such scenes of horror and tumult has disfigured many English plays. In this way, the French avoid much that is ridiculous and absurd in the English plays.

✚ The major imperfection of English plays is the representation of Death on the stage. All passions can be in a lively manner represented on the stage, only if the actor has the necessary skill, but there are many actions which cannot be successfully represented, and dying is one of them. The French omit the same mistake. Death should better be described or narrated rather than represented.

✚ It is wrong to believe that the French represent no part of their action on the stage. Instead, they make proper selection. Cruel actions which are likely to cause hatred, or disbelief by their impossibility, must be avoided or merely narrated. They must not be represented. The French follow this rule in practice and so avoid much of the tumult of the English plays by reducing their plots to reasonable limits. Such narrations are common in the plays of the Ancients and the great English dramatists like Ben Jonson and Fletcher. Therefore, the French must not be blamed for their narration, which are judicious and well managed.

### **Superiority of English Drama:**

Based on the definition of the play, Neander suggests that English playwrights are best at "the lively imitation of nature" (i.e., human nature). French poesy is beautiful; it is beautiful like a "statue". He even says that the newer French writers are imitating the English playwrights. One fault he finds in their plots is that the regularity also makes the plays too much alike. He defends the English invention of tragi-comedy by suggesting that the use of mirth with tragedy provides "contraries" that "set each other off" and gives the audience relief from the heaviness of straight tragedy. He suggests that the use of well-ordered sub-plots makes the plays interesting and help the main action. Further, he suggests that English plays are more entertaining and instructive because they offer an element of surprise that the Ancients and the French do not. He brings up the idea of the suspension of disbelief. While the audience may know that none of them are real, why should they think scenes of deaths or battles any less "real" than the rest? Here he credits the English audience with certain robustness in suggesting that they want their battles and "other objects of horror." Ultimately he suggests that it may be there are simply too many rules and often following them creates more absurdities than they prevent.

### **Dryden on Tragi-comedy:**

Dryden is more considerate in his attitude towards the mingling of the tragic and the comic elements and emotions in the plays. He vindicates tragi-comedy on the following grounds:

- ✚ The tragedy and comedy contrasts, when placed near, set off each other.
- ✚ The continued gravity depresses the spirit, a scene of mirth thrown in between refreshes. It has the same effect on us as music. In other words, comic scene produces relief, though Dryden does not explicitly say so.
- ✚ Mirth does not destroy compassion and thus the serious effect which tragedy aims at is not disturbed by mingling of tragic and comic.

- ✚ Just as the eye can pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant one, so also the soul can move from the tragic to the comic. And it can do so much more swiftly.
- ✚ The English have perfected a new way of writing not known to the Ancients. If they had tragic-comedies, perhaps Aristotle would have revised his rules.
- ✚ It is all a question of progress with the change of taste. The Ancients cannot be a model for all times and countries, “What pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience”. Had Aristotle seen the English plays “He might have changed his mind”. The real test of excellence is not strict adherence to rules or conventions, but whether the aims of dramas have been achieved. They are achieved by the English drama.

Dryden’s view on Tragi-comedy clearly brings out his liberal classicism, greatness and shrewdness as a critic. Dryden is of the view that mingling of the tragic and the comic provides dramatic relief.

### **Advocacy of Writing Plays in Rhymed Verse:**

In the Restoration era rhymed verse or Heroic Couplet was generally used as the medium of expression for Heroic Tragedy, while the great Elizabethan dramatists had used blank verse for their plays. Dryden himself used rhyme for his plays upto ‘Aurangzebe’. But in the Preface to this play he bids farewell to his ‘mistress rhyme’, and expresses his intention of turning to blank verse. However, in the Essay, he has expressed himself strongly in favour of rhyme.

Neander’s defends rhyme saying:

- ✚ The choice and the placing of the word should be natural in a natural order – that makes the language natural, whether it is verse or rhyme that is used.
- ✚ Rhyme itself may be made to look natural by the use of run-on lines, and variety, and variety resulting from the use of hemistich, manipulation of pauses and stresses, and the change of metre.
- ✚ Blank Verse is no verse at all. It is simply poetic prose and so fit only for comedies. Rhymed verse alone, made natural or near to prose, is suitable for tragedy. This would satisfy Aristotle’s dictum.
- ✚ Rhyme is justified by its universal use among all the civilized nations of the world. The Elizabethans achieved perfection in the use of blank verse and they, the Moderns, cannot excel them, or achieve anything significant or better in the use of blank verse. Hence they must perforce use rhyme, which suits the genius of their age.
- ✚ Tragedy is a serious play representing nature exalted to its highest pitch; rhyme being the noblest kind of verse is suited to it, and not to comedy.
- ✚ Rhyme adds to the pleasure of poetry.
- ✚ Rhyme helps the judgment and thus makes it easier to control the free flights of the fancy.
- ✚ The primary function of poetry is to give ‘delight’, and rhyme enables the poet to perform this function well.

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## BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA – CHAPTER – XIV S.T. COLERIDGE

### **Introduction:**

*Biographia Literaria* is an autobiography in discourse by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which he published in 1817, in two volumes of twenty-three chapters. The first intended title of the work was 'Autobiographia Literaria'. The formative influences of the work was Wordsworth's theory of imagination, Kantian view of imagination as a shaping power and David Hartley and the Associationist psychology.

*Biographia Literaria* was originally intended as a mere preface to a collected volume of his poems, explaining and justifying his own style and practice in poetry. The work grew to a literary autobiography. It includes facts concerning his education and studies and his early literary adventures, an extended criticism of William Wordsworth's theory of poetry and a statement of Coleridge's philosophical views.

In the first part of the work Coleridge is mainly concerned with showing the evolution of his philosophic creed. As an adherent of the associationist psychology of David Hartley, Coleridge agrees that the mind is an active agency in the apprehension of reality. He believes in the "self-sufficing power of absolute Genius". He distinguishes between genius and talent as between "an egg and an egg-shell". He defines imagination or "esemplastic power," as the faculty by which the soul perceives the spiritual unity of the universe, as distinguished from the fancy. The later chapters of the book deal with the nature of poetry and with the question of diction raised by Wordsworth. While maintaining a general agreement with Wordsworth's point of view, Coleridge elaborately refutes Wordsworth's principle on the language of poetry. A critique on the qualities of Wordsworth's poetry concludes the volume.

The book contains Coleridge's celebrated distinction between "imagination" and "fancy". Chapter XIV is the origin of the famous critical concept of the "willing suspension of disbelief" when reading poetic works.

In Chapter – XIV, Coleridge discusses the difference between poetry and prose, and the immediate function of poetry, whereas the philosopher discusses the difference between poetry and poem.

### **Cardinal Functions of Poetry:**

Coleridge was the first English writer to insist that every work of art is an organic whole. His views on nature and function of poetry are discussed in philosophical terms. He rules out the assumption that the object of poetry is to instruct or to make men morally better. To Coleridge, poetry should have the two cardinal functions -

- ✚ the power of exciting sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, as Wordsworth does in his poems and
- ✚ the power of giving the interest of novelty by modifying with the colours of imagination as Coleridge himself does in his poems.

### **Wordsworth's Poems:**

For the first type of poetry, the treatment and subject matter should be "The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both." These are the poems of Nature. In such poems, subjects are to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents are to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity,



where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

The attempt of Wordsworth is to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing in to the loveliness and the wonders of the world.

### **Coleridge's Poems:**

In the second type of poetry, the incidents and agents are to be supernatural. In this sort of poetry "The excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situation, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being at any time believed himself under Supernatural agency." Thus with the help of imagination the natural will be dealt supernaturally by the poet and the reader will comprehend it with "willing suspension of disbelief." The attempt of Coleridge was to deal with "persons and characters supernatural".

### **In Defence of Wordsworth's Poetic Creed:**

Coleridge does not agree with Wordsworth's views on poetic diction. Anyway, he writes in defence to the violent assailant to the, "Language of real Life" adopted by Wordsworth in his poems. There had been strong criticism against Wordsworth's views expressed in the Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads". Coleridge defends Wordsworth as a poet. There are charges on the latter's poems that they are about the silly and the childish things. They are no better than parodies. Coleridge refutes these charges. He says if the charges are true, the poems of Wordsworth would have been forgotten as "a dead weight into the slough of oblivion".

### **Difference between Prose and Poetry:**

Coleridge differentiates poetry from prose. The poem contains the same elements as a prose. But the difference is in the combination of those elements and objects aimed at in both the composition. If the object of the poet is to facilitate the memory to recollect, he would make use of certain artificial arrangement of words with the help of meter. As a result, the composition will be a poem, because it is distinguished from composition in prose by meter or rhyme. But, such mere addition of meter or rhyme does not make a poem. Coleridge elucidates his view point by various prose writings and its immediate purpose and ultimate end. In scientific and historical compositions, the immediate purpose is to convey the truth. In the prose works of other kinds, giving pleasure in the immediate purpose and giving truth is the ultimate end. If meter is super added, it should maintain the harmony with the other parts of the poem. Meter should not be added just to provide a superficial decorative charm. A poem is a species of composition. It is opposed to works of science by proposing for its immediate object pleasure and not truth.

### **On Imagination and Fancy:**

In Chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge defines Imagination and Fancy.

#### **Fancy:**

Fancy has no other counters to play with but fixities and definite. It is a mode of memory emancipated from the other order of time and space. It is blended with, and modified that empirical phenomenon of the will which Coleridge expresses by the word 'choice'. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials from the law of association.

#### **Imagination:**

Coleridge calls imagination, a magical and synthetic power. This power is first put in action by the will and understanding. It is retained under gentle and unnoticed control. Yet, it reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities. It blends and harmonizes "the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature, the manner to the matter and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry."

**Primary Imagination:**

Primary Imagination is the power of perceiving the object of sense, both in their parts and as a whole. It is an involuntary act of the mind. The human mind receives impressions and sensations from the outside world, unconsciously and involuntarily and it imposes some sort of order on those impressions, reduces them to shape and size. The mind is able to form a clear image of the outside world. It is in this way that clear and coherent perception becomes possible.

**Secondary Imagination:**

Secondary imagination makes artistic creation possible. It is more active and conscious in its working. It requires an effort of the will, volition and conscious afford. It works upon what is perceived by the primary imagination, its raw material is the sensations and impression supplied to it by the primary imagination. By an effort of the will and the intellect, the secondary imagination selects and orders the raw material, and reshapes and remodels it into objects of beauty. It is an active agent which, "dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates, in order to create."

This secondary imagination is at the root of all poetic activity. It is the power which harmonies and reconciles opposites, and hence Coleridge calls it a magical, synthetic power. This unifying power of the imagination is seen in the fact that it synthesizes the various faculties of the soul-perception, intellect, will, emotion and fuses the internal with the external the subjective with the objective, the human mind with external nature, the spiritual with the physical or material, it is through the play of this unifying power that nature is coloured by the soul of the poet, and soul of the poet is steeped in nature.

Good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude, Wordsworth has endeavoured 'to establish the principles of writing rather than to furnish rules about how to pass judgment on what had been written by others. Thus, Coleridge is the first English critic who based his literary criticism on philosophical principles. He is more interested in the creative process that made it, what it is, than in the finished product.

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**A DEFENCE OF POETRY**

**PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY**

**Introduction:**

"A Defence of Poetry" is an essay by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, written in 1821 and first published posthumously in 1840 in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations*

*and Fragments*. It contains Shelley's famous claim that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world".

### **Response to Peacock:**

Shelley defends poetry as "my mistress, Urania" against the attack by Thomas Love Peacock in "The Four Ages of Poetry," published in the first and only issue of the *Literary Miscellany* in 1820. In his essay, Peacock had elaborated the familiar figure of the Golden and Silver Ages of classical poetry into four (Iron, Gold, Silver, and Brass), skipped over "the dark ages," and repeated the succession in English poetry. Peacock's point is that poetry never amounts to much in civilized society. Shelley's defence is that poetry is essential. Peacock sent a copy of his essay to Shelley. The latter was stirred to write his only prose statement on his craft. In it he came to the memorable conclusion that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

### **Shelley on Imagination and Reason:**

Shelley defines a poet as anyone who possesses an abundance of imagination and an ability to make connections that are not rationally apparent. He differentiates reason from imagination. Reason does the work of numbering, analyzing, and relating objects. Imagination perceives the similitude of objects in their innate values, not in their appearance, and synthesizes these values into a valid and Platonic One or Truth. The synthetic principle of the imagination is poetry.

Shelley sees the imagination as a shaping power that gives form to the poet's vision, and only those who master form can hope to convey their vision to readers. He is insistent that the practice of poetry involves the intellect as well as the heart. He believes that great poets have a special gift that allows them to use the materials of their own time (the forms and subjects that might appeal to their contemporary readers), but transcend the limits of time and place to speak to people of all ages.

For Shelley, universal truth is not something that can be arrived at through rational inquiry, but must be felt in a deeper and more profound sense through one's emotions. Understanding this position is key to understanding Shelley's preference for imagination over reason in terms of creating a better world.

Sympathy is key to Shelley's understanding of the usefulness of art. He argues that reason does not produce sympathy in the human mind, and he points to the extreme and increasing inequality that has come about during the period of the Enlightenment. He argues that it is relatively easy to imagine how the world would be different without the best of the rational philosophers.

### **Shelley's definition of a Poet:**

Shelley asserts the superiority of the poet. A poet is most active in using the glimpses of truth and conveying them to lesser beings for their uplifting. The poet is the most powerful influence on humankind, a "legislator." The poet gives an insight into the ills of humankind which can be corrected.

Shelley presents an argument that all people are poets in some degree, for poetry is an innate human faculty; hence, it is seen in all societies at all times and to eternity. He offers a philosophical analysis of the role of the poet as a special kind of person. A poet alone can see the essential harmonies of the world beneath the discordant images people find in their everyday lives. He assigns the poet a higher calling. The poet brings out the revelation of

truth about life and the promotion of universal betterment. The production of poetry is not simply a craft. Rather, the true poet is a visionary who is inspired to create art as a means of revealing something about the nature of the world. The poem itself is merely an attempt to reproduce that vision.

The poet is compared to “an Aeolian lyre,” subject to impressions external and internal but possessing an inner principle called ‘poetry’. It produces not simply melody but harmony. Poetry is thus both the name of a form of language (measured) and of the power of producing it. Shelley asserts that poets are “the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society” because they discover the laws of harmony and become “legislators” by giving these laws the form of a poem. The poetic product or poem may be an act of mimesis, but the act proceeds from the poetic faculty highly developed in the poet and contained in all people: “A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.”

### **Shelley on Power of Poetry:**

Shelley asserts that the pleasure of poetry lies not in its superficial melody but in its innate harmony. Shelley summarizes the duality of the “poetic faculty”. By synthesis, it “creates new materials of knowledge and power and pleasure”. By its expressive powers, it reproduces those materials “according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good.” He says,

- ✚ Poetry is indeed something divine.
- ✚ Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.
- ✚ Poetry turns all things to loveliness.

By *poetry*, Shelley means not only all art, but also several things the modern reader might not think of as art per se. Among his historical poets, Shelley lists King Solomon, Jesus, and the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. When he defends poetry, he is speaking less about the art form in terms of rhyme and meter and more in terms of people's ability to sympathize and feel empathy.

Shelley argues that poets are each individual and that their impact on the human mind is both so profound and so subtle that he cannot comprehend how different the world would look if there had been no Homer and no Shakespeare.

### **Conclusion:**

Shelley defends poetry by claiming that the poet creates human values and imagines the forms that shape the social and cultural order.

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## **THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME MATTHEW ARNOLD**

### **Introduction:**

Matthew Arnold (1812 – 1888) was a poet-critic and one of the most significant writers of the late Victorian period in England. He occupies a prominent place in the history of Literary Criticism. His essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” was published in his first collection of critical writings, “Essays in Criticism” in 1865. “The



Function of Criticism in the Present Time” is largely made of ideas that Arnold discusses in his essay “The Study of Poetry”.

### **On Criticism:**

Arnold states that criticism should be a "dissemination of ideas, an unprejudiced and impartial effort to study and spread the best that is known and thought of in the world". He defines criticism as “A disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought of in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas.” The term ‘disinterest’ in the view of Arnold refers to being an impartial and just reader.

Arnold states that the role of criticism is

- ✚ to make itself inherently valuable
- ✚ and to rouse men from complacency to a state of achieving perfection.

Arnold also likens criticism to creativity. Writing of criticism gives rise to creative joy that comes from original writing. He argues that unlike Wordsworth’s opinion on criticism, it must be considered as a form of art for its vital contributions to the literary world and society. It is a form of exercising free creativity. He also states that criticism paves the way for creativity. Arnold believes that criticism is a way to understand life and the world, and can be linked to the satisfaction derived from creative writing.

### **On the Role of a Critic:**

Arnold defines the role of a critic as the one

- ✚ to view an object for what it really is,
- ✚ to bring best ideas to the masses and
- ✚ to create an atmosphere that fuels the literary genius of the future.

A critic needs to be free from two prejudices: historical and personal. Historical prejudice is when the critic resorts to view through the lens of past and neglects the present in the work. Personal prejudice refers to a personal liking that can cloud judgment.

Arnold also believes that for the production of great literary work, the ‘power of man’ and ‘power of the moment’ must come together. If one of them is absent, the work will not become great. To illustrate this, he takes the example of Goethe and Byron. Both had great productive power, yet Goethe’s work was more powerful because he had a rich cultural background. He also mentions how Shakespeare was not a deep reader, which affected his work. But his fame and glory were a result of his age and a climate of great ideas.

The task of a critic is threefold.

- ✚ The first task is the critic’s duty to learn, and for that he must “see things as they really are”.
- ✚ The second task is to hand on this idea to others, to convert the world, to make “the best ideas prevail.”
- ✚ The third task requires the critic to create a favourable atmosphere for the creative genius of the future, by promoting “a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power.”

Without the prevalence of best ideas, there will be a cultural anarchy.

Arnold also observes that to recognize the greatness of a literary work, one has to look beyond the social ideas and influences that cast shadows and opinions. In the quest to be a critic, Arnold believed that one must not confine himself to the literature of his own country,



but should draw substantially on foreign literature and ideas because the propagation of ideas should be an objective endeavour.

### **Function of Criticism:**

Arnold suggests that the function of criticism at the present time is to make itself inherently valuable in itself. Arnold mirrors Aristotle's view of poetry while he explains that the highest function of human kind is exercising its creative power. Criticism performs another important function. It rouses men out of their self-satisfaction and complacency. By doing so, it makes their mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and makes them contemplate the ideally perfect. Therefore, the critic must rise above practical considerations and have ideal perfection as his aim.

### **Creative Capacity and Critical Faculty:**

Arnold believes creative capacity to be more important than critical faculty. However, his definition of criticism as "the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is" makes it a necessary prerequisite for valuable creation. He asserts that creation of quality is not possible if people are not provided with a current of fresh ideas. This is achieved through honest criticism. If the best ideas do not prevail, it gives rise to a cultural anarchy.

Arnold also states that writing criticism may produce in its practitioner a sense of creative joy. He compares the emotional state of writing criticism with the emotional state of creative writing. In this, he dispels the typical censure that criticism serves no purpose.

Arnold observes that great writing emerges from great ideas, and they are manifested when these ideas reach the masses. The critic performs the important task of identifying these ideas with disinterestedness and imparting them to people. He implies that the period of great creativity and dormant creativity can be traced to lack of objective criticism and public attention as much as to creators of great work. In this argument, Arnold establishes literary criticism as an art form as high and significant as any form of creativity.

Further, Arnold argues that critical writing is an important activity of exercising free creativity. "It is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art." If some people were better equipped to write criticism, it would be frustrating to insist they channel their talent only for creating original writing.

Finally, criticism is necessary because Arnold thinks that creative power works with certain materials, and for the author these ideas, "the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time." However authors do not discover these ideas, rather they synthesize them into their work of art. Therefore, if authors do not readily know these ideas, they have nothing to write about. Arnold talks about the power of man and power of the moment, in this context. The author needs to live in a society where true ideas are discussed and debated, where true thoughts are cherished and passed on, like in ancient Greece or Renaissance England. Thus he advocates that good criticism propagates good literature.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, Arnold makes an effort to demonstrate that criticism in itself has several functions and should be observed as an art form that is as high and important as any other creative art form.

## THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM

T.S. ELIOT

### Introduction:

T.S. Eliot is the well-known critic of the twentieth century. His critical essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" was published in 1919. Middleton Murry challenged the opinions of Eliot in his essay "Romanticism and the Tradition". Eliot replied in the form of the essay "The Function of Criticism". The essay falls into four parts of discussion –

- ✚ Summing up of Eliot's critical theories, as expressed in "Tradition and Individual Talent"
- ✚ A resume of the views of Middleton Murry
- ✚ Dismissal of the views of Middleton Murry and
- ✚ Examining the different aspects of the nature and function of criticism.

### Eliot's Dynamic Conception of Tradition:

Eliot says that there is an intimate relation between the present and the past in the world of literature. The entire literature of Europe from Homer down to the present day forms a single literary tradition, and it is in relation to this tradition that individual writers and individual works of art have their significance. This is so because the past is not dead, but lives on in the present. The past is altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. Past works of literature form an ideal order, but this ideal order is disturbed if ever so slightly, when a really new work of art appears. There is a readjustment of values, resulting in conformity between the old and the new. Literary tradition is constantly changing and growing different from age to age.

### Literary Tradition: The Value of Conformity

The literary tradition is the outside authority to which an artist in the present must owe allegiance. He must constantly surrender and sacrifice himself in order to have meaning and significance. The true artists of any time form an ideal community, and artist in the present must achieve a sense of his community. He must realize that artists of all times are united together by a common cause and a common inheritance. While a second rate artist asserts his individuality because his distinction lies in the difference and not in similarity with others, the true artist tries to conform. He alone can "afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute."

### What is True Criticism:

Eliot's views on criticism derive from his views on art and tradition. He defines criticism as, "the exposition of works of art by means of written words". Criticism can never be an auto telic activity, because criticism is always about something. Art, as critics like Matthew Arnold point out may have moral, religious and cultural ends. Art need not be aware of these ends. It performs its function better by being indifferent to such ends. But criticism has only one definite end, which is, "elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste." In his essay "The Frontiers of Criticism", Eliot further explains the aim of criticism as, "the promotion of understanding and enjoyment of literature."

A true critic has to perform his function correctly. But, some critics do not discipline their personal prejudices and whims nor co-operate in the common pursuit of true judgment. They express extreme views and assert their individually, by purposely differing from others. This is so because they owe their livelihood to such differences and oddities. The result is

criticism has become like a Sunday Park, full of orators competing with each other to attract as large an audience as possible. Such critics are a worthless lot of no value and significance. However, there are certain other true critics, on the basis of whose works, Eliot establishes the aims and methods of criticism.

### **Eliot's Rejection of Murry's Views on Classicism and Romanticism:**

Eliot digresses into a consideration of Middleton Murry's views on classicism and Romanticism. Some critics hold that classicism and romanticism are same. Murry takes a definite position and makes a clear distinction between the two. He is of the opinion that cannot be a classic and a romantic. In this respect, Eliot praises Murry. Eliot rejects Murry's view that the genius of the French is classic and that of the English is romantic. Murry relates Catholicism with classicism in literature, for both believe in tradition, discipline and obedience. On the contrary, romanticism and Protestantism, and social liberalism, are related, for they have full faith in the 'inner voice', the individual, and obey no outside authority. They care for no rules and traditions.

Eliot does not agree with these views. To Eliot, the difference between classicism and romanticism is like the difference between the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic. The concept of the inner voice sounds remarkably like doing, what one likes. It is a sign of indiscipline leading to vanity, fear and lust. Eliot rejects the view that the English as a nation are romantics and so 'humorous' and 'non-conformists', while the French are 'naturally' classical.

Eliot contemptuously calls the inner voice, whiggery. For those who believe in the 'inner voice', criticism is of no value at all, because the function of criticism is to discover some common principles for achieving perfection in art. Those who believe in the "inner voice" do not want any principles. In other words, they do not care for perfection in art, which can result only through obedience to the laws of art, and to tradition which represents the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages.

### **Creative Faculty and Critical faculty:**

Eliot comments on the terms 'critical' and 'creative'. He holds the view that criticism is of capital importance in the work of creation. As a matter of fact, "the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour", the labour of sifting, combining constructing, expunging, correcting, testing." Eliot further expresses the view that the criticism employed by a writer on his own work is the most vital and the highest kind of criticism. He calls such criticism, workshop criticism. Its high worth and value cannot be denied, for a poet who knows from personal experience the mysteries of the creative process is in a better position to write about it than those who have no such knowledge. Eliot goes further to say that some creative writers are superior to others only because their critical faculty is superior. Instead of relying on the 'Inner voice', or 'inspiration', writers can conform to tradition, and thus make their works as free from defects as possible.

A large part of creation is in reality criticism. But critical writing cannot be creative. There can be no creative criticism. Creative criticism is neither criticism nor creation. This is so because there is a fundamental difference between creation and criticism. Creation, a work of art, is autotelic. It has no conscious aims and objectives. Criticism, on the other hand, is always about something, other than itself. In other words, it is not an autotelic activity. Its

aim is being the elucidation of works of art. The critical activity finds its highest fulfilment when it is fused with creation, with the labour of the artist.

### **An Ideal Critic:**

Eliot next proceeds to consider the qualifications of a critic. The foremost quality which an ideal critic must have is a highly developed sense of fact. The sense of fact is a rare gift. It is slow to develop. The value of a practitioner's criticism lies in the fact that he is dealing with facts which he understands. Eliot's own criticism is such workshop criticism. Eliot does not give importance to impressionistic criticism.

True interpretation is no interpretation at all. It is merely putting the reader in possession of the facts. The true critic himself knows the facts about a work of art—its conditions, its settings, its genesis—and puts them before his readers in a simple and easy manner. Thus it is clear that by 'facts' Eliot means the various technical aspects of a work of art.

Comparison and analysis are the chief tools of a critic. A critic has to use them with care and intelligence. It is possible only when the critic knows the facts about the works which are to be compared and analysed. He must know the facts about the work of art. By facts, Eliot means the structure, content and theme of the work of art.

### **Conclusion:**

The function of criticism is to educate taste or, as Eliot puts it elsewhere, to promote enjoyment and understanding of literature. Now facts, however trivial, can never corrupt taste; they can only gratify taste. Fact-hunting is not criticism.

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## **POST MODERNISM**

### **Introduction:**

**Postmodernism** is a branch of Western philosophy. It is a late 20th-century movement, characterized by broad scepticism, subjectivism, or relativism and a general suspicion of reason. Postmodernism is largely a reaction against the intellectual assumptions and values of the modern period.

According to postmodernists, reality is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice and language. They deny objective natural reality and say that there is no such thing as Truth. They deny the Enlightenment faith in science and technology as instruments of human progress. They hold that the misguided pursuit of scientific and technological knowledge led to the development of technologies for killing on a massive scale in World War II. For postmodernists, reason and logic too are merely conceptual constructs and are therefore valid only within the established intellectual traditions in which they are used. There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces. Postmodernists insist that faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions are completely socially determined. To them, language is not such a "mirror of nature."

### **Postmodern literature:**

Inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodernists claim that language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential: the meaning of a word is not a static thing in the world or even an idea in the mind but rather a range of contrasts



and differences with the meanings of other words. Self-reference characterizes not only natural languages but also the more specialized “discourses” of particular communities or traditions; such discourses are embedded in social practices and reflect the conceptual schemes and moral and intellectual values of the community or tradition in which they are used. The postmodern view of language and discourse is due largely to the French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), the originator and leading practitioner of deconstruction.

Another precursor to postmodernism was Dadaism, which challenged the authority of the artist and highlighted elements of chance, whim, parody, and irony. Tristan Tzara claimed that to create a Dadaist poem one had only to put random words in a hat and pull them out one by one. Another way Dadaism influenced postmodern literature was in the development of collage. Artists associated with Surrealism, which developed from Dadaism, continued experimentations with chance and parody while celebrating the flow of the subconscious mind.

Postmodern literature represents a break from the 19th century realism. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature. The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. With postmodernism playfulness becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely.

Postmodern literature is a form of literature that is characterized by the use of

- ✚ metafiction,
- ✚ unreliable narration
- ✚ self-reflexivity and
- ✚ inter-textuality

Postmodern literature first emerged in the context of political tendencies in the 1960s.

It often thematizes both historical and political issues. This style of experimental literature emerged in the United States in the 1960s through the writings of authors such as

- ✚ Kurt Vonnegut,
- ✚ Thomas Pynchon
- ✚ Kathy Acker and
- ✚ John Barth

There are three forms of postmodernism:

- ✚ Postmodernity is understood as a historical period from the mid-1960s to the present.
- ✚ Theoretical postmodernism encompasses the theories developed by thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and others.
- ✚ The cultural postmodernism includes film, literature, visual arts, etc. that feature postmodern elements. Postmodern literature is, in this sense, part of cultural postmodernism.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, there were some playwrights whose work influenced the aesthetics of postmodernism. They are –

- ✚ August Strindberg,
- ✚ Luigi Pirandello and
- ✚ Bertolt Brecht.



## **Common themes and techniques in Post-modern Literature:**

### **Irony, Playfulness, Black Humour:**

Postmodern fiction could be characterized by the ironic quote marks, along with black humour and the general concept of "play". The 'play' is related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*. These are among the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. In fact, several novelists later to be labelled postmodern were first collectively called Black Humorists.

The Black Humorists are –

John Barth,

- ✚ Joseph Heller
- ✚ William Gaddis
- ✚ Kurt Vonnegut,
- ✚ Bruce Jay Friedman, etc.

### **Intertextuality:**

Postmodernism represents a decentred concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations. Much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is on intertextuality - the relationship between one text and another or one text within the literary history. It can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style. In postmodern literature, intertextuality is manifested as references to fairy tales, as in works by

- ✚ Margaret Atwood and
- ✚ Donald Barthelme.

### **Pastiche:**

Pastiche means to combine, or "paste" together, multiple elements. In Postmodernist literature this can be a homage to or a parody of past styles. It is a representation of the chaotic, pluralistic, or information-drenched aspects of postmodern society. It is a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in postmodernity.

- ✚ William S. Burroughs uses science fiction, detective fiction, westerns;
- ✚ Margaret Atwood uses science fiction and fairy tales;
- ✚ Giannina Braschi mixes poetry, commercials, musical, manifesto, and drama;
- ✚ Umberto Eco uses detective fiction, fairy tales, and science fiction, and so on.

### **Metafiction:**

Metafiction is essentially writing about writing or "foregrounding the apparatus". It is typical of deconstructionist approaches. It is making the artificiality of art or the fictionality of fiction. It disregards the necessity for "willing suspension of disbelief." Metafiction is often employed to undermine the authority of the author, for unexpected narrative shifts, to advance a story in a unique way, for emotional distance, or to comment on the act of storytelling.

- ✚ Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *If on a winter's night a traveler* is about a reader attempting to read a novel of the same name.
- ✚ The first chapter of Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* is about the process of writing the novel.

- ✚ Tim O'Brien's 1990 short story cycle *The Things They Carried* is about one platoon's experiences during the Vietnam War.
- ✚ David Foster Wallace in *The Pale King* writes that the copyright page claims it is fiction only for legal purposes, and that everything within the novel is non-fiction.

### **Fabulation:**

The term 'fabulation' was coined by Robert Scholes in his book *The Fabulators*. It is used interchangeably with metafiction and relates to pastiche and Magic Realism. It is a rejection of realism. Fabulation challenges some traditional notions of literature — the traditional structure of a novel or role of the narrator. It integrates other traditional notions of storytelling such as magic and myth or elements from popular genres such as science fiction. Fabulation in contemporary literature is found in

- ✚ Giannina Braschi's *United States of Banana* and
- ✚ Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

### **Poioumena:**

Poioumenon means "product". It is a term coined by Alastair Fowler to refer to a specific type of metafiction in which the story is about the process of creation. In many cases, the book will be about the process of creating the book or includes a central metaphor for this process. Common examples of this are

- ✚ Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*
- ✚ Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*
- ✚ Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*
- ✚ Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*
- ✚ *Anagrams* by David R. Slavitt describes a week in the life of a poet and his creation of a poem
- ✚ In *The Comforters*, Muriel Spark's protagonist hears the sound of a typewriter and voices that later may transform into the novel itself.

### **Historiographic metafiction:**

Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction". The term refers to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures.

- ✚ *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel García Márquez
- ✚ *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes
- ✚ *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow
- ✚ Rabih Alameddine's *Koolhaas: The Art of War*

### **Temporal distortion:**

Temporal distortion is a common technique in modernist fiction. Fragmentation and nonlinear narratives are central features in postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony.

- ✚ Billy Pilgrim's *Slaughterhouse-Five*
- ✚ Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada*
- ✚ Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" from *Pricksongs & Descants*

### **Magic realism:**

Magic realism may be literary work marked by the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in a surrealistic manner. The themes and subjects are often imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dream-like

quality. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, skillful time shifts, labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable.

- ✚ Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude.
- ✚ The Cuban Alejo Carpentier's The Kingdom of this World
- ✚ Italo Calvino's The Baron in the Trees
- ✚ Giannina Braschi's Empire of Dreams and
- ✚ Salman Rushdie's The Ground beneath Her Feet

### **Technoculture and hyperreality:**

Fredric Jameson called postmodernism the "cultural logic of late capitalism". "Late capitalism" implies that society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age. Postmodernity is a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real. People are inundated with information. Technology has become a central focus in many lives. Our understanding of the real is mediated by simulations of the real.

- ✚ Don DeLillo's White Noise
- ✚ The cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson and Neal Stephenson

### **Paranoia:**

The sense of paranoia is the belief that there is an ordering system behind the chaos of the world. No ordering is extremely dependent upon the subject. Paranoia often straddles the line between delusion and brilliant insight.

- ✚ Heller's Catch-22,
- ✚ Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49
- ✚ Kurt Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions

### **Maximalism:**

Maximalism is a post-modern technique of writing with the sprawling canvas and fragmented narrative. Many modernist critics, notably B.R. Myers in his polemic A Reader's Manifesto, attack the maximalist novel as being disorganized, sterile and filled with language play for its own sake, empty of emotional commitment.

- ✚ Dave Eggers and
- ✚ David Foster Wallace
- ✚ Pynchon's Mason & Dixon and
- ✚ David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest

### **Minimalism:**

Literary minimalism is a focus on a surface description, where the readers are expected to take an active role in the creation of a story. The characters in minimalist stories and novels are common. The short stories are "slice of life" stories. Minimalism is a resensation of only the most basic and necessary pieces. It is specific by economy with words. Minimalist authors do not use adjectives, adverbs, or meaningless details. The author provides a general context and then allows the reader's imagination to shape the story.

The minimalist story writers are –

- ✚ Jon Fosse and
- ✚ Samuel Beckett.

### **Fragmentation:**

Fragmentation is another important aspect of postmodern literature. Various elements, concerning plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references are fragmented and dispersed throughout the work. Fragmentation purports to depict a metaphysically unfounded, chaotic universe. It can occur in language, sentence structure or grammar.

✚ Dimitris Lyacos is a Greek writer. He has written *Z213: Exit*, a fictional diary. This work is one of the major exponents of fragmentation in postmodern literature. He has adopted a telegraphic style in writing. In most parts, there are no articles and conjunctions. The text is a combination of lacunae, everyday language and biblical references also to mean the chaotic world.

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## **DECONSTRUCTION**

### **Introduction:**

Deconstruction is a school of philosophy that originated in France in the late 1960s. It has had an enormous impact on Anglo-American criticism. Largely the creation of its chief proponent Jacques Derrida, deconstruction upends the Western metaphysical tradition. It represents a complex response to a variety of theoretical and philosophical movements of the 20th century, most notably Husserlian phenomenology, Saussurean and French structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Deconstruction is a philosophical movement and one among the theories of literary criticism. It questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth. It asserts that words can only refer to other words. It attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings. Rebecca Goldstein says that in deconstruction, the critic claims there is no meaning to be found in the actual text, but only in the various, often mutually irreconcilable, 'virtual texts' constructed by readers in their search for meaning".

Deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has contradictory meanings, rather than being a unified, logical whole. J. Hillis Miller, the preeminent American deconstructionist, has explained in an essay entitled *Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure* (1976), "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air."

### **Derrida's Definition:**

Deconstruction was both created and has been profoundly influenced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida coined the term 'deconstruction'. He defines deconstruction as "A deconstructive reading must always aims at certain relationship by the writer between what he commands and what he does not command." He argues that in Western culture, people tend to think and express their thoughts in terms of binary oppositions (white / black, masculine / feminine, cause /effect, conscious /unconscious, presence / absence, speech writing). Derrida suggests these oppositions are hierarchies in miniature, containing one term that Western culture views as positive or superior and another considered negative or inferior. Through deconstruction, Derrida aims to erase the boundary between binary oppositions.



According to Derrida deconstruction generally operates by conducting textual readings with a view to demonstrate that the text is not a discrete whole, instead containing several irreconcilable, contradictory meanings. This process ostensibly shows that any text has more than one interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible; and thus that interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point.

Deconstruction owes much to the theories of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. With his book of *Grammatology* he began a new critical movement. Derrida shows that deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has contradictory meanings. Deconstruction defines text as something whose meaning is known only through difference. Derrida shows that text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying. It may be read as carrying a plurality of significance. Thus a text may betray itself. Derrida carries his logic still further to suggest that the language of any discourse is at variance with itself and by so being is capable of being read as yet another language. Derrida displaces the traditional "hierarchy" of speech over writing to suggest that speech can only ever be subject to the same instability as writing; that speech and writing are forms of one science of language, grammatology.

#### **Derrida's Logocentrism:**

Derrida criticized the entire tradition of Western philosophy's search to discover the essential structure of knowledge and reality, ultimately confronting the limits of human thought. As an extension of his theory of logocentrism, Derrida posited that all texts are based on hierarchical dualisms (e.g., being/nonbeing, reality/appearance, male/female), where the first element is regarded as stronger and thus essentially true and that all systems of thought have an assumed center, or Archimedean point, upon which they are based. In a deconstructionist reading, this unconscious and unarticulated point is revealed, and in this revelation the binary structure upon which the text rests is imploded. Thus what appears stable and logical is revealed to be illogical and paradoxical, and interpretation is by its very nature misinterpretation.

#### **Definition of Barbara Johnson:**

In the book *The Critical Difference* (1981), Barbara Johnson clarifies the term: "Deconstruction is not synonymous with "destruction", however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means "to undo" -- a virtual synonym for "to de-construct.". If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."

#### **Undecidability:**

The ultimate aim of deconstruction is to criticize Western logic. It also arose as a response to structuralism and formalism. Structuralists believed that all elements of human culture, including literature, may be understood as parts of a system of signs. Derrida rejected the structuralist belief that texts have identifiable "centres" of meaning. Formalist critics, such as the New Critics, assume that a work of literature is a freestanding, self-contained object whose meaning can be found in the complex network of relations between its parts (allusions, images, rhythms, sounds, etc.). Deconstructionists see works in



terms of their undecidability. They see texts as more radically heterogeneous. Undecidability is mastered in deconstruction.

To a deconstructionist, meaning includes what is left out of the text or ignored or silenced by it. Deconstruction is an attack on the very existence of theories and conceptual systems. It resists logical definitions and explanations. Instead it opts for a linear presentations based on extensive wordplay and puns. Deconstructionists tend to concentrate on close readings of particular texts, focusing on how these texts refer to other texts.

#### **Peter Barry on Deconstruction:**

Deconstruction, according to Peter Barry is divided into three parts- verbal, textual and linguistic.

- ✚ The verbal stage is very similar to that of more conventional forms of close reading. It involves looking in the text for paradoxes and contradictions, at what might be called the purely verbal level.
- ✚ In textual stage a critic looks for shifts or breaks in the continuity of the poem. These shifts reveal instabilities of attitude, and hence the lack of a fixed and unified position.
- ✚ The linguistic stage involves looking for moments in the poem when the adequacy of language itself as a medium of communication. There is implicit or explicit reference to the unreliability or untrustworthiness of language.

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## **FEMINISM**

### **Introduction:**

**Feminism is the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.**

Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life.

### **Christine de Pisan (ca. 1365–1429)**

Christine de Pisan was perhaps the most articulate and prolific female voice of the European Middle Ages. Almost uniquely among women of her time, Christine was enabled to obtain a fine education through her family's connections to the court of Charles V. Being widowed at the age of 25 without an inheritance and with three children, she was obliged to earn her living as a writer. She was commissioned as biographer of Charles V. In *Vision* (1405), she complained against her fortune as a female writer and scholar burdened by the conventional obligations of womanhood. Her *Book of Three Virtues* concerns the status and role of women in society. Her most renowned work was *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), which was influenced by Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women* (1361) and Augustine's *City of God*. *The Book of the City of Ladies* attempts effectively to rewrite the history of women, its scope extending through past and future, as well as over pagan and Christian eras. Such rewriting entails an explosion of age-long male myths about women, such as their inability to govern, their unfitness for learning, and their moral deficiencies.

### **Feminism in 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

Aphra Behn (1640–1689) 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.

She is one of the founders of the English novel, *The Lucky Chance*. Behn takes up the murky issues surrounding female authorship. She heaps a barrage of insulting criticism upon a man who warned the audience for her play to expect “awful Play ... for it was a woman’s.” Replying to his presumption, 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.

### **Feminism in 18<sup>th</sup> Century: Age of Enlightenment:**

**Germaine de Stacel** (1766–1817) was one of the heirs of Enlightenment thought; her writings offended Napoleon, who exiled her from Paris. She published two novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne, or Italy* (1807); her important contributions to literary criticism are contained in her “Essay on Fictions” (1795) and her longer work *On Literature* (1800). Stacel examines the various social obstacles to the success of women writers. She urges that women must be enlightened and taught together with men, in order to establish any “permanent social or political relationships.” The development of reason in women will promote “both enlightenment and the happiness of society in general.”

**Mary Wollstonecraft** (1759–1797) is acknowledged as one of the first feminist writers of modern times. She was a radical thinker whose central notions were framed by the French Revolution of 1789. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), like Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, was a defence of the Revolution. Yet Wollstonecraft added to these conventional Enlightenment elements an important concern for the economic and educational rights of women, as expressed in the work for which she is best known, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The issues Wollstonecraft raises have remained crucial to much feminist literary criticism. Her central argument is that if woman “be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all.”

### **Feminism in 19th century: The feminine ideal**

The 19th-century feminists reacted to cultural inequities including the widespread acceptance of the Victorian image of women's "proper" role and "sphere." The Victorian ideal created a dichotomy of "separate spheres" for men and women that was very clearly defined in theory, though not always in reality. In this ideology, men were to occupy the public sphere (the space of wage labor and politics) and women the private sphere (the space of home and children.) This "feminine ideal," *The Angel in the House* (1854) by Coventry Patmore came to symbolize the Victorian feminine ideal. Queen Victoria herself disparaged the concept of feminism, which she described in private letters as the "mad, wicked folly of 'Woman's Rights'".

Some of the women writers are

- Jane Austen
- Charlotte Brontë,
- Anne Brontë,
- Elizabeth Gaskell
- George Eliot and
- Alcott

They depicted women's misery and frustration. Alcott penned a strongly feminist novel, *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (1866), about a young woman's attempts to flee her bigamist husband and become independent.

Some of the male writers, writing about the plight of women are

- Thomas Hardy and
- Henrik Ibsen

### **Gradual Changes in 19<sup>th</sup> Century:**

At the outset of the 19th century, the dissenting feminist voices had no social influence. There was little sign of change in the political or social order, nor any evidence of a recognizable women's movement.

- In Scotland, Reid published her influential *A Plea for Woman* in 1843, which proposed a transatlantic Western agenda for women's rights, including voting rights for women.
- Caroline Norton advocated for changes in British law. She discovered a lack of legal rights for women upon entering an abusive marriage.
- Florence Nightingale whose conviction that women had all the potential of men but none of the opportunities impelled her storied nursing career.

### **Educational reform**

The interrelated barriers to education and employment formed the backbone of 19th-century feminist reform efforts. The education reform efforts of women like Davies and the Langham group slowly made inroads. Queen's College (1848) and Bedford College (1849) in London began to offer some education to women from 1848.

As part of the continuing dialogue between British and American feminists, Elizabeth Blackwell, one of the first American women to graduate in medicine (1849), lectured in Britain with Langham support. She eventually took her degree in France.

### **First wave Feminism:**

The first-wave feminism refers to the 19th- and early 20th-century feminist activity in the English-speaking world. It sought to win

- women's suffrage,
- female education rights,
- better working conditions, and
- abolition of gender double standards

In the United States, feminist movement leaders campaigned for the national abolition of slavery and temperance before championing women's rights.

### **Early 20th century:**

In the early part of the 20th century, also known as the Edwardian era, there was a change in the way women dressed from the Victorian rigidity and complacency. Books, articles, speeches, pictures, and papers from the period show a diverse range of themes other than political reform and suffrage discussed publicly.

### **Mid-20th century:**

Women entered the labour market during the First World War in unprecedented numbers, often in new sectors, and discovered the value of their work. The war also left large numbers of women bereaved and with a net loss of household income. By now, the word "feminism"

was in use, but with a negative connotation from mass media, which discouraged women from self-identifying.

### **Social reform**

The political change did not immediately change social circumstances. With the economic recession, women were the most vulnerable sector of the workforce. Some women who held jobs prior to the war were obliged to forfeit them to returning soldiers. Laws prevented feminists from discussing and addressing reproductive rights. Annie Besant was tried under the Obscene Publications Act 1857 in 1877 for publishing Charles Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy*, a work on family planning.

But in 1940s, in most front line countries, women volunteered or were conscripted for various duties in support of the national war effort. In Britain, women were drafted and assigned to industrial jobs or to non-combat military service. The British services enrolled 460,000 women.

### **Writers:**

In Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes the extent of the backlash and her frustration. When Rebecca West, another prominent writer, had been attacked as "a feminist", Woolf defended her. West has been remembered for her comment "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat, or a prostitute."

### **Second-wave feminism:**

Feminists did not recognize separate waves of feminism until the second wave was so named by journalist Martha Lear. "Second-wave feminism" identifies a period of feminist activity from the early 1960s through the late 1980s that saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. It is a newer feminist movement that fought social and cultural inequalities beyond basic political inequalities. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of a sexist power structure. As first-wave feminists focused on absolute rights such as suffrage, second-wave feminists focused on other cultural equality issues, such as ending discrimination.

### **The Term 'Women's Liberation':**

In 1960s feminism, its theory, and its activism was fuelled by the social, cultural, and political climate of that decade. This time was marked by increased female enrolment in higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies courses and departments, and feminist ideology in other related fields, such as politics, sociology, history, and literature.

Over the following decade, "Women's Liberation" became a common phrase and concept. It has been used to refer to feminism throughout history.

The rise of the Women's Liberation movement revealed "multiple feminisms". Some notable works of this period are -

- Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*,
- Sheila Rowbotham's *Women's Liberation and the New Politics*, and
- Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*

### **Betty Friedan:**



In 1963, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* became the voice for the discontent and disorientation women felt in being shunted into homemaking positions after their college graduations. In the book, Friedan explored the roots of the change in women's roles from essential workforce during World War II to homebound housewife and mother after the war. She assessed the forces that drove this change in perception of women's roles.

### **Third-wave feminism:**

The Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s in response to what young women perceived as failures of the second-wave. It also responds to the backlash against the second-wave's initiatives and movements. It seeks to challenge or avoid second-wave "essentialist" definitions of femininity, which over-emphasized the experiences of white, upper middle class women. A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality, or an understanding of gender as outside binary maleness and femaleness, is central to much of the third wave's ideology.

### **Global feminism**

In 1948, the UN issued its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects "the equal rights of men and women" and addressed both equality and equity. Starting with the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico, the UN has held a series of world conferences on women's issues. These conferences have worldwide female representation and provide considerable opportunity to advance women's rights.

### **Fourth-wave feminism**

Fourth-wave feminism refers to a resurgence of interest in feminism that began around 2012 and is associated with the use of social media. According to feminist scholar Prudence Chamberlain, the focus of the fourth wave is justice for women and opposition to sexual harassment and violence against women. Its essence, she writes, is "incredulity that certain attitudes can still exist". Fourth-wave feminism is "defined by technology".

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## **POSTCOLONIALISM**

### **Introduction:**

**The term 'Postcolonialism' refers to** the historical period or state of affairs, as the aftermath of Western colonialism. It is the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history of people, who were subordinated under various forms of imperialism. Postcolonialism signals a possible future of overcoming colonialism. Yet new forms of domination or subordination can come in the wake of such changes, including new forms of global empire.

Postcolonial theorists and historians have been investigating the various trajectories of modernity. They view in a range of philosophical, cultural, and historical perspectives. They have been particularly concerned with engaging with the ambiguous legacy of the Enlightenment—as expressed in social, political, economic, scientific, legal, and cultural thought—beyond Europe itself. The age of Enlightenment was also an age of empire, and the connection between those two historical epochs is more than incidental.

## From Decolonization To Postcolonialism

There have been many different kinds of imperialism and processes of decolonization. The two most important periods of postcolonialism include

- ✚ the British disengagement from its second empire during the 19th and the 20th centuries and
- ✚ the decolonization movements of the 1960s and '70s in Africa and elsewhere.

The history and formation of Decolonization started much earlier. But its international principles and instruments were formally declared during the latter era. The processes triggered by those struggles were not only political and economic but also cultural. The previously subjugated individuals sought to assert control over not only territorial boundaries but also their language and history. So, the term '*postcolonialism*' is also sometimes used to refer to the struggles of indigenous peoples in many parts of the world in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The term 'Postcolonialism' is not apt to refer the principles of self-determination and self-government within the international system, along with the minority status and vulnerability of those peoples even within decolonized states. The reason is that the indigenous peoples were denied even the modest gains extended by the United Nations and the international system of states to the various decolonized territories in the 1970s. The history of imperialism is complex. European imperialism between the 16th and 18th centuries in the Americas, the West Indies, Australasia, and Southeast Asia was substantially different from that of the 19th and 20th centuries. Still, one of the central themes of postcolonial scholarship is the persistence of empire as well as resistance to it in human history.

### **Subject of Postcolonialism:**

Postcolonialism is a general domain of intellectual inquiry. It addresses those questions that emerge in relation to the aftermath of imperialism. One of the most-important features of the history of imperialism has been the emergence of states and new conceptions of international order. It is also closely associated with a more-specific set of questions, and they have proved to be enormously influential. One of the most prominent has been the relation between imperialism and identity.

Fanon, a psychoanalyst and philosopher born in Martinique, presented one of the most searing and provocative analyses of the relation between colonized and colonizer in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) as well as in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Fanon remains perhaps best known for his explosive justification of violence in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where it is cast as the appropriate response to the violence perpetrated by colonialism and as the mediation through which the colonized can begin to reclaim their self-conscious agency. His is a deeply unsettling argument, shaped undoubtedly by the brutal period of French colonial rule in Algeria and the war for independence (1954–62). Violence was inevitable and necessary, Fanon seemed to be arguing in *The Wretched of the Earth*, but it also has to be overcome. One has to move from reaction to the construction of something new. Fanon includes overcoming the binary oppositions imposed on the colonized by the geopolitical structures of the Cold War. It is there that the foreshadowing of some important themes that became central to postcolonialism is found. For example, Fanon combined a material and psychological analysis of the consequences of colonialism, which looked to both the micro- and macro-effects and experience of colonial government. Among those

consequences and their effects, as identified and investigated by Fanon and other theorists, are:

- ✚ both the colonized and the colonizer are implicated in the horrors of imperialism and
- ✚ both will have to be decolonized;
- ✚ the colonized have to find a way of overcoming the imposition of alien rule not only over their territory but also over their minds and bodies;
- ✚ the colonized have to seek recognition from an oppressor in terms that the oppressor has set hardly provides a genuine liberation from the grip of colonialism
- ✚ the colonizers have to make sense of how the brutality of colonialism relates to their own apparent humanism.

Fanon's work emphasized the complex relation between imperialism and nationalism that remained a critical focus of much postcolonial writing. The aspiration for self-determination at the heart of anticolonial struggles proved difficult to institutionalize democratically in existing postcolonial states. Most postcolonial theorists have been critical of nationalism as well as "nativism" and romantic communitarianism.

Postcolonialism suggests that as dominant and important as the European process of modernity has been, there have been and will continue to be multiple modernities, and important questions about how best to understand the relations between them will thus persist.

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## **THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE – THE TALES OF HENRY JAMES TZVETAN TODOROV**

### **Introduction:**

Saussure looked at language as a structure. Todorov considered literature a structure. Tzvetan Todorov in his essay "Structural Analysis of Narrative" expounds the structural approach to analyzing literature. He analyzes Boccaccio's *The Decameron* with that perspective. He also analyzes the structural issues such as concrete problems of narrative and plot.

### **The Theoretical and the Descriptive Approach:**

Todorov contrasts two different approaches to literature; namely the theoretical approach and the descriptive approach. A theoretical approach is based on the derivations of general principles; it is abstract. A descriptive approach is concrete for it focuses on a number of details that are added together and applied to a single text.

### **The Structural Approach:**

The structural analysis is "essentially theoretical and non-descriptive". It is not a study of the description of a concrete work. The work will be considered as the manifestation of an abstract structure. The structural analysis seeks to understand the structure behind the

actual work, such as the structure of the genre to which that work belongs, rather than discuss the structure of the individual work.

#### **Difference from Other Approaches:**

The New Critics tried to learn all about the particular work of literature. The Marxists and the psycho analytic critics tried to understand the abstract structure of the work to arrive at the exhibition of the social or psycho analytic concept in the work. Structuralists tend to look at theory or poetics of literature, the “literary discourse”. At the same time, description is not completely discarded because it helps in understanding theory. Of course, , “the best stepping stone toward theory is that of precise, empirical knowledge” . Todorov comments that structural analysis owes much of its methods to modern science since the literature must be studied in relation to everything else

#### **Todorov’s Reaction to James’ Views:**

To stress his concepts of Structuralism, Todorov analyzes the views of Henry James, as expressed by him in his essay “The Art of Fiction”. One is, there is no such thing of a pure dialogue in a real text. The second objection is that the terms of description are not necessary since a novel is considered a living thing. Todorov answers the first objection made by James. Structuralism does not expect ‘description’ or ‘action’ in their pure state. Todorov answers the second objection. A work of literature need not be put in the state of ‘living’ or ‘dead’.

#### **A Structuralist’s Perspective of Plot:**

Usually, critics undervalue and disregard plot. Todorov does a structural analysis of plot in a novel and defends it. He looks into Boccaccio’s *Decameron* for an examination of plot. He looked at four different plots within the *Decameron* and found they had several similarities. He looks at the story of a monk and his abbot, a nun and an abbess, and two other stories of married women and their lovers. In each case, people of lower rank commit adultery. Before condemning them, their superiors also do the same mistake. They are unable to punish the first set of sinners.

Todorov sums up the commonalities. From the structuralist’s point of view, he makes several explanations. In a novel, the minimal scheme of the plot can be summarized by a clause. In a plot, the proper nouns and their predicative exist with their semantic value. Actions in a novel will have a positive or negative form. So, they need a “category of status”. Before the actions happen, they can be logically assumed and point of view can be arrived. There are relations between clauses which might lead to a study of entailment and presupposition. These clauses are organized to form a new sequence. Sequence is perceived by the reader as a finished story. There are ways of going from the abstract structure to the original tale. It is also possible by studying the concrete patterns which incorporate the abstract. Todorov calls this a thematic study.

#### **Literature and Poetics:**

Todorov makes the distinction between literature and poetics. Literature is not subservient to poetics. Literature is the language by which poetics deals with itself. Discussions of methodology are the core of poetics and not its byproducts. Thus, Todorov defends structural analysis of literature.

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## THE ROLE OF READER IN FIELDING'S JOSEPH ANDREWS AND TOM JONES WOLFGANG ISER

### Introduction:

Wolfgang Iser is known for his reader-response theory in literary theory. Iser and Hans Robert Jauss **are considered to be the founders of the** Constance School of reception aesthetics. He deepened his interest in inter-cultural exchange and subsequently lectured on '*reader-response to literary anthropology*'. Reader-Response theory and hermeneutics share many goals and insight in common. Both describe the reader's contact with the text and the author. Reader-Response criticism recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts 'real existence' to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. Thus, it argues that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates his/her own, possibly unique, text-related performance.

### Reader-Response theory and Fielding's novels:

Iser develops his theory of reader participation and reader-response by choosing Henry Fielding's novels to model it. He begins his essay "The Role of Reader in Fielding's Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones" by quoting the words of Fielding about his own novels. Fielding states about his novel as "*a new province of writing*". *From the reader's point of view of his novels, innovations arise*. Therefore, the role of the reader is not just passive. It is transformative. W. Booth says, '*the author shapes the reader and most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement*'.

According to Iser, the eighteenth century novelists were deeply conscious of the interplay of the text with the reader. **Richardson** says, '*the story must leave something for the reader to do*'. **Laurence Sterne** says, '*the novelist must keep the imagination of the reader busy*'.

### The Blanks or Gaps:

According to Iser, there is an author-narrator in the novels of Fielding. He helps the reader in constituting the meaning of the novel. In fact, Fielding himself extends co-operation at certain places in the novels which he calls '*Blanks*' or '*gaps*'. The reader is meant to fill the '*Blanks*' (**Tom Jones II. I. 89**) '*vacant spaces*' (**iii, I, 116**) or '*vacant pages*' (**Joseph Andrews ii, i**) with the help of certain textual signs. Iser's main contention is that the novel does not explicitly state its meaning. It is the reader, who constructs its meaning on the basis of these signs. In other words, the author provides the reader with guidelines, and with that the reader has to bring out the meaning of the text. Fielding says the novel is like a mirror in which the reader can see himself. Therefore it creates a sense of superiority in the mind of the reader.

### Process of reading:

Iser interprets Fielding's theoretical essays and statements in an intellectual sense. Fielding states that reading is like the experience of living through the incidents depicted in the text; reading a book is like journey. The reader is personally involved in creating part of the meaning. The distance between the story and the reader is lessened; the spectator becomes an actor. For instance, in a scene in *Joseph Andrews*, the reader is left to figure out a particular emotion displayed by Lady Booby, based on the clues provided by the author-narrator. The reader is left free to describe what response might have been appropriate to the characters.

The novel thus becomes a test for the reader's faculty of discernment. The novel does not represent the world. It provides points of access to the world.

**Use of Contrast:**

Iser points out the author can use various strategies to achieve this effect. There is a strategy for control and explanation of the reader's imagination or views about the text. Since the reader is the source of the meaning of the novel, there has to be some controls placed on him so that the meaning does not become completely arbitrary and subjective. This control is provided by the author-reader dialogue. The dialogue provides guidelines or framework. This framework allows the full realization of the complexities. Fielding asserts contrast as the key to understand literature. Thus the beauty of the day and summer is set off by the horrors of the night and winter. These contrasting pairs give a clear understanding in reader's mind. Iser stresses that in Fielding the use of contrasts is numerous and it indicates the complexities of the characters. The authentic pleasure given by the novel to the reader lies in the opportunity to discover things for himself. Fielding often uses legal imagery. This underlines the goal of the novel, to induce the reader to make balanced judgments.

**Conclusion:**

The role of the reader is potential not actual. The reader's reactions are not predetermined but he is offered a frame of possible decisions. According to Iser, Fielding was aware that the reader's reaction might be at variance with his own. It is left open for the reader to explore.

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**THE RACE FOR THEORY  
BARBARA CHRISTIAN**

**Introduction:**

Many Western philosophers have played an important role in setting up the Literary Theory. They have considered the distinctions among written literatures and redefined literature. This has led them to the changes in literary critical language such as to 're-invent the meaning of theory'.

**Charges on Theory:**

Barbara states that the literary theory should be ignored. It has been invented to work for the Western philosophers. The replacement of this theory has left the black literature unexposed. Its only 'advantage' is its determination on being promoted in academic institutions. This theory is not stable. Many critics are not concerned with literature but more with other critics' texts. The professionals are developed, they are increasingly academics. So there is a replacement of ideas which is a competition theory as the 'race accelerates'. Barbara underlines that Black folk has always been a race for theory. She charges the academic hegemony and its inaptness to the emerging literatures today. This race for theory refuses to mention contemporary creative writers. Its generalization on culture becomes an obstacle in discussing many of black literature. By objecting the race for theory she still does not agree with 'the neutral humanists who see literature as pure expression'. The Afro-American writers have protested the literary hierarchy of dominance.

In *The Race for Theory*, Barbara Christian argues that contemporary philosophers have redefined literature. By this the distinction between everything written and those writings that evoke feeling and thought have been blurred. Actually, she does not refer to theoretical orientation, influenced by the likes of Austin, Derrida, and Butler, which makes no distinction between genres but instead views everything as performative “text.” This theoretical orientation dramatically changes the situation of the literary critic: “Critics are no longer concerned with literature but with other critics’ texts.” They conceive themselves in the center and displace the writer. Due to this new orientation, literary works have become texts. Critics are no longer concerned with literature, but with other critics’ texts.

Barbara analyzes the present day critics who have changed the course of critics. In the past, the critic was also a writer of poetry, or plays, or novels. But, in the modern times he is increasingly an academic.” His career depends allow him to give priority to the object of its criticism, but to theorizing. These theories are, by their nature ephemeral. They are the useless product of an endeavor that the critic hopes will bring them publishing deals, influence, etc. The complex language used in a majority of critical discourses alienates people of color in academic contexts, or force them to speak a language that is not adequate to their experiences.

People of colour have always theorized “in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.” To claim that the thought and language of critical theory is static and to oppose it to a dynamic theorizing alive in the flow of narrative, is to claim that the institution of critical theory, the play of language tends to make the concept of dynamism static with whatever particular form is popular within the academy. The literary critical theory, despite its defense of the subaltern, and despite its supposed interest in dismantling hegemonic structures, still leaves Third World literatures by the wayside. By this process, certain works are continuously neglected. Moreover, literary critical theory is not just guilty of neglect, but guilty of *totalization*. It neglects its own discourses. It is pathetically based on the White Male philosophy. It marginalizes literatures, artists, and readers.

Barbara objects to theory that excludes through languages and forms which obscure conditions instead of confronting conditions.

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## DECONSTRUCTION

### **Introduction:**

Deconstruction is a school of philosophy that originated in France in the late 1960s. It has had an enormous impact on Anglo-American criticism. Largely the creation of its chief proponent Jacques Derrida, deconstruction upends the Western metaphysical tradition. It represents a complex response to a variety of theoretical and philosophical movements of the 20th century, most notably Husserlian phenomenology, Saussurean and French structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Deconstruction is a philosophical movement and one among the theories of literary criticism. It questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth. It asserts that words can only refer to other words. It attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings. Rebecca Goldstein says that in deconstruction, the critic

claims there is no meaning to be found in the actual text, but only in the various, often mutually irreconcilable, 'virtual texts' constructed by readers in their search for meaning".

Deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has contradictory meanings, rather than being a unified, logical whole. J. Hillis Miller, the preeminent American deconstructionist, has explained in an essay entitled *Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure* (1976), "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air."

### **Derrida's Definition:**

Deconstruction was both created and has been profoundly influenced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida coined the term 'deconstruction'. He defines deconstruction as "A deconstructive reading must always aims at certain relationship by the writer between what he commands and what he does not command." He argues that in Western culture, people tend to think and express their thoughts in terms of binary oppositions (white / black, masculine / feminine, cause /effect, conscious /unconscious, presence / absence, speech writing). Derrida suggests these oppositions are hierarchies in miniature, containing one term that Western culture views as positive or superior and another considered negative or inferior. Through deconstruction, Derrida aims to erase the boundary between binary oppositions.

According to Derrida deconstruction generally operates by conducting textual readings with a view to demonstrate that the text is not a discrete whole, instead containing several irreconcilable, contradictory meanings. This process ostensibly shows that any text has more than one interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible; and thus that interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point.

Deconstruction owes much to the theories of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. With his book of *Grammatology* he began a new critical movement. Derrida shows that deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has contradictory meanings. Deconstruction defines text as something whose meaning is known only through difference. Derrida shows that text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying. It may be read as carrying a plurality of significance. Thus a text may betray itself. Derrida carries his logic still further to suggest that the language of any discourse is at variance with itself and by so being is capable of being read as yet another language. 'Derrida displaces the traditional "hierarchy" of speech over writing to suggest that speech can only ever be subject to the same instability as writing; that speech and writing are forms of one science of language, grammatology.

### **Derrida's Logocentrism:**

Derrida criticized the entire tradition of Western philosophy's search to discover the essential structure of knowledge and reality, ultimately confronting the limits of human thought. As an extension of his theory of logocentrism, Derrida posited that all texts are based on hierarchical dualisms (e.g., being/nonbeing, reality/appearance, male/female), where the first element is regarded as stronger and thus essentially true and that all systems of thought have an assumed center, or Archimedean point, upon which they are based. In a deconstructionist reading, this unconscious and unarticulated point is revealed, and in this



revelation the binary structure upon which the text rests is imploded. Thus what appears stable and logical is revealed to be illogical and paradoxical, and interpretation is by its very nature misinterpretation.

**Definition of Barbara Johnson:**

In the book *The Critical Difference* (1981), Barbara Johnson clarifies the term: "Deconstruction is not synonymous with "destruction", however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means "to undo" -- a virtual synonym for "to de-construct.". If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."

**Undecidability:**

The ultimate aim of deconstruction is to criticize Western logic. It also arose as a response to structuralism and formalism. Structuralists believed that all elements of human culture, including literature, may be understood as parts of a system of signs. Derrida rejected the structuralist belief that texts have identifiable "centres" of meaning. Formalist critics, such as the New Critics, assume that a work of literature is a freestanding, self-contained object whose meaning can be found in the complex network of relations between its parts (allusions, images, rhythms, sounds, etc.). Deconstructionists see works in terms of their undecidability. They see texts as more radically heterogeneous. Undecidability is mastered in deconstruction.

To a deconstructionist, meaning includes what is left out of the text or ignored or silenced by it. Deconstruction is an attack on the very existence of theories and conceptual systems. It resists logical definitions and explanations. Instead it opts for a linear presentations based on extensive wordplay and puns. Deconstructionists tend to concentrate on close readings of particular texts, focusing on how these texts refer to other texts.

**Peter Barry on Deconstruction:**

Deconstruction, according to Peter Barry is divided into three parts- verbal, textual and linguistic.

- ✚ The verbal stage is very similar to that of more conventional forms of close reading. It involves looking in the text for paradoxes and contradictions, at what might be called the purely verbal level.
- ✚ In textual stage a critic looks for shifts or breaks in the continuity of the poem. These shifts reveal instabilities of attitude, and hence the lack of a fixed and unified position.
- ✚ The linguistic stage involves looking for moments in the poem when the adequacy of language itself as a medium of communication. There is implicit or explicit reference to the unreliability or untrustworthiness of language.

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**POSTCOLONIALISM**

**Introduction:**

**The term 'Postcolonialism' refers to the historical period or state of affairs, as the aftermath of Western colonialism. It is the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history of people, who were subordinated under various forms of imperialism.**

Postcolonialism signals a possible future of overcoming colonialism. Yet new forms of domination or subordination can come in the wake of such changes, including new forms of global empire.

Postcolonial theorists and historians have been investigating the various trajectories of modernity. They view in a range of philosophical, cultural, and historical perspectives. They have been particularly concerned with engaging with the ambiguous legacy of the Enlightenment—as expressed in social, political, economic, scientific, legal, and cultural thought—beyond Europe itself. The age of Enlightenment was also an age of empire, and the connection between those two historical epochs is more than incidental.

### **From Decolonization To Postcolonialism**

There have been many different kinds of imperialism and processes of decolonization. The two most important periods of postcolonialism include

- ✚ the British disengagement from its second empire during the 19th and the 20th centuries and
- ✚ the decolonization movements of the 1960s and '70s in Africa and elsewhere.

The history and formation of Decolonization started much earlier. But its international principles and instruments were formally declared during the latter era. The processes triggered by those struggles were not only political and economic but also cultural. The previously subjugated individuals sought to assert control over not only territorial boundaries but also their language and history. So, the term '*postcolonialism*' is also sometimes used to refer to the struggles of indigenous peoples in many parts of the world in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The term 'Postcolonialism' is not apt to refer the principles of self-determination and self-government within the international system, along with the minority status and vulnerability of those peoples even within decolonized states. The reason is that the indigenous peoples were denied even the modest gains extended by the United Nations and the international system of states to the various decolonized territories in the 1970s. The history of imperialism is complex. European imperialism between the 16th and 18th centuries in the Americas, the West Indies, Australasia, and Southeast Asia was substantially different from that of the 19th and 20th centuries. Still, one of the central themes of postcolonial scholarship is the persistence of empire as well as resistance to it in human history.

### **Subject of Postcolonialism:**

Postcolonialism is a general domain of intellectual inquiry. It addresses those questions that emerge in relation to the aftermath of imperialism. One of the most-important features of the history of imperialism has been the emergence of states and new conceptions of international order. It is also closely associated with a more-specific set of questions, and they have proved to be enormously influential. One of the most prominent has been the relation between imperialism and identity.

Fanon, a psychoanalyst and philosopher born in Martinique, presented one of the most searing and provocative analyses of the relation between colonized and colonizer in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) as well as in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Fanon remains perhaps best known for his explosive justification of violence in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where it is cast as the appropriate response to the violence perpetrated by colonialism and as the mediation through which the colonized can begin to reclaim their self-conscious agency. His is a deeply unsettling argument, shaped undoubtedly by the brutal period of

French colonial rule in Algeria and the war for independence (1954–62). Violence was inevitable and necessary, Fanon seemed to be arguing in *The Wretched of the Earth*, but it also has to be overcome. One has to move from reaction to the construction of something new. Fanon includes overcoming the binary oppositions imposed on the colonized by the geopolitical structures of the Cold War. It is there that the foreshadowing of some important themes that became central to postcolonialism is found. For example, Fanon combined a material and psychological analysis of the consequences of colonialism, which looked to both the micro- and macro-effects and experience of colonial government. Among those consequences and their effects, as identified and investigated by Fanon and other theorists, are:

- ✚ both the colonized and the colonizer are implicated in the horrors of imperialism and
- ✚ both will have to be decolonized;
- ✚ the colonized have to find a way of overcoming the imposition of alien rule not only over their territory but also over their minds and bodies;
- ✚ the colonized have to seek recognition from an oppressor in terms that the oppressor has set hardly provides a genuine liberation from the grip of colonialism
- ✚ the colonizers have to make sense of how the brutality of colonialism relates to their own apparent humanism.

Fanon's work emphasized the complex relation between imperialism and nationalism that remained a critical focus of much postcolonial writing. The aspiration for self-determination at the heart of anticolonial struggles proved difficult to institutionalize democratically in existing postcolonial states. Most postcolonial theorists have been critical of nationalism as well as "nativism" and romantic communitarianism.

Postcolonialism suggests that as dominant and important as the European process of modernity has been, there have been and will continue to be multiple modernities, and important questions about how best to understand the relations between them will thus persist.

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