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SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT - I

Introduction To Literary Criticism – SHS1305

INTRODUCTION

Criticism is an overall term for studies concerning with defining, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature. Theoretical criticism speaks of literary theory. Some such theoretical critics have been Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, Sainte-Beuve, Johnson, Coleridge, Arnold, Poe, Emerson, Richards, Burke and Frye. “Literary criticism” refers to the act of interpreting and studying literature. A literary critic is not someone who merely evaluates the worth or quality of a piece of literature but, rather, is someone who argues on behalf of an interpretation or understanding of the particular meaning(s) of literary texts. The task of a literary critic is to explain and attempt to reach a critical understanding of what literary texts mean in terms of their aesthetic, as well as social, political, and cultural statements and suggestions. A literary critic does more than simply discuss or evaluate the importance of a literary text; rather, a literary critic seeks to reach a logical and reasonable understanding of not only what a text’s author intends for it to mean but, also, what different cultures and ideologies render it capable of meaning.

“Literary theory,” however, refers to a particular form of literary criticism in which particular academic, scientific, or philosophical approaches are followed in a systematic fashion while analyzing literary texts. For example, a psychoanalytic theorist might examine and interpret a literary text strictly through the theoretical lens of psychoanalysis and psychology and, in turn, offer an interpretation or reading of a text that focuses entirely on the psychological dimensions of it. Traditional literary criticism tends not to focus on a particular aspect of (or approach to) a literary text in quite the same manner that literary theory usually does. Literary theory proposes particular, systematic approaches to literary texts that impose a

particular line of intellectual reasoning to it.

ARISTOTLE

Aristotle lived from 384 B.C. to 322 B.C. He was the most distinguished disciple of Plato. Among his critical treatise, only two are extant- 'Poetics' and 'Rhetoric', the former deals with the art of poetry and the latter with the art of speaking. Aristotle sees that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and music are alike in that they all imitate. They differ in the medium, objects, and manner of imitation.

THE PLAN OF POETICS

Poetics contains twenty six small chapters. The first four chapters and the twenty fifth are devoted to poetry; the fifth in general way to comedy, epic, and tragedy; the following fourteen exclusively to tragedy; the next three to poetic diction; the next to epic poetry; and the last to a comparison of epic poetry and tragedy. Aristotle's main concern thus appears to be tragedy, which was considered the most developed form of poetry in his day. Poetry, comedy, and epic come in for consideration because a discussion of tragedy would be incomplete without some reference to its parent and sister forms.

ARISTOTLE'S OBSERVATION ON POETRY

1. Its Nature.

Aristotle calls poet an imitator. The poet imitates things 'as they were or are', 'as they are said or thought to be' or 'as they ought to be'. In other words the poet imitates what is past or present, what is commonly believed, and what is ideal. He believes that there is a natural pleasure in imitation. This is an inborn natural instinct. There is also another inborn instinct i.e. the instinct for harmony and rhythm. This manifests itself in metrical composition. But unlike Plato, Aristotle does not consider the poet's imitations of life as twice removed from reality, but reveal universal truths. To prove this, Aristotle makes a comparison between

poetry and history. The poet does not relate what has happened, but what may happen. The historian relates what has happened. Poetry therefore is more philosophical and higher than history. Poetry expresses the universal, history the particular. The pictures of poetry are truths based on facts on the laws of probability or necessity. Thus Aristotle answers Plato's severest charge against poetry.

2. Its functions.

Aristotle considers pleasure as the end of poetry. Poetry springs from the instincts of imitation and rhythm and harmony. They are indulged in for the pleasure they give. Poetry is pleasing both to the poet and to the reader. Aristotle nowhere states that the function of poetry is to teach. However, he considers teaching desirable, if it is incidental to the pleasure it gives. Such a pleasure is regarded as superior to all others, for, it has a dual purpose i.e. teaching as well as pleasing.

3. Its emotional appeal.

Poetry makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. For example, tragedy aroused the emotions of pity and fear- pity at the undeserved suffering and fear for the worst that may befall him. Plato considers them harmful to the healthy growth of mind. Aristotle has no such fear. According to him these emotions are aroused with a view to their purgation or catharsis. Everybody has occasions of fear and pity in life. If they go on accumulating they become harmful to the soul. But in tragedy, the sufferings we witness are not our own and these emotions find a free and full outlet. Thereby they relieve the soul of their excess. We are lifted of ourselves and emerge nobler than before. It is this that pleases in a tragic tale. Thus tragedy transmutes these disturbing emotions into "calm of mind". So the emotional appeal of poetry is not harmful but health-giving.

ARISTOTLE'S OBSERVATION ON TRAGEDY

1. Its origin

Poetry can imitate two kinds of actions- the nobler actions of good men or the mean actions of bad men. Tragedy was born from the former and comedy from the latter. Tragedy has resemblances to epic and comedy to satire. Aristotle considers tragedy superior to epic. Tragedy has all the epic elements in a shorter compass.

2. Its characteristics.

Aristotle defines tragedy as " an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of certain magnitude, in a language embellished in with each kinds of artistic ornaments, the several kinds being found in the separate part of the play, in the form of action, not of narrative, through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions". By a serious action Aristotle means a tale of suffering exciting the emotions of pity and fear. The action should be complete which means that it must have a proper beginning, middle and end. It should also be arranged sequentially also. In other words it should have an organic unity. The action must be of certain magnitude. i.e. It should have reasonable length. It should be neither too long nor too short. Then only it can be easily remembered. It should have a length enough to unfold the events naturally. By artistic ornament, Aristotle means rhythm, harmony and song. They are all designed to enrich the language of the play. The form of action in tragedy distinguishes it from narrative verse. In tragedy, the tale is told with the help of characters. Their speeches and actions make the tale. In the narrative the poet is free to speak in his own person. In tragedy, the dramatist is nowhere seen. All is done by his characters. It is meant to be acted as well as read. The narrative, on the other hand is meant to be read only.

3. Its constituent Parts.

Aristotle finds six constituent parts in tragedy. They are: Plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle. The Greek equivalents of these terms are: ethos, muthos, dianoia, lexis,

melos and opsis. By plot is meant the arrangement of the incidents in the play in a logical and coherent way. Aristotle considers plot as the chef part of the tragedy because tragedy is an imitation not of men but men in action. Aristotle says: “without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character’. The actions themselves issue from characters. Character, he says, determines men’s qualities, but it is by their action that they are happy or sad. It is by their deeds that we know them. So it is these deeds that are woven into plot that matters. Character, is thus next only in importance to plot. Thought refers to what the character thinks or feels. It reveals itself in speech. As plot imitates action, character imitates men, so thought imitates men’s mental and emotional reactions to the circumstances in which they find themselves. All these three i.e. plot, character and thought constitutes the poet’s objects in imitation in tragedy. To accomplish them, he employs the medium diction. By diction is meant, words embellished with each kind of artistic ornament.

Song is one of them. Spectacle, the last of the six parts, is in fact the work of the stage mechanic. But it constitutes the manner in which the tragedy is presented to the audience.

4. The Structure of the Plot.

The plot is the soul of the tragedy. It should have unity of action. It means that only those actions in the life of the hero which are intimately connected with one another and appear together as one whole forms the plot. If any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjoined. The events comprising the plot will concern only one man. Otherwise there will be no necessary connection between them. By unity of time, Aristotle means the conformity between the time taken by the events of the play and that taken in their representation on the stage. The unity of place means the conformity between the scene of tragic events and the time taken by them to happen. A good tragic plot arouses the feelings of pity and fear in the audience- pity for the undeserved suffering of the hero and fear for the

worst that may happen to him. The plot is divisible into two parts- complication and denouement. The former ties the events into a tangle knot, latter untie it. Complication includes all the actions from the beginning to the point where it takes a turn for good or ill. The denouement extends from the turning point to the end. The first is commonly called the rising action, and the second the falling action.

5. Simple and Complex Plot.

The plot may be simple or complex. In a simple plot there are no puzzling situations such as peripeteia and anagnorisis. Peripeteia is generally explained a 'reversal of the situation' and anagnorisis as 'recognition' or 'discovery'. By reversal of situation is meant reversal of intention (e.g. a move to kill an enemy turning on one's own head, or killing an enemy and later discovering him to be a friend.) The discovery of these false moves is anagnoris. In other words it means a change from ignorance to knowledge. Both peripeteia and anagnorisis please because there is an element of surprise in them. A plot that makes use of them is complex. A perfect tragedy should be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plot.

6. Tragic Hero.

According to Aristotle, the ideal tragic hero should be good but neither too bad not too perfect. He should be a man whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depriving but by some error or frailty. This error is hamartia or the tragic flaw. For example, in 'Hamlet', it is his procrastination or inability to take action that leads to his down-fall. It is not a deliberate vice but flaw of characters and it makes the play tragic one.

7. Aristotle's opinion about Comedy.

Aristotle regards comedy as inferior to tragedy. He traces its roots to satire. Satiric verse originated in phallic songs sung in honour of Dionysus, the god of fertility, as epic originated from hymns to gods and praises of famous men. Consequently tragedy represents men as

noble as they can be, and comedy taking its origin from satirical verse, represents men as worse than they are, but satire ridicules personality or rather the “sinner’ while comedy ridicules sin or rather human vices. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not consider the characters in comedy as vicious. According to him they are rendered ludicrous by some defect that is neither painful nor destructive. They are not contemptible also. Like poetry, comedy shows not what has happened, but what may happen. The characters are presented in particular situations in which every human being would have acted in the same way. Thus, general, not individual weakness is displayed in them.

8. Aristotle’s opinion about epic.

The epic is earlier in origin than tragedy or comedy. In its nature it resembles tragedy, for it is an imitation of a serious action, whole, with a beginning, middle and an end. The structure also is like that of the tragedy, for the plot has a complication, and denouement, it can be complex, or simple, with or without perepeteia and anagnorisis. Its effect is the same, namely catharsis. But it lacks the song and spectacle found in tragedy. In its form it is different from tragedy, for it is narrative and is much longer than a tragedy. It is meant to be read or recited. While the tragedy presents only one main event, an epic contains several events which add to its variety and grandeur. Thirdly, an epic poet can introduce many improbable but marvelous incidents which presented on the stage may appear absurd, while they remain unnoticed when perceived by the imagination. They add to the pleasure of the poem, and Aristotle recommended probable impossibilities though not improbable possibilities. The supernatural element in the epic is an example of it. Aristotle still considers tragedy superior to epic though the latter appeals to the cultured, refined people and has no need of theatrical aid to achieve its effect. But Aristotle finds that tragedy with its music produced greater pleasure and its limited length attains more unity.

9. Aristotle's observation on Style.

Aristotle lays down clearness and propriety as two essentials of good writing. According to him current words are the best. But writing should aim at dignity and charm. These are best attained by the use of archaic words, foreign words, dialect words and newly coined words. They have an element of surprise in them. Metaphorical use of words is to be preferred to the plain. Aristotle says that a perfect poetic style uses words of all kinds in a judicious combination. Compound words are the most suitable for the lyric, rare or unfamiliar words suit the epic form, and metaphorical use of language is best for drama. In the "Rhetoric" Aristotle comments that common, familiar words are best for prose that deals with everyday subjects. But metaphorical language may be employed to introduce an element of novelty and surprise. Multiplicity of clauses, parenthesis and ambiguity should be avoided in prose. Words may be arranged in two ways called loose style and periodic style. The former consists of a whole sentence with a beginning and an end. The periodic style is more intelligible and graceful

10. The Value of Aristotle's Criticism.

Aristotle's approach to literature is that of a scientist. Aristotle wanted literature to be an art and not to do the work of morality. He points the difference between politics and poetry. Politics is a social science, therefore it should be judged by the contribution it makes to social well-being. Poetry, on the other hand, should be judged by its capacity to please the audience. He judges literature by aesthetic standards alone. Unlike Plato, he does not regard poetry as twice removed from reality. Instead, he considers the representations in poetry as true to the facts of human life. He points out its capacity to see the permanent features of life. He suggests what kind of plot, character and style please men. He finds that perepetiea and anagnorisis, please most in a tragic plot, hamartia in the tragic hero, and metaphor in style.

Tragedy, comedy and epic are all, in this way, considered with reference to the effect on the minds and hearts of their spectators. Poetics deals with the art of poetry and many more problems of literature and has therefore attracted greater attention than any other works of criticism.

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UNIT - II

Introduction To Literary Criticism – SHS1305

On the Sublime by Longinus

On the Sublime is one of a number of classical literary treatises that pose the often-considered problem of nature versus art, of the relative contributions of natural genius or inspiration and of acquired skill to great writing. The author of *On the Sublime*, who almost certainly was not Longinus, but instead was an anonymous Greek rhetorician of the first century, argues throughout the work that it is a writer's genius that lifts the reader out of himself (or herself), above the limitations of reason. The author also points out that it takes great skill, training, and self-discipline to know when to give free rein to one's genius andwhen to hold it in check.

This treatise is an interesting combination of philosophical speculation about the elevating, moving powers of poetry and oratory and of practical suggestions about the grammatical constructions and figures of speech that contribute to the effectiveness of great or sublime writing. The author, an enthusiastic critic of his literary predecessors, often quotes Homer, Demosthenes, the great Greek dramatists, and even the book of Genesis to illustrate the powers of literature, and he points out faults with examples from the works of less skilled writers and from inferior passages in the works of the masters.

The author begins *On the Sublime* with a definition of the sublime in literature as a "loftiness and excellence in language" that uplifts the reader and makes him or her react as the writer desires. Sublimity may arise from a few words that cast light on a whole subject, or it may be the result of the expansion and development of an idea; the treatise suggests that the former method is generally the more powerful.

The great danger for the writer who seeks to create a sublime passage is the possibility of lapsing into bombast, that what is intended to be majestic will be simply an empty show. Other potential traps are affectation in expression and empty emotionalism, the display of passion that is not sufficiently motivated. The search for novelty, which on occasion can create a striking effect, may also result in inappropriate imagery and diction. The elements of the truly sublime in literature are often hard to distinguish; they are known chiefly by their effect—the reader's sense of exaltation. Too, a great passage will grow in meaning and significance with each rereading.

Five sources of the sublime are outlined. Two of these are results of the natural capacities of the author: grandeur of thought and the vivid portrayal of the passions. The other three are basically rhetoricalskills: the appropriate use of figures of speech, suitable diction and metaphors, and the majestic composition or structure of the whole work. An important source is the first, which rests upon the sweep of the author's mind. Although a great intellect is likely innate, it may be enlarged by association with great ideas. Reading the finest works of the past and pondering them is always valuable, although even the greatest minds can sometimes fall below their customary level. The author suggests that Homer's *Odyssey* (c. 800 b.c.e.) is on a lower plane of intensity throughout than his *Iliad* (c. 800 b.c.e.). It is the work of an aging man who dreams, but "he dreams as Zeus might dream."

One of the tormented love lyrics of Sappho, the Greek poet, is analyzed to illustrate the power of emotion to create an impression of sublimity. The tumultuous succession of feelings, burning, shivering, and fainting are described so vividly and follow one another so closely that the reader participates in the emotional crises of the poet. This technique can, however, in the hands of a lesser skilled writer than Sappho, seem contrived, even ridiculous.

The author digresses from this discussion to elaborate on his earlier consideration of the relative merits of succinctness and diffuseness in the creation of sublime literature. He suggests that quickly moving, powerful language can overcome readers or listeners,...

On the Sublime by Longinus

Longinus defines sublime as a kind of loftiness and excellence inlanguage raising the style of the ordinary language. Sublimity springs from a great and lofty soul, thereby becoming "one echo of a great soul". It should not only be distinct and excellent in composition but also move the readers along with the effects of pleasure and persuasion.

Such effects should be subtle, flashing at the right moment, scattering everything before it like a thunder bolt and at once displaying the power of plentitude. In this sense, sublime is lofty and excellent poetic creation with power to please, persuade and move the readers through the upliftment of their souls. Sublimity is thus the aesthetic upliftment of the soul through the

reconciliation of the poetic inspiration and rhetorical mastery of the writers. Longinus believes that sublimity is achieved by a deft handling of Nature and Art, which is inborn genius and learned skills. The five sources he mentions for the sublime are either related to author or poem. In the course of dealing with the sources of the sublime, Longinus even differentiates true sublime between false sublime.

Power of forming great conceptions: It is concerned with the grandeur of thought in writers and is the first essential source of sublime. Lofty and natural expression is possible when there are noble and lofty thoughts. Such elevating thoughts that remain as the "echo of great soul" are possible when the author has power of forming great conceptions. Mean and ignorable thoughts can never energies a lofty utterance. The great thoughts come from the imagination of a great creative genius and from a sound interpretation of the imitation of nature and of the great predecessors. The details of the conceptions should be so chosen to form an organic whole being heightened by amplification of all the details of a given subject through the vivid use of imagery and rhetoric

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Vehement and inspired passion: The second source of sublime is the genuine emotion. The emotion should be strong and natural expressed in lofty and elevated language so that it can move the readers with pleasure and persuasion. It should match with the grandeur of subject, thought and lofty style.

The due formation and use of figures of speech: The third source of sublime is the poetic use of language. The formation and use of figures boost the elevated expression if they are properly used. Such a use of figures should not be mechanical and forceful. They should be used genuinely and as per the demands of the contextual environment. Longinus deals with some major figures of speech- to him; the proper use of rhetorical question makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. It is a statement in question form that suggests its own answer. An apostrophe is a direct address to a person, thing, or abstraction, or readers that helps to move readers. Asydenton is a figure of speech in which clauses are left unconnected. The omission of conjunctions gives a quick movement of feelings and emotions; Hyberaton is an intentional inversion of word designed for special emphasis or

climatic effect. Anaphora, polybaton, periphrasis etc. give ballast to the lofty and natural expression of the language. In short, the use of figures must be physical and intimately connected with thoughts and emotions.

Noble diction: The fourth source of sublime is diction that includes choice and arrangement of words. Longinus says that the use of proper and striking words enthrall (hold attention) the hearers.

The words, to him, should be noble corresponding to the subject matter and emotion. So as to impart grandeur and beauty, giving breath in to dead things.

Dignified and elevated composition: The last source of sublime is the dignified and elevated arrangement of the diction for the grandeur of composition. The verbal order should be rhythmic and harmonious which helps pull off persuasion and pleasure. Such a composition appeals to the soul and enables the readers to participate in the emotions of the author. Similarly, while discussing the sources of true sublime, Longinus also deals with the factors of the false sublime. To him, the vices of the sublime emerge out of the lack of passion sincerely and inadequacy of communication caused by faulty techniques. The following factors are described to mention how they cause sublime to be false:

Conceit of turgidity: It is a type of timidity or bombasting use of language, which he thinks, is drier than dropsy.

Puerility: The use of puerility spoils the sublimity. It is a pedantic type of conceit adding to a pompous and frigid style.

Parentheses: It is a passion out of place and meaning, where there is no cause for passion or unrestrained where restraint is needed. Here unrestrained passion does not make sublime for the greatness of soul, place, manner, occasion, and purposes are essential.

Defects of style: The false sublimity even arises out of the defeats of style, especially when sincerity is sidelined in favor of the craze for fashionable style. Here, he suggests that the same elements of true sublime may obstruct and cause false sublime if they are not well handled by virtue of nature and sincerity.

At last to Longinus, the form and content should bring about equilibrium. The hierarchical composition can never be sublime as an art showing a beautiful cock in the mid- ocean can never be natural and pleasing.

On the Sublime by Longinus is a work of literary criticism thought to date back to 1st century

Rome. While the author is not definitively known, Longinus or Pseudo-Longinus is typically credited for the work. *On the Sublime* centers on aesthetics and the benefits of strong writing. Longinus does this by analyzing both strong and weak writing from works written over the previous thousand years. The goal, according to Longinus, is to achieve the sublime. In philosophy, the sublime is a quality of greatness. It can be physical, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, spiritual, artistic, or metaphysical. Another

quality of of the sublime is that it can't be calculated, imitated, or measured.

On the Sublime is written in epistolary form. An epistolary work is usually written through letters, journal entries, or a combination of the two. There is a missing part to this treatise—the final part—which reportedly handles the topic of public speaking. Longinus dedicated the work to one Posthumius Terentianus, a public figure in Ancient Rome known for being cultured. *On the Sublime* includes works by roughly fifty authors including Homer, the famed blind poet of Ancient Greek culture. Longinus also mentions Genesis, a book in Hebrew Bible. Because of this, many have assumed that Longinus was either knowledgeable about Jewish culture, or possbly even a Hellenized (Greek) Jew.

One of Longinus' assertions is that in order for one's writing to reach the sublime, the writer must possess and exhibit what he refers to as "moral excellence." Theories abound that Longinus avoided publishing his writings in order to preserve his modesty and therefore moral excellence. This might be another reason why the authorship of *On the Sublime* is uncertain. Another main point that Longinus makes is that a writer who transgresses social mores may not necessarily be a fool or shameless. For Longinus, social subjectivity is also important. He writes that in order to support spirit and hope, freedom is necessary. That said, too much freedom can lead to a decline in eloquence, which according to Longinus, which can hamper one's ability to write in the sublime.

To go into sublimity in more depth, Longinus provides five sources that can lead to this goal: great thoughts, noble diction, dignified word arrangement strong emotions and particular figures of speech or thoughts. The sublime also has a number of specific effects, for which Longinus calls upon readers to search: the loss of rationality, deep emotion combined with pleasure, and alienation. That alienation should lead to identifying the creative process in order to be considered sublime. Longinus simplifies these effects by stating that a strong writer will not focus on his own emotions, or trying to convey emotions, but rather to cause the reader to feel those emotions.

In addition, Longinus admires genius in writing. He mentions specific writers in addition to Homer, including Sappho, Plato, and Aristophanes. Longinus talks about these writers' ability to create the sublime by causing readers to feel pleasure. Other writers on his list are Apollonius

of Rhodes and Theocritus for their sophisticated poetry; however, Longinus says they fail to measure up to classic writers like Homer because they lack the bravery. Bravery is necessary to take risks, and taking risks is necessary to reach the sublime. After making his points about the sublime, Longinus laments the decline of the oratory arts. The reason for this is two-fold: it comes from the absence of freedom as well as moral corruption. These two phenomena, Longinus reminds readers, damages the high spirit which creates the sublime.

It's important to note that the use of the English word "sublime" and all its philosophical associations that accompany arise from multiple translations, but the word truly means "the essentials of a noble and impressive style." Longinus' own writing is rarely described as perfect or even sublime in part because of his overzealous enthusiasm. This leads to an overuse of hyperbole, or overstatement, on his part. Longinus is also criticized for writing tediously in *On the Sublime*.

By the 10th century, *On the Sublime* was copied into a medieval manuscript where it was incorrectly attributed to Dionysius or Longinus, which was misread or mistranslated as Dionysius Longinus, and therefore confused with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who also lived

during the first century. The work was also attributed to Cassius Longinus, but as he lived from 213-273 C.E., he cannot be the same Longinus who wrote *On the Sublime*. Three hundred years later, references were made by a Byzantine rhetorician to text that might be *On the Sublime*. In the 16th century, the treatise was published by Francis Robortello in Basel, and six years later by Niccolò da Falgano. In the 1600s, the concept of reaching the sublime becomes a major goal of Baroque literature, and the treatise is rediscovered. Since then, *On the Sublime* has received more attention with each passing century.

On the Sublime BY Longinus

Short questions

In "On the Sublime," why does Longinus shed light on the production itself rather than on the poet?

The reason why the author of On the Sublime (who more than likely is not Longinus, according to historians) sheds a light on the production itself rather than the poet is because of a term that the author quoted from Theodorus which is parenthyrsus (III). This term refers to a tragic flaw in all men which is to lose themselves into a situation.

What is an example of any poem that can be considered sublime according to Longinus, and why is it considered sublime?

One example of the sublime in poetry is Epithalamion by Edmund Spenser. Since this is a long and immensly complex poem, the poems in his sonnet cycle will serve equally well as examples of the sublime. According to Longinus, in brief, the style of poetry must elevated, moral, nobel, having strong emotion and containing dignified figures of speech.

What does Longinus discuss in On The Sublime?

This text begins with a discussion about the relationship between "nature" and "art

How is nobility of diction a source of the sublime as discussed by Longinus in On the Sublime?

Not every work is extraordinary. Longinus, in On the Sublime,has given detailed account of the sources that make any work of art sublime. Sublimity refers to greatness and excellence. One of the key things that make any work extraordinary is its "diction" (By diction, one means the words chosen for use in the work). Now, a writer can always choose one word over the other.

What is some information on Longinus as a Classic or Romantic critic?

Longinus wrote in the Classic Greek period. Longinus cannot be properly identified. It is thought he was actually a Greek master of rhetoric, though, for simplicity, the writer is consistently called Longinus.During the Classic period, Longinus had no appreciable impact or influence. This is said to be true because he is not referenced in any other known Classic Greek works, neither is he nor The Sublimementioned in the Medieval period.

What are the sources of the "sublime" in On The Sublime by Longinus? Grandeur of Thought
Capacity for Strong Emotion Appropriate Use of Pictures Nobility of Diction
Dignity of Composition

What is false sublime? Explain with reference to Longinus's On the Sublime.

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

How does figurative language enhance "sublimity" in On the Sublime?

Longinus, in Section XV of his treatise, argues that figurative langauge, done well, can play a vital part in the creation of sublimity. This is a very interesting example of how Longinus argues that excellence in literature comes through a marriage of natural talent and genius and learnt skill, such as the ability to use figurative language well to describe something.

Write note on Frigidity in On the Sublime.

Frigidity is a characteristic that Longinus sees as an enemy of sublime literature. Writers achieve frigidity when, while they "aim at the uncommon and elaborate and most of all at the attractive, they drift unawares into the tawdry and affected.

What is the sublime art?

In aesthetics, the sublime (from the Latin sublīmis) is the quality of greatness, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, aesthetic, spiritual, or artistic. The term especially refers to a greatness beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement, or imitation.

How does Longinus define the sublime?

Longinus defines the literary sublime as "excellence in language", the "expression of a great spirit" and the power to provoke "ecstasy" in one's readers. Longinusholds that the goal of a writer should be to produce a form of ecstasy.

What is the sublime in literature?

The sublime, a notion in aesthetic and literary theory, is a striking grandeur of thought and emotion. Longinus defines literary sublimity as "excellence in language," the "expression of a great spirit," and the power to provoke "ecstasy."

What is the romantic sublime?

Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry (1757) connected the sublime with experiences of awe, terror and danger. Burke saw nature as the most sublimeobject, capable of generating the strongest sensations in its beholders. ThisRomantic conception of the sublime proved influential for several generations of artists.

What is a sublime landscape?

19th Century Landscape – The Pastoral, the Picturesque and the Sublime. ... Three aesthetic concepts established during the Romantic era divided the natural world into categories: the Pastoral, the Picturesque, and the Sublime. The first two represent Nature as a comforting source of physical and spiritual sustenance.

What is a sublime experience?

The Sublime Experience. Sublime experiences, whether in nature or in art, inspire awe and reverence, and an emotional understanding that transcends rational thought and words or language.

Who is called the first romantic critic?

Sublimity, with its emphasis on natural expression and impulse, balanced astutely with skill and artifice, is something that sounds awfully like Romantic poetry and literature. It is therefore perfectly plausible to argue that Longinus was in fact the first Romantic critic

Is sublimity a word?

sublimity When something is sublime, it transcends greatness or beauty for the observer — like a deeply moving film or a transcendent piece of music. So when something is truly wonderful, or someone acts in a truly noble way, it's an example ofsublimity. The Latin root, sublimis, means "uplifted, high, or exalted."

What is a sublime?

In common use, sublime is an adjective meaning "awe-inspiringly grand, excellent, or impressive," like the best chocolate fudge sundae you've ever had. You might describe a spine-tingling piece of music as "a work of sublime beauty.

What is the egotistical sublime?

egotistical sublime a phrase coined by Keats in a letter of 27 October 1818 to describe his version of Wordsworth's distinctive genius. "egotistical sublime.

An Apology for Poetry by Sir Philip Sydney

An Apology for Poetry

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.

So, even history when it is described in a lively and passionate expression becomes poetic. He prefers imaginative literature that teaches better than history and philosophy. Literature has the power to reproduce an ideal golden world not just the brazen world.

Stephen Gossen makes charges on poetry which Sidney answers.
The charges are:

1. Poetry is the waste of time.

2. Poetry is mother of lies.

3. It is nurse of abuse.

3. Plato had rightly banished the poets from his ideal world.

Against these charges, Sidney has answered them in the following ways-

Poetry is the source of knowledge and a civilizing force, for Sidney. Gossoon attacks on poetry saying that it corrupts the people and it is the waste of time, but Sidney says that 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 essay societies, poetry was the main source of education. He remembers ancient Greek society that respected poets. The poets are always to be looked up. So, poetry is not wasted of time.

To the second charge, 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.

Sidney rejects that poetry is the source of abuses. To him, it is people who abuses poetry, not the vice- versa. 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.

Sidney views that Plato in his Republic wanted to banish the abuse of poetry not the poets. He himself was not free from poeticality, which we 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.

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. It is artists who turn dull nature in to golden color. He employs his creative faculty, imagination and style of presentation to decorate the raw materials of nature. For Sidney, art is a speaking picture having spatiotemporal dimension. For Aristotle human action is more important but for Sidney nature is important.

Artists are to create arts considering the level of readers. The only purpose of art is to teach and delight like the whole tendency of Renaissance. Sidney favors poetic justice that is possible in poet's world where good are rewarded and wicked people are punished.

Plato's philosophy on ' virtue' is worthless at the battlefield but poet teaches men how to behave under all circumstances. Moral philosophy teaches virtues through abstract examples and history teaches virtues through concrete examples but both are defective. Poetry teaches virtue by example as well as by percept (blend of abstract + concrete). The poet creates his own world where he gives only the inspiring things and thus poetry holds its superior position to that of philosophy and history.

In the poet's golden world, heroes are ideally presented and evils are corrupt. Didactic effect of a poem depends up on the poet's power to move. It depends up on the affective quality of poetry. Among the different forms of poetry like lyric, elegy, satire, comedy etc. epic is the best form as it portrays heroic deeds and inspires heroic deeds and inspires people to become courageous and patriotic.

In this way, Sidney defines all the charges against poetry and stands for the sake of universal and timeless quality of poetry making us know why the poets are universal genius.

Poetry's Superiority over Philosophy and History

Even a cursory view at Sidney's *Apology* may prove that Sidney has an exalted conception of the nature and function of poetry. Following Minturno he says that poetry is the first light-giver to ignorance, it Nourished before any other art or science. The first philosophers and Historians were poets; and such 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.

Poetry, according to Sidney, is an art of imitation, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end,—to teach and delight. The object of all arts and sciences is to lift human life to the highest altitudes of perfection; and in this respect they are all servants of the sovereign, or poetry, whose end is well-doing and not well-knowing only. Virtuous action is, therefore, the end of learning; and Sidney sets out to prove that the poet, more than anyone else, fulfils this end.

Showing the superiority of poetry to history and philosophy Sidney says that while the philosopher teaches by precept alone, and the historian by example alone, the poet conduces most to virtue because he employes both precept and example. The philosopher teaches virtue by showing what virtue is and what vice is, by setting down, in abstract argument, and without clarity or beauty of style, the bare principles of morality. The historian teaches virtue by showing the experience of past ages; but, being tied down to what actually happened, that is, to the particular truth of things and not to general possibilities, the example he depicts draws no necessary consequence. The poet alone accomplishes this duel task. What the philosopher says should be done, is, by the poet, pictured most perfectly in some one by whom it has been done, thus coupling the general notion with the particular instance. The philosopher, moreover, teaches the learned only; but the poet teaches all, and so is, in Plutarch's phrase, "the right

popular philosopher." He seems only to promise delight, and moves men to virtue unawares. But even if the philosopher excels-the poet in teaching, he cannot move his readers to virtuous action as the poet can, and this is of higher importance than teaching, for what is the use of teaching virtue if the pupil is not moved to act and accomplish what he is taught? On the other hand, the historian deals with particular instances, with vices and virtues so mingled together in the same personage that the reader can find no pattern to imitate.

The poet improves upon history, he gives examples of vice and virtue for human imitation; he makes virtue succeed and vice fail, and this history can but seldom do. Poetry does not imitate nature; it is the reader who 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.

The basis of Sidney's distinction between the poet and the historian is the famous passage in which Aristotle explains why poetry is more philosophic and of more value than history. The poet deals, not with the particular, but with the universal,—with what might or should be, not with what is or has been. But Sidney, in the assertion of this principle, follows Mintumo and Scaliger, and goes farther than Aristotle would probably have gone. All arts have the works of nature as their principal objects of imitation, and follow nature as actors follow

the lines of their play. Only the poet is not tied to such subjects, but creates another nature better than nature herself. For going hand in hand with nature, and being enclosed not within her limits, but only by, the zodiac of his own imagination," he creates a golden world in place of Nature's brazen; and in the sense he may be compared as a creator with God. Where shall you find in life, asks Sidney, such a friend as Pylades. Such a hero as Orlando, such an excellent man as Aeneas?

Furthermore, he defends poetry vigorously against the puritans' charges, and says that it is not the mother of lies; it is the oldest of all branches of learning and removes ignorance. It delights as teaches. Poetry does not misuse and debase the mind of man by turning it to wantonness and by making it unmartial and effeminate: it is man's wit that abuses poetry, and poetry that abuses man's wit; and as to making men effeminate, this charge applies to all other sciences more than to poetry, which in its description of battles and praises of valiant men stirs courage and enthusiasm. Lastly, it is pointed out by the enemies of poetry that Plato, one of the greatest of philosophers, banished poets from his ideal commonwealth. But Plato's *Dialogues*is in reality themselves a form of poetry.

The 'Apology' as an Epitome of Renaissance Criticism

Sidney's '**Apology for Poetry**' is a work of genius, a rare and valuable critical document. Among the manifold achievements of Sidney as a critic one of the most important is the introduction of Aristotelianism into England. Says **Spingarn**, **"The introduction of Aristotelianism into England was the direct result of the influence of the Italian critics; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney."** His **Defence of Poesy**, **"is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance; and so thoroughly is it imbued with this spirit, that no other work, Italian, French, or English, can be said to give so complete and so noble a conception of the temper and the principles of Renaissance criticism."** For the general theory of poetry, its sources were the critical treatises of Minturno and Scaliger. Yet without any decided novelty of ideas, or even of expression, it can lay claim to distinct originality in its unity of feeling, its ideal and noble temper, and its adaptation to circumstance. Sidney is the harold of Neo-classicism in England, but his treatise is also a piece of creative literature romantic to the core. **Wimsatt and Brooks** emphasise the note of romance in the Apology and write, **"The sources of Sidney's 'Defence' were classical, but the spirit was not very sternly classical. Sidney sends up the joyous fireworks of the ltalianate Renaissance. His colours are enthusiastic, neo-Platonic,**

the dual purple and gold. The motion is soaring. He is essentially a theorist of the exuberant imagination." His romanticism is also seen in his appreciation of the ballad of Chevy Chase, which he says has always moved his heart like a trumpet. He thus illustrates the dual Renaissance tendency, i.e. the simultaneous presence of the romantic and the classic. Creative literature in the age was romantic, while criticism was mainly classical. As a matter of fact, Sidney's Apology is a synthesis of the critical doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Scaliger, Minturno, and a host of other writers and critics. It brings together, and interprets and comments upon, all that was characteristic in the theories of literature, current at the time.

Sidney's Defence of Poetry is the earliest attempt to deal with the poetic art, practically and not theoretically. His judgments are based on contemporary literature and show ample of good sense and sound scholarship. It is not merely empty, abstract theorising: apart from the unities, and his dislike of tragi-comedy, his judgments are not governed, to any great extent, by rules and theories. His ultimate test is of a practical kind, i.e. the power of poetry to move to virtuous action. **"The first sign of literary appreciation is to feel; and not the least of Sidney's achievement as a critic was the early recognition of that fact"—(Atkins**). He has

thus contributed to the appreciation of literature in the concrete. His treatise is the key to an understanding of Elizabethan poetry and poetic theory.'

Sidney's practical criticism is constructive and his work contributes a great deal to a better understanding of literary values. He calls attention to literary excellencies of more than one kind. He has enthusiasm for Biblical literature and finds much merit, unlike the other humanists of the day, in the medieval literature. He appreciates Chaucer and the ballad of Chevy Chase. In many ways, Sidney inaugurated a new era in the history of English literary criticism. His treatise is a landmark in the history of literary criticism in England. More truly than Dryden he is the father of literary criticism in that country.

His '**Apology**', as mentioned above, is an epitome of Renaissance criticism. In every one of his views, on the nature and function of poetry, on the three unities, on Tragedy and Comedy, on Diction and metre, he represents contemporary trends. Everywhere his work reflects the influence of Aristotle and Plato, of Scaliger and Minturno, and other classical, Italian and French critics: He constantly cites the authority of Aristotle, Horace, and the Italian critics of the Renaissance in support of his views. But this does not mean that it is a mere summary of classical and Italian doctrines. Sidney's originality lies in the skill with which he has drawn upon, selected, arranged and adapted earlier ideas, and then has put forth his own ideas, independently arrived at. He makes use of (a) Italian critics, (b) classical critics, Plato and Aristotle, (c) Roman critics, Horace and Plutarch (d) he also shows the influence of medieval concept of tragedy, and (e) his didactic approach to poetry, is typically Renaissance approach. Poetry was valued not for its delight, but for its moral effect and practical utility in actual life. However, he is original in his emphasis on the transport of poetry. Poetry teaches by moving us to virtuous action. In fact, throughout, his conclusions are his own, the result of reflection and wide reading. What he writes bears the stamp of his personality.

In the Apology, he has (a) boldly faced the traditional objections against poetry, (b) he has claimed for poetry, a high place in intellectual and social life, (c) by his unique vindication of poetry, he has restored it to something of its ancient prestige and meaning, and (d) by his defence of poetry, he brought enlightenment and assurance to his own generation.

His manner of presentation, his freshness and vigour, are characteristically his. His style has dignity, simplicity, concreteness, and a racy humour and irony. It is an illuminating piece of literary criticism; as well as a fine piece of creative literature.

Dramatic criticism in England began with Sidney. To him goes the credit of having formulated, for the first time, more or less in a systematic manner, the general principles of dramatic art. As a French critic writes, Sidney's Defence of Poetry, **"gives us an almost complete theory of neo-classical tragedy, a hundred years before the 'Art Poetique' of Boileau."** Sidney is unique as a critic. He is judicial, creative and original. Hence the value of his work is for all times to come.

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UNIT - III

Introduction To Literary Criticism – SHS1305

Analysis of Alexander Pope's An Essay on Criticism

An Essay on Criticism (1711) was Pope's first independent work, published anonymously through an obscure bookseller [12–13]. Its implicit claim to authority is not based on a lifetime's creative work or a prestigious commission but, riskily, on the skill and argument of the poem alone. It offers a sort of master-class not only in doing criticism but in being a critic:addressed to those

– it could be anyone – who would rise above scandal,envy, politics and pride to true judgement, it leads the reader through a qualifying course. At the end, one does not become a professional critic –the association with hired writing would have been a contaminating one for Pope – but an educated judge of important critical matters.

Much of the poem is delivered as a series of instructions, but the opening is tentative, presenting a problem to be solved: ''Tis hard to say, if greater Want of Skill/Appear in *Writing* or in *Judging* ill' (EC, 1– 2). The next six lines ring the changes on the differences to be weighed in deciding the question:

> But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' Offence, To tire our
> *Patience,* than mislead our *Sense:* Some few in that, but
> Numbers err in *this,*
> Ten Censure wrong for one who Writes amiss; A *Fool*
> might once *himself* alone expose,
> Now *One* in *Verse* makes many more in *Prose.*
>
> (EC, 3–8)

The simple opposition we began with develops into a more complex suggestion that more unqualified people are likely to set up for critic than for poet, and that such a proliferation is serious. Pope's typographically- emphasised oppositions between poetry and criticism, verse and prose,patience and sense, develop through the passage into a wider accountof the problem than first proposed: the even-handed balance of the couplets extends beyond a simple contrast. Nonetheless, though Pope's oppositions divide, they also keep within a single framework different categories of writing: Pope often seems to be addressing poets as much as critics. The critical function may well depend on a poetic function: this is after all an essay on criticism delivered in verse, and thus acting also as poetry and offering itself for criticism. Its blurring

of categories which might otherwise be seen as fundamentally distinct, and its often slippery transitions from area to area, are part of the poem's comprehensive,educative character.

Addison, who considered the poem 'a Master-piece', declared that its tone was conversational and its lack of order was not problematic: 'The Observations follow one another like those in *Horace's Art of Poetry,* without that Methodical Regularity which would have been requisite in a Prose Author' (Barnard 1973: 78). Pope, however, decided during the revision of the work for the 1736 *Works* to divide the poem into three sections, with numbered sub- sections summarizing each segment of argument. This impluse towards order is itself illustrative of tensions between creative and critical faculties, an apparent casualness of expression being given rigour by a prose skeleton. The three sections are not equally balanced, but offer something like the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of logical argumentation – something which exceeds the positive-negative opposition suggested by the couplet format. The first section (1–200) establishes the basic possibilities for critical judgement;the second (201–559) elaborates the factors which hinder such judgement;andthe third (560–744) celebrates the elements which make up true critical behaviour. Part One seems to begin by setting poetic genius and critical taste against each other, while at the same time limiting the operation of teaching to those 'who have *written well*' (*EC,* 11–18). The poem immediately stakes an implicit claim for the poet to be included in the category of those who can 'writewell' by providing a flamboyant example of poetic skill in the increasingly satiric portrayal of the process by which failed writers become critics: 'Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,/Or with a Rival's, or an *Eunuch*'s spite' (*EC,* 29–30). At the bottom of the heap are 'half-learn'd Witlings, num'rous in our Isle', pictured as insects in an early example of Pope's favourite image of teeming, writerly promiscuity (36–45). Pope then turns his attention back to the reader,conspicuously differentiated from this satiric extreme: '*you* who seek to *give* and *merit* Fame' (the combination of giving and meriting reputation again links criticism with creativity). The would-be critic, thus selected, is advised to criticise himself first of all, examining his limits and talents and keeping to the bounds of what he knows (46-67); this leads him to the most major of Pope's abstract quantities within the poem (and within his thought in general): Nature.

> First follow NATURE, and your Judgment frame By her
> just Standard, which is still the same: Unerring Nature, still
> divinely bright,
> One clear, unchang'd, and Universal Light, Life, Force,
> and Beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the Source, and End, and Te s t of Art.
>
> (*EC,* 68–73)

Dennis complained that Pope should have specified ‘what he means by Nature, and what it is to write or to judge according to Nature’ (*TE* I: 219),and modern

analyses have the burden of Romantic deifications of Nature to discard: Pope's Nature is certainly not some pantheistic, powerful nurturer, located outside social settings, as it would be for Wordsworth,though like the later poets Pope always characterises Nature as female,something to be quested for by male poets [172]. Nature would include all aspects of the created world, including the non-human, physical world, but the advice on following Nature immediately follows the advice to study one's own internal 'Nature', andthus means something like an instinctively-recognised principle of ordering, derived from the original,timeless, cosmic ordering of God (the language of the lines implicitly aligns Nature with God; those that follow explicitly align it with the soul). Art should be derived from Nature, should seek to replicate Nature, and can be tested against the unaltering standard of Nature, which thus includes Reason and Truth as reflections of the mind of the original poet- creator, God.

In a fallen universe, however, apprehension of Nature requires assistance: internal gifts alone do not suffice.

> Some, to whom Heav'n in Wit has been profuse, Want as
> much more, to turn it to its use;
> For *Wit and Judgment* often are at strife,
>
> Tho' meant each other's Aid, like *Man* and *Wife.*
>
> (*EC,* 80–03)

Wit, the second of Pope's abstract qualities, is here seamlessly conjoined with the discussion of Nature: for Pope, Wit means not merely quick verbal humour but something almost as important as Nature – a power of invention and perception not very different from what we would mean by intelligence or imagination. Early critics again seized on the first version of these lines (which Pope eventually altered to the reading given here) as evidence of Pope's inability to make proper distinctions: he seems to suggest that a supply of Wit sometimes needs more Wit to manage it, and then goes on to replace this conundrum with a more familiar opposition between Wit (invention) and Judgment (correction). But Pope stood by the essential point that Wit itself could be a form of Judgment and insisted that though the marriage between these qualities might be strained, no divorce was possible.

Nonetheless, some external prop to Wit was necessary, and Pope finds this in those 'RULES'

of criticism derived from Nature:

Those RULES of old *discover'd,* not *devis'd,*

Are *Nature* still, but *Nature Methodiz'd;*

Nature, like *Liberty*, is but restrain'd

By the same Laws which first *herself* ordain'd.

(*EC*, 88–91)

Nature, as Godlike principle of order, is 'discover'd' to operate according to certain principles stated in critical treatises such as Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica* (or Pope's *Essay on Criticism*). In the golden age of Greece (92–103), Criticism identified these Rules of Nature in early poetry and taught their use to aspiring poets. Pope contrasts this with the activities of critics in the modern world, where often criticism is actively hostile to poetry, or has become an end in itself (114–17). Right judgement must separate itself out from such blind alleys by reading Homer: '*You* then whose Judgment the right Course would steer' (*EC,* 118) can see yourself in the fable of 'young *Maro*' (Virgil), who is pictured discovering to his amazement the perfect original equivalence between Homer, Nature, and the Rules (130–40). Virgil the poet becomes a sort of critical commentary on the original source poet of Western literature,Homer. With assurance bordering consciously on hyperbole, Pope can instruct us: 'Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem;/To copy *Nature* is to copy *Them*' (*EC,* 139–40). Despite the potential for neat conclusion here, Pope has a rider to offer,and again it is one which could be addressed to poet or critic: 'Some Beauties yet, no Precepts can declare,/For there's a *Happiness* as well as *Care*' (*EC,* 141– 2). As well as the prescriptions of Aristotelian poetics,Pope draws on the ancient treatise ascribed to Longinus and known as *On the Sublime* [12]. Celebrating imaginative 'flights' rather than representation of nature, Longinus figures in Pope's poem as a sort of paradox:

Great Wits sometimes may *gloriously offend,* And *rise* to
Faults true Criticks *dare not mend;* From *vulgar Bounds*
with *brave Disorder* part, And *snatch a Grace* beyond the
Reach of Art, Which, without passing thro' the *Judgment,*
gains The *Heart,* and all its End *at once* attains.

(*EC*, 152–7)

This occasional imaginative rapture, not predictable by rule, is an important concession, emphasised by careful typographic signalling of its paradoxical nature ('*gloriously offend*', and so on); but it is itself countered by the caution that 'The Critick' may 'put his Laws in force' if such licence is unjustifiably used. Pope here seems to align the 'you' in the audience with poet rather than critic, and in the final lines of the first section it is the classical '*Bards Triumphant*' who remain unassailably immortal, leavingPope to pray for 'some Spark of *your* Coelestial Fire' (*EC,* 195) to inspire his own efforts (as

'The last, the meanest of your Sons', *EC,* 196) to instruct criticism *through* poetry.

Following this ringing prayer for the possibility of reestablishing a critical art based on poetry, Part II (200-559) elaborates all the human psychological causes which inhibit such a project: pride, envy,sectarianism, a love of some favourite device at the expense of overall design. The ideal critic will reflect the creative mind, and will seek to understand the whole work rather than concentrate on minute infractions of critical laws:

> A perfect Judge will *read* each Work of Wit With the
> same Spirit that its Author *writ,* Survey the *Whole,* nor
> seek slight Faults to find,
> Where *Nature moves,* and *Rapture warms* the Mind;
>
> (*EC,* 233–6)

Most critics (and poets) err by having a fatal predisposition towards some partial aspect of poetry: ornament, conceit, style, or metre, which they use as an inflexible test of far more subtle creations. Pope aims for akind of poetry which is recognisable and accessible in its entirety:

> *True Wit* is *Nature* to Advantage drest, What oft was
> *Thought,* but ne'er so well *Exprest,*
>
> *Something,* whose Truth convinc'd at Sight we find, That
> gives us back the Image of our Mind:
>
> (*EC,* 296–300)

This is not to say that style alone will do, as Pope immediately makesplain (305–6): the music of poetry, the ornament of its 'numbers' or rhythm, is only worth having because 'The Sound must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*' (*EC,* 365). Pope performs and illustrates a series of poetic clichés – the use of open vowels, monosyllabic lines, and cheap rhymes:

> Tho' oft the Ear the *open Vowels* tire … (*EC,* 345) And ten low
> Words oft creep in one dull Line … (*EC,* 347)
> Where-e'er you find the *cooling Western Breeze,*
>
> In the next Line, it *whispers thro' the Trees*… (*EC,* 350–1) These gaffes are

contrasted with more positive kinds of imitative effect:

> Soft is the Strain when *Zephyr* gently blows,

And the *smooth Stream* in *smoother Numbers* flows; But when
loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,

The *hoarse, rough Verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar.

(*EC*, 366–9)

Again, this functions both as poetic instance and as critical test, working examples for both classes of writer.

After a long series of satiric vignettes of false critics, who merely parrot the popular opinion, or change their minds all the time, or flatter aristocratic versifiers, or criticise poets rather than poetry (384-473), Pope again switches attention to educated readers, encouraging (or cajoling)them towards staunchly independent and generous judgment within what is described as an increasingly fraught cultural context, threatened with decay and critical warfare (474–525). But, acknowledging that even'Noble minds' will have some 'Dregs … of Spleen and sow'r Disdain' (*EC*,526–7), Pope advises the critic to 'Discharge that Rage on more ProvokingCrimes,/Nor fear a Dearthin these Flagitious Times' (EC, 528–9): obscenity and blasphemy are unpardonable and offer a kind of lightning conductor for critics to purify their own wit against some demonised object of scorn.

If the first parts of *An Essay on Criticism* outline a positive classical past and troubled modern present, Part III seeks some sort of resolved position whereby the virtues of one age can be maintained during the squabbles of the other. The opening seeks to instill the correct *behaviour* in the critic –not merely rules for written criticism, but, so to speak, for enacted criticism, a sort of '*Good Breeding*' (EC, 576) which politely enforces without seeming to enforce:

LEARN then what MORALS Criticks ought to show, For 'tis
but *half a Judge's Task*, to *Know*.

'Tis not enough, Taste, Judgment, Learning, join; In all you
speak, let Truth and Candor shine … Be *silent* always when
you *doubt* your Sense; And *speak*, tho' *sure*, with *seeming*
Diffidence

…Men must be *taught* as if you taught them *not;*

And Things *unknown* propos'd as Things *forgot:*

(*EC*, 560–3, 566–7, 574–5)

This ideally-poised man of social grace cannot be universally successful: some poets, as some critics, are incorrigible and it is part of Pope's education of the poet-critic to leave them well

alone. Synthesis, if that is being offered in this final part, does not consist of gathering all writers into one tidy fold but in a careful discrimination of true wit from irredeemable ‘dulness’ (584–630).

Thereafter, Pope has two things to say. One is to set a challenge to contemporary culture by asking ‘where’s the Man’ who can unite all necessary humane and intellectual qualifications for the critic (*EC*, 631–42), and be a sort

of walking oxymoron, 'Modestly bold, and humanly severe' in his judgements. The other is to insinuate an answer. Pope offers deft characterisations of critics from Aristotle to Pope who achieve the necessary independence from extreme positions: Aristotle's primary treatise is likened to an imaginative voyage into the land of Homer which becomes the source of legislative power; Horace is the poetic model for friendly conversational advice; Quintilian is a useful store of 'the justest Rules, and clearest *Method* join'd'; Longinus is inspired by the Muses,who 'bless *their Critick* with a *Poet's Fire'* (*EC,* 676). These pairs include and encapsulate all the precepts recommended in the body of the poem. But the empire of good sense, Pope reminds us, fell apart after the fall of Rome,leaving nothing but monkish superstition, until the scholar Erasmus,always Pope's model of an ecumenical humanist, reformed continental scholarship (693-696). Renaissance Italy shows a revival of arts, including criticism; France, 'a Nation born to serve' (*EC,* 713) fossilised critical and poetic practice into unbending rules; Britain, on the other hand, '*Foreign Laws* despis'd,/And kept *unconquer'd,* and *unciviliz'd'* (*EC,* 715–16)

– a deftly ironic modulation of what appears to be a patriotic celebration intosomething more muted. Pope does however cite two earlier verse essays (by John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire, and Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon) [13] before paying tribute to his own early critical mentor, William Walsh, who had died in 1708 [9]. Sheffield and Dillon were both poets who wrote criticism in verse, but Walsh was not a poet; in becoming the nearest modern embodiment of the ideal critic, his 'poetic' aspect becomes Pope himself, depicted as a mixture of moderated qualities which reminds us of the earlier 'Where's the man' passage: he is quite possibly here,

> Careless of *Censure,* nor too fond of *Fame,* Still
> pleas'd to *praise,* yet not afraid to *blame,* Averse alike
> to *Flatter,* or *Offend,*
>
> Not *free* from Faults, nor yet too vain to *mend.*
>
> (*EC,* 741–44)

It is a kind of leading from the front, or tuition by example, as recommended and practised by the poem. From an apparently secondary,even negative, position (writing on criticism, which the poem sees as secondary to poetry), the poem ends up founding criticism on poetry, and deriving poetry from the (ideal) critic.

Early criticism celebrated the way the poem seemed to master and exemplify its own stated ideals, just as Pope had said of Longinus that he 'Is *himself* that great *Sublime* he draws' (*EC,* 680). It is a poem profuse with images, comparisons and similes. Johnson thought the longest example,that simile comparing student's progress in learning with a traveller's journey in Alps was

‘perhaps the best that English poetry can shew’: ‘The simile of the Alps has no useless parts, yet affords a striking picture by itself: it makes the foregoing position better understood, and enables it to take faster hold on the attention; it assists the apprehension, and elevates the fancy’ (Johnson 1905: 229–30). Many of the abstract precepts aremade visible in this way: private judgment is like one’s reliance on one’s(slightly unreliable) watch (9– 10); wit and judgment are like man and wife(82–3); critics are like pharmacists trying to be doctors (108–11). Much ofthe imagery is military or political, indicating something of the social role(as legislator in the universal empire of poetry) the critic is expected toadopt; we are also reminded of the decay of empires, and the potentialdecay of cultures (there is something of *The Dunciad* in the poem). Muchof it is religious, as with the most famous phrases from the poem (‘For Fools rush in where angels fear to tread’; ‘To err is human, to forgive, divine’), indicating the level of seriousness which Pope accords the matterof poetry. Much of it is sexual: creativity is a kind of manliness, wooing Nature, or the Muse, to ‘generate’ poetic issue, and false criticism, likeobscenity, derives from a kind of inner ‘impotence’. Patterns of suchimagery can be harnessed to ‘organic’ readings of the poem’s wholeness. But part of the life of the poem, underlying its surface statements andmetaphors, is its continual shifts of focus, its reminders of that which liesoutside the tidying power of couplets, its continual reinvention of the ‘you’opposed to the ‘they’ of false criticism, its progressive displacement of theopposition you thought you were looking at with another one whichrequires your attention

SUMMARY OF JOHNSON'S PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE'S ENDURING APPEAL

Approach towards antiquity. Some people lament that the dead are praised unreasonably. They hold that the criteria of evaluating a writer should be the excellence of his work and not his antiquity. They are generally people, who have nothing to contribute to the universal truth and therefore try to win fame by offering controversial arguments or hope that posterity will be kind and sympathetic and will bestow them with the name that their contemporaries deny. Admittedly, antiquity has its blind votaries who indiscriminately praise everything merely because it dates back to the remote days. It is also true that spotlighting the merits of the ancients and the faults of contemporaries is more congenial to many critics. As long as an author is alive, the tendency is to judge him in the 'light of his worst work, and after his death the practice is to regard his best work as his most characteristic and judge him from that view point.

Continuation of esteem: a criterion of merit. The criteria for judging works of art cannot be absolute as in case of works based on scientific principles. Johnson says that in the field of literature excellence is not absolute, but gradual and comparative. In weighing works of literature, the only test that can be aptly applied is length of duration and continuation of esteem. It is quite natural that mankind examines and compares works which they have possessed long, and in case they go on praising them, it shows that they have found them to be really valuable. No production of genius can be termed excellent until it has been impartially compared with other such works, just as no one can call a river deep unless he has seen and known several rivers and judges the particular one in comparison with the others. A literary work is primarily tentative and can be estimated only by its proportion to the general and collective of humanity, as this ability has been discovered in a long succession of endeavours. Scientific works can be adjudged perfect because of their objective base, whereas the greatness of Homers poems has not been given any specific explanation except that they have appealed to generation after generation. The reason why the works of antiquity are held in esteem is not blind adulation or superstitious brief in their superior wisdom but the fact that they have stood up to scrutiny of time.

The enduring eminence of Shakespeare. The works of Shakespeare have come to assume the

status of a classic. They are credited with enduring fame and respect. As these works have outlived one whole century, which is the test normally laid down in such cases, they have attained the prestigious position of antiquity, the topical allusions to local customs and prevailing manners in Shakespeare's works are no longer relevant and his works are read for the literary pleasure they provide. His works can hardly support any faction at present, nor can they satisfy the vanity or feelings of enmity, in people closely associated with him, since all such people have passed away. It is astonishing that they have withstood changes of manners and customs, and are read just for the pleasure they offer. They are thus praised disinterestedly by generation after generation. However, it would not do to blindly believe that human judgement is never infallible. Even though a few works have met with popular approval for a long period, it is possible that this approval may have been based on prejudice or fashion. It is indispensable therefore to probe into the facts which enable the works of Shakespeare to attain and retain the respect or esteem of his countrymen.

MERITS OF SHAKESPEARE

Just representation of general nature. It is the just representation of general nature that brings immorality and enduring approbation to literary works. A faithful portrayal of the prevailing

manners of combinations of fanciful inventions is insufficient to confer immortality upon a work of art. Such pieces can only evoke pleasure or wonder which his soon exhausted. It is only truth that can afford a consistent place for the mind to rest upon. Shakespeare is, more than any one else, a poet of nature. Through his works he reflects life. Shakespeare's characters do not belong to the society of a particular place or time; they are universal, representing every man. They are the genuine progeny of common humanity such as will always remain in this world and whom our eyes will always continue to .meet. What motivates his characters to speak and act are those general principles and emotions which stir all hearts; whereas in the works of other poets a character is often an individual, in Shakespeare it is commonly a species. The wide expanse of Shakespeare's design is the main source of the wealth of instruction that his plays convey and owing to this fact they are filled with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. Critics used to say that even verse of Euripides is essentially a percept in itself and it may be said of Shakespeare's plays that a whole pantheon of civil and economic prudence may be collected from them. Still it is not in the grandeur of particular passages but in the total progress of the fable and the tenor of the dialogue that Shakespeare's spontaneity is unfolded. To reveal his genius through singled out passages is like describing the endurance and beauty of a house by showing a brick.

In order to know how and why Shakespeare excels other writers in depicting the sentiments that are true to life, we have to compare him with other renowned authors and their practices. A patient and laborious perusal of his plays does not disqualify the reader for the feasible world, whereas this may be the case of almost every other dramatist. In the dramas of these writers we meet characters who are never seeing the human world, their characters converse in a language which was never heard before; the topics upon which they speak are such as are not of any consequence in real life. In Shakespeare the dialogue is not accidental, it is occasioned by the incident which products it. It is so realistic and lucid that one does not come to think of it as belonging to a fanciful fiction. It seems rather than the dialogue has been gleaned out of common conversation through a wise selection.

Theme of love not over-emphasized. In a majority of the dramas of other dramatists love is the universal agent that causes all good and evil and hastens or retards every action. In their fables we meet stock characters such as a lover, a lady and a rival. These are involved in contrary obligations and haunted with violent but inconsistent desires. They are made to speak out in hyperbolic or exaggerated joy and outrageous sorrow. Actually, by doing so, these dramatists are violating probability and misrepresenting life. They deprave the language too.

Love is not the only passion, it is just one among the many. Shakespeare never assigns any excessive role to this passion in his plays, for he catches his clues from the world of day to day life and exhibits in his plays what he finds in life. He knew that any passion would cause happiness or disaster depending on its being moderated or left uncontrolled.

Shakespeare's methods of characterization; individualized but universal. Shakespeare's characters are universally delineated but it is easy to distinguish one from another. Most of the speeches are so apt that they cannot be transplanted from the character to whom Shakespeare has given it. Shakespeare's characters are not exaggerated. He does not give us purely virtuous or utterly depraved characters. We may even say he has no heroes as such in his play; on the contrary it is the common humanity that he depicts. The characters act and speak in a way which appears to the reader to be what he himself would have done in a similar situation. Even when the plot requires a supernatural agency, the tone of the dialogues of various characters are life-like and realistic, other writers draw the most natural passions and most common incidents in a way which makes them unrecognizable. Shakespeare "approximates the remote and familiarizes the wonderful'. Even when he describes an impossible incident, he makes it seem probable; we feel it would have been just the way in which Shakespeare has described it

if it took place. He presents human nature not merely as it reacts to the common situations of real life but also as it may act in extraordinary situations.

Reflection of life. Other dramatists gain attention only by presenting fabulous, exaggerated characters which confuse our imagination, but those feverish experiences can be cured by reading Shakespeare's- plays where we meet human sentiments in human language. His plays are informative and instructive, no matter who the reader is. A confessor as well as a sagacious hermit can draw lessons of practical wisdom from them.

Objection of some critics answered. Shakespeare's emphasis on general human nature has invited censure and hostility from some critics. Dennis and Rymer complain that Shakespeare's Romans are not sufficiently Roman. Voltaire's protest is that his kings are not kingly in the strict sense; that one of them, Claudius in Hamlet, is depicted as a drunkard. In reality Shakespeare assigns nature a prominent role and gives less room to accidental features. lie is careful of preserving adventitious distinctions. His story or plot may demand Romans or kings but what Shakespeare thinks about is the human element in them. Romans and kings are essentially human beings, what befalls all human beings may befall them too. A usurper and murderer like Claudius can certainly be a lover of wine; buffoon may well be picked from among Roman senators. l'lie objections of the critics on this issue merely proves their petty mindedness.

Mixture of tragic and comic elements defended. Another allegation levelled against Shakespeare is that he was careless enough to mix tragedy and comedy in the same- play. Johnson take this point for a detailed consideration. Johnson agrees that in the strictest sense, Shakespeare's plays are neither comedies or tragedies. They are compositions of a distinct kind which show the real state of nature. Life is an ebb and flow of sorrow and happiness, ,'d and ill in various permutations and combinations. Hence a portrait of life should consist of both; such an intermingled expression life is unexceptionable ; the loss of one is the gain of another. In this world the treacherousness of one is sometimes beaten by the frolic of another, and at times people may contrive to help or harm others without in the least intending to do so. Ancient poets used select crimes and foolishness, vicissitudes and lighter incidents, kills of distress and joys of prosperity and modify them in several their plays. It must have been thus that tragedy comedy arose. But it comes to our particular attention that no single lurk or Roman author has attempted depicting both these aspects either in separate plays or in the same composition. Shakespeare's genius is proved in his power to give rise to joy and sorrow through the same play. Almost all his plays have serious as well as absurd characters and thus sometimes cause

seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

Nature a higher court of appeal than rules of criticism. From the point of view of the rules of dramatic writing, Shakespeare's mingling of the tragic and the comic may be considered unfavourable but the rules are less important than the claims of realism; there is always room for appealing from criticism to nature. The aim of poetry is to please and instruct and we may justify the drama which mingles the comic and the tragic, because it achieves this aim better than pure drama; for it is closer to reality. Nor are critics justified in alleging that such mingling results in the suspension of passions and interruption in their progress so that the principle event loses the power of moving the hearts of the spectators. The mingling of tragic and comic scenes succeeds in enhancing the intensity of passions. In any case mingled drama can give greater pleasure because pleasure consists in variety.

Classification of Shakespeare's plays artificial. Besides, any rigorous differentiation between tragedy and comedy hardly existed in the time of Shakespeare when any play which had a denouement providing happiness for its chief characters was regarded as a comedy, and any play which had a catastrophe depicting death or disaster of the chief character was labelled as a tragedy. A history play was believed to be one which depicted a series of actions in a

chronological order. It was not always clearly distinguished from tragedy. In any of these modes Shakespeare can be seen to have interchanged scenes of seriousness and happiness. This soothes the mind on one hand and exalts it on the other. Shakespeare always succeeds in achieving his purpose, whether it is to gladden or to depress, to -carry on with the story without vehemence or emotion. He makes us laugh or mourn, to keep silent in quite expectation, tranquil but not indifferent. Once we come to grasp Shakespeare's plan in a particular play much of the criticism of Rymer and Voltaire loses its validity. Hamlet opens, without any impropriety, with a dialogue between two sentinels. In *Othello* Iago's shouting at Brabantio's window in the first Act does not harm the scheme of the play, although his phraseology may be too, vulgar for, a modern spectator. There is no gross impropriety either in the character of Polonius or in the grave-diggers' conversation.

Shakespeare's natural affinity for comedy. Shakespeare wrote his plays in keeping with his natural disposition. He was unaware of the 'rules' of dramatic writing. Rymer's argument that Shakespeare's natural disposition lay in the direction of comedy is correct. In writing tragedy Shakespeare seems to have – toiled hard. His comic scenes, on the other hand, are spontaneous and successful. Comedy was congenial to his nature. In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting but his comic scenes often surpass our expectations. His comedy pleases through the thoughts and language whereas his tragedy pleases mainly through incidents and action. His tragedy is a testimony of his skill; his comedy is the product of his instinct Though time has brought in many changes of customs and manners the force of his comic scenes has not abated. The intrigues and vexations of the characters in the comic scenes still continue to please us because of their originality or genuineness. The appeal of his comedies has stood the test of time. Shakespeare seems to have obtained his comic dialogues from the common intercourses of life, and not from the language of- 'polite' society or from that of the learned people who tend to depart from the established forms of speech. Shakespeare's familiar dialogue is smooth and clear yet not wholly free of ruggedness or difficulty.

WEAKNESSES OF SHAKESPEARE

Virtue sacrificed to convenience. The excellence of Shakespeare must not blind us to the fact that his works have numerous defects too. Actually these defects are so serious that they would have sufficed to overwhelm the merit of any other writer. The first impropriety in Shakespeare is that he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is more careful to please than to instruct. It is not incorrect to say that Shakespeare seems to write without any moral purpose. Although we

can select a whole system of axioms his plays it is not – because he has paid any conscious thought to morality. These precepts seem to come from him in a casual manner. In Shakespeare's plays there is no just distribution of evil and good. His virtuoues characters do not always show a disapproval of the wicked ones. His characters pass through right and wrong indifferently and at the end if they serve as examples, they do so by chance and not by the author's efforts. The fact that the period in -which he lived was not too refined is not an excuse for this defect. Every writer has the duty of trying to make the world a better place to live in.

Carelessness about plot development. Shakespeare's plots are often loosely knit and carelessly developed**;** in a majority of the cases, just a little more attention would have been enough to improve them. In fact in his plays there are plenty of opportunities to instruct or delight, but he makes use of those the ate easy and rejects those which demand more effort and labour. In many of his plays the later part appears to have been neglected. It seems that when he was approaching the end of his work and the reward seemed near at hand, he exerted less labour on the work in order to complete in quickly and derive the profits immediately. As a matter of fact, it is the conclusion at which he ought to have exerted his maximum labour; lack

of attention has resulted in the catastrophe in several of his plays being improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

Anachronism. Yet another fault in Shakespeare's plays is anachronism—his violation of chronology, or his indifference to historical accuracy. Shakespeare is indifferent about the distinctions of time and place and gives to one age or nation the manners and opinions which pertain to another. This is detrimental to the effect of likelihood of the incidents. Alexander Pope opines that this defect is to be attributed not to Shakespeare himself but to those who interpolated unnecessary details of their own into his plays. But Johnson does not agree this. Shakespeare makes Hector quote Aristotle in *Troilus and Cressida* and mingles classical legend with Gothic mythology in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* However, it must be confessed that he was not the only violator of chronology; Sidney, a contemporary writer, who was also learned, in his *Arcadia* confounded the pastoral period with the feudal age, whereas the two ages were quite opposite to each other.

Coarseness of dialogues. Shakespeare's plays also have faults of dialogue and diction. The dialogues in the comedies are exposed to objection when the characters are made to engage in contests of wit and sarcasm. Many of their jests are generally indecent and gross and there is much licentiousness and indelicacy even where ladies join the conversation. Even the refined characters speak on the same level as the clowns and often all distinction between the two is lost. Whether this was the real conversation of ladies and gentlemen of his period is difficult to say. But the coarseness of this conversation in Shakespeare's plays cannot be approved; it is the writer's duty to make suitable selection even in the forms of gaiety.

Performance in tragedies worse when more labour is spent. In his tragedies, Shakespeare's performance is the worse where he seems to have spent the most labour. When he works hard to be effective, the result is unimpressive, tedious and obscure,

Undue verbosity and prolixity of words. The narrative parts of Shakespeare's plays show an undue pomp of diction and verbosity full of repetition. Instead of enlivening the narration by making it brief, Shakespeare endeavours to make it effective through dignity and splendour.

Flamboyant speeches, inflated vocabulary. The set speeches in some of his plays are dispiriting, cold and feeble. It appears that as Shakespeare's powers were natural, he perform badly whenever he endeavours to create a particular effect deliberately. Often he seems to be involved in some unwieldy sentiment which he seems unable to express and unwilling to drop. Complexity or intricacy of language does not always accompany subtlety of thought. Quite often the quality of words does not correspond to that or the thought or image for which they

were employed. Trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas are, at times, clothed in sonorous epithets and high-sounding images. He often loses the heights of poetic loftiness by the use of some idle conceit or dry equivocation. In such cases terror and pity are degraded into a sort of frigidity. Thus the intense feelings roused by him suddenly lose their intensity and become weak.

Craze for puns word play. Lastly Shakespeare could never resist a quibble. Whatever be the occasion of the dialogue, whether the situation be amusing or tense, Shakespeare seizes the opportunity of employing a pun. Love of quibbling misleads Shakespeare just as the will-o-the wisp misleads the traveller in marshy places. A quibble is, after all, a trivial thing. But it had such a fascination for Shakespeare that he would sacrifice reason, propriety, and truth for its sake. It is to him like the golden apple for which he would always turn aside from his path; his fatal Cleopatra for which he would lose the world and be content to lose it. He was prepared to spoil his whole play for the sake of quibble.

THE THREE UNITIES OF SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's disregard of the unites not a defect. One practice in Shakespeare's writing of dramas, which is regarded by critics as a defect but which is not really a defect, is his neglect of the unities of time and place. It is held that these rules have been laid down by the joint authority of poets and critics and hence ought not to be violated. Johnson does not agree with this view, and defends Shakespeare. One is not required to look for the unities in the history plays, for all that. they need is consistency and spontaneity of characterization. The events in them are not subject to the writer's control. In other plays, Shakespeare has observed the unity of action. His plays have beginning, a middle and an end as laid down by Aristotle. Here and there we may find an incident which could be easily spared, but, on the whole, there is nothing superfluous in. them. There is a logical sequence of incidents and the conclusion follows naturally. Shakespeare had no consideration for the unities of time and place. In case the issue is closely examine it will be found that unlike the unity of action, he other two unities are no essential. They have given more trouble to the dramatist than pleasure to the spectator

Unities of time and place: pros and cons. The argument given in favour of the unities of time and place is that if they are **limit** preserved, credibility of the play is affected. No one will believe that an action of months or years can take place within hours, that the scene can change from Greece to Rome in the span if mimic act. Our mind, it is averred, revolts against apparent falsehood, fiction loses its impact when it does not resemble reality. Johnson calls this argument stupid. It is a mistake to imagine that the change of scene from Alexandria to Rome strains credibility; to do so would imply that the spectator actually imagines himself at Alexandria in the first act while he himself is sitting at a theatre in London. On the same grounds, we can say, that no audience can actually believe in point of time that they are witnessing events that took place in the days of Antony and Cleopatra. But if the audience can believe that in the first act they are at Alexandria they can also believe that in the next act, they are in Rome, and similarly they can also believe the changes in respect of time. The spectators are fully aware, from the first act to the last, that the stage on which events are being presented is only a stage and that the players are only players. There is nothing wrong in representing the stage as Athens in the first act of the drama and as Sicily in the second act when the stage is only a stage, and neither Athens nor Sicily. If we accept that the unity of place is dispensable, it is easy to accept that an extension of time is also valid. Drama presents successive imitations of sequential actions, and there is no reason why lapse of time is not to be allowed between cause and effect, or in other words, between one act and the next. The belief of the audience is not adversely affected by lapse of time between acts.

The credulity of the audience: dramatic illusion. The fact that the spectators do not believe that they are witnessing actual events taking place at actual places does not mean hat they are totally incredulous of the various happenings on the stage. They take the dramatic performance not as reality itself but as a just representation of reality. The evils and vices that they see on the stage are not believed by the s spectators to be real evils, but they are accepted as evils to which they themselves may be exposed. If there is any illusion, it lies in the fact that the spectator fancies himself unhappy for a moment when he sees the actor represent unhappiness; it is not that the spectator believes the actor to be unhappy. The audience knows that they are witnessing only a fiction, and it is this consciousness of fiction that is a source of the pleasure of tragedy. If the audience took the murders in tragedy for reality it may no longer amuse them.
The stage brings life's realities to mind. Events enacted on the stage cause pain or pleasure to the spectators not because they are seen as realities, but because they bring realities to the mind. For instance, when we view fountains or trees painted on a canvas, we do not, in fact, feel their refreshing coolness and comfort, but we do image the freshness we many derive if we were actually amidst the trees and fountains. We are agitated when we read *Henry the Fifth* but never do we take the pages of this play to be the battlefield of Again court. Witnessing a dramatic performance on the stage is similar to reading a book.

Comedy mere powerful on stage, **and tragedy more effective when read.** Comedy is really more effective when seen on the stage, but tragedy is often more stirring when read. Comic action enhances the pleasure conveyed by words in a comedy, but neither voice nor gesture can add dignity or force to the soliloquy of a tragic character like Cato.

About the spectators, acceptance of scenic change and the passage of time. A reader acknowledges the changes of location and the lapse of time in a narrative poem; similarly, one accepts these anomalies in the case of a drama enacted on the stage or read at home. It is a matter of indifference if the unities of time and place are disregarded by a dramatist and if a longer or shorter time is shown to have lapsed between the acts or if changes of scenes are implied.

Possible ignorance of Shakespeare in regard to the rules of he unities. It is not known whether Shakespeare was aware of the rules regarding the unities and deliberately rejected them or if he violated the rules in sheer ignorance of their existence. However, there must have been scholars enough to advise him on this matter when he gained repute. It is possible that he neglected the rules first in ignorance but later on deliberately. Either way, the neglect is not lamentable. Such violations of rules are in keeping with the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare, and only petty-minded critics would disapprove of such deviations from rules in his case.

Unities of time and place not essential. To keep the unities of time and place is not necessary although 'authority' is on the side of rules. True, the unities of time and place at time add much to the totality of the play; but there is no harm in sacrificing them for the sake of the nobler beauties of variety and instruction. A play that scrupulously observes the rules may be regarded as the product of superfluous and showy art. The greatest attributes of a play are to copy nature and instruct life. If a dramatist complies in this matter and can yet observe all the unities, he deserves honour for his accomplishment. Some of the critics who advocate these unities are men of renown and worthy of respect. But perhaps, says Johnson, the principles governing drama are in need of a fresh examination.

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UNIT - IV

Introduction To Literary Criticism – SHS1305

Samuel Taylor Coleridge ‘Biographia Literaria’

Coleridge intended Biographia Literaria to be a short preface to a collection of his poems, Sibylline Leaves (1817). However, it quickly expanded into a two-volume autobiography, mixing memoir, philosophy, religion and literary theory, and was heavily influenced by German criticism, the evaluation and interpretation of literature. Coleridge himself described Biographia Literaria as an ‘immethodical miscellany’ of ‘life and opinions’. In 1906, the poet Arthur Symons called the work ‘the greatest book of criticism in English, and one of the most annoying books in any language’.

Coleridge (1770-1856) takes the trouble to examine and correct Wordsworth’s views on language and meter. He does it seventeen years later in his Biographia Literaria. Coleridge acutely remarks that Wordsworth’s own theory of language is based on a selection of the language of rustics. Now, Coleridge says, if you remove the provincial terms of speech from a peasant’s language you no longer have rustic language at all. You have the language that any man speaks. Thus he denies Wordsworth’s main assertion that a special virtue is in the speech of those in close communication with nature. Yet though he will not accept Wordsworth’s theory, he is in complete agreement with him as to the falseness and artificiality of much of the verse of the preceding generation. Writing later than Wordsworth, at a time when the Romantic movement has more partisans, he can be more reasonable and less polemical than Wordsworth. Coleridge’s ideas about fancy and imagination, and his Shakespeare criticism are much useful for us.

Coleridge writes of his ideas of imagination and fancy;“The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former,

co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites.

The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory must receive all its materials ready made from the laws of association. Murray Budny observes, ‘‘During the 17th century the terms imagination and fancy had often enough been used in a vaguely synonymous way to refer to the realm of fairy tale or make-believe. Yet here and there (as in the opening of Hobbes’s Leviathan) the term ‘imagination’ had tended to distinguish itself from ‘fancy’ and settle toward a meaning centered in the sober literalism of sense impressions and the survival of these in memory. This was in accord with medieval and Renaissance tradition, where imagination and phantasia had all along been fairly close together, but where, so far as a distinction of this kind had been made, it was phantasia which meant the lighter and less responsible kind of imaging.”

Poetic theory in Biographia Literaria

Biographia Literaria includes some of the most important English writing on poetic theory. Some of it is a response to ideas of poetry advanced by his close friend and collaborator William Wordsworth, first in the 1800 preface to their joint publication Lyrical Ballads and then in the preface to Wordsworth’s Collected Poems (1815). Referring to the latter, Coleridge says he wants in Biographia Literaria to make clear ‘on what points I coincide

with the opinions in that preface, and in what points I altogether differ'.

Imagination and the suspension of disbelief

In one of the most famous passages in Biographia Literaria, Coleridge offers a theory of creativity (pp. 95-96). He divides imagination into primary and secondary. Primary imagination is common to all humans: it enables us to perceive and make sense of the world. It is a creative function and thereby repeats the divine act of creation. The secondary imagination enables individuals to transcend the primary imagination – not merely to perceive connections but to make them. It is the creative impulse that enables poetry and other art.

Biographia Literaria contains the first instance of the phrase 'suspension of disbelief'. Writing about his contributions to the Lyrical Ballads, which includes The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Coleridge says that although his characters were 'supernatural, or at least romantic', he tried to give them a 'human interest and a semblance of disbelief' that would prompt readers to the 'willing suspension of disbelief… which constitutes poetic faith'.

The Transformative Power of the Imagination

Coleridge believed that a strong, active imagination could become a vehicle for transcending unpleasant circumstances. Many of his poems are powered exclusively by imaginative flights, wherein the speaker temporarily abandons his immediate surroundings, exchanging them for an entirely new and completely fabricated experience. Using the imagination in this way is both empowering and surprising because it encourages a total and complete disrespect for the confines of time and place. These mental and emotional jumps are often well rewarded. Perhaps Coleridge's most famous use of imagination occurs in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797), in which the speaker employs a keen poetic mind that allows him to take part in a journey that he cannot physically make. When he "returns" to the bower,

after having imagined himself on a fantastic stroll through the countryside, the speaker discovers, as a reward, plenty of things to enjoy from inside the bower itself, including the leaves, the trees, and the shadows. The power of imagination transforms the prison into a perfectly pleasant spot.

The Interplay of Philosophy, Piety, and Poetry

Coleridge used his poetry to explore conflicting issues in philosophy and religious piety. Some critics argue that Coleridge's interest in philosophy was simply his attempt to understand the imaginative and intellectual impulses that fueled his poetry. To support the claim that his imaginative and intellectual forces were, in fact, organic and derived from the natural world, Coleridge linked them to God, spirituality, and worship. In his work, however, poetry, philosophy, and piety clashed, creating friction and disorder for Coleridge, both on and off the page. In "The Eolian Harp" (1795), Coleridge struggles to reconcile the three forces. Here, the speaker's philosophical tendencies, particularly the belief that an "intellectual breeze" (47) brushes by and inhabits all living things with consciousness, collide with those of his orthodox wife, who disapproves of his unconventional ideas and urges him to Christ. While his wife lies untroubled, the speaker agonizes over his spiritual conflict, caught between Christianity and a unique, individual spirituality that equates nature with God. The poem ends by discounting the pantheist spirit, and the speaker concludes by privileging God and Christ over nature and praising them for having healed him from the spiritual wounds inflicted by these unorthodox views.

Nature and the Development of the Individual

Coleridge, Wordsworth, and other romantic poets praised the unencumbered, imaginative soul of youth, finding images in nature with which to describe it. According to their formulation, experiencing nature was an integral part of the development of a complete soul

and sense of personhood. The death of his father forced Coleridge to attend school in London, far away from the rural idylls of his youth, and he lamented the missed opportunities of his sheltered, city-bound adolescence in many poems, including “Frost at Midnight” (1798). Here, the speaker sits quietly by a fire, musing on his life, while his infant son sleeps nearby. He recalls his boarding school days, during which he would both daydream and lull himself to sleep by remembering his home far away from the city, and he tells his son that he shall never be removed from nature, the way the speaker once was. Unlike the speaker, the son shall experience the seasons and shall learn about God by discovering the beauty and bounty of the natural world. The son shall be given the opportunity to develop a relationship with God and with nature, an opportunity denied to both the speaker and Coleridge himself. For Coleridge, nature had the capacity to teach joy, love, freedom, and piety, crucial characteristics for a worthy, developed individual.

Conversation Poems

Coleridge wanted to mimic the patterns and cadences of everyday speech in his poetry. Many of his poems openly address a single figure—the speaker’s wife, son, friend, and so on—who listens silently to the simple, straightforward language of the speaker. Unlike the descriptive, long, digressive poems of Coleridge’s classicist predecessors, Coleridge’s so-called conversation poems are short, self-contained, and often without a discernable poetic form. Colloquial, spontaneous, and friendly, Coleridge’s conversation poetry is also highly personal, frequently incorporating events and details of his domestic life in an effort to widen the scope of possible poetic content. Although he sometimes wrote in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter, he adapted this metrical form to suit a more colloquial rhythm. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge believed that everyday language and speech rhythms would help broaden poetry’s audience to include the middle and lower classes, who might have felt

excluded or put off by the form and content of neoclassicists, such as Alexander Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and John Dryden.

Delight in the Natural World

Like the other romantics, Coleridge worshiped nature and recognized poetry's capacity to describe the beauty of the natural world. Nearly all of Coleridge's poems express a respect for and delight in natural beauty. Close observation, great attention to detail, and precise descriptions of color aptly demonstrate Coleridge's respect and delight. Some poems, such as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "Youth and Age" (1834), and "Frost at Midnight," mourn the speakers' physical isolation from the outside world. Others, including "The Eolian Harp," use images of nature to explore philosophical and analytical ideas. Still other poems, including "The Nightingale" (ca. 1798), simply praise nature's beauty. Even poems that don't directly deal with nature, including "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," derive some symbols and images from nature. Nevertheless, Coleridge guarded against the pathetic fallacy, or the attribution of human feeling to the natural world. To Coleridge, nature contained an innate, constant joyousness wholly separate from the ups and downs of human experience.

Prayer

Although Coleridge's prose reveals more of his religious philosophizing than his poetry, God, Christianity, and the act of prayer appear in some form in nearly all of his poems. The son of an Anglican vicar, Coleridge vacillated from supporting to criticizing Christian tenets and the Church of England. Despite his criticisms, Coleridge remained defiantly supportive of prayer, praising it in his notebooks and repeatedly referencing it in his poems. He once told the novelist Thomas de Quincey that prayer demanded such close attention that it was the one of the hardest actions of which human hearts were capable. In the sad poem, "Epitaph" (1833),

Coleridge composes an epitaph for himself, which urges people to pray for him after he dies. Rather than recommend a manner or method of prayer, Coleridge's poems reflect a wide variety, which emphasizes his belief in the importance of individuality.

Symbols

The Sun

Coleridge believed that symbolic language was the only acceptable way of expressing deep religious truths and consistently employed the sun as a symbol of God. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Coleridge compares the sun to "God's own head" (97) and, later, attributes the first phase of the mariner's punishment to the sun, as it dehydrates the crew. All told, this poem contains eleven references to the sun, many of which signify the Christian conception of a wrathful, vengeful God. Bad, troubling things happen to the crew during the day, while smooth sailing and calm weather occur at night, by the light of the moon. Frequently, the sun stands in for God's influence and power, as well as a symbol of his authority. The setting sun spurs philosophical musings, as in "The Eolian Harp," and the dancing rays of sunlight represent a pinnacle of nature's beauty, as in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison."

The Moon

Like the sun, the moon often symbolizes God, but the moon has more positive connotations than the sun. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the sun and the moon represent two sides of the Christian God: the sun represents the angry, wrathful God, whereas the moon represents the benevolent, repentant God. All told, the moon appears fourteen times in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and generally favorable things occur during night, in contrast to the horrors that occur during the day. For example, the mariner's curse lifts and he returns home by moonlight. "Dejection: An Ode" (1802) begins with an epitaph about the new moon and goes on to describe the beauty of a moonlit night, contrasting its beauty with the

speaker's sorrowful soul. Similarly, "Frost at Midnight" also praises the moon as it illuminates icicles on a winter evening and spurs the speaker to great thought.

Dreams and Dreaming

Coleridge explores dreams and dreaming in his poetry to communicate the power of the imagination, as well as the inaccessible clarity of vision. "Kubla Khan" is subtitled "A Vision in a Dream." According to Coleridge, he fell asleep while reading and dreamed of a marvelous pleasure palace for the next few hours. Upon awakening, he began transcribing the dream-vision but was soon called away; when he returned, he wrote out the fragments that now comprise "Kubla Khan." Some critics doubt Coleridge's story, attributing it to an attempt at increasing the poem's dramatic effect. Nevertheless, the poem speaks to the imaginative possibilities of the subconscious. Dreams usually have a pleasurable connotation, as in "Frost at Midnight." There, the speaker, lonely and insomniac as a child at boarding school, comforts himself by imagining and then dreaming of his rural home. In his real life, however, Coleridge suffered from nightmares so terrible that sometimes his own screams would wake him, a phenomenon he details in "The Pains of Sleep." Opium probably gave Coleridge a sense of well-being that allowed him to sleep without the threat of nightmares.

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UNIT - V

Introduction To Literary Criticism – SHS1305

A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessin

Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing* is a pioneering masterpiece in feminism studies. The book impresses the reader with Showalter's groundwork to revive the interest in long-forgotten women writers in British literature history. Showalter's work is indeed a kind of rediscovery, mapping widely rather than mining deeply the territory of women's writing. In a sense, feminist criticism came of age with this book.

Keywords: Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*, feminism

Introduction

Elaine Showalter (1941) is one of the most influential American scholars in the field of feminine studies. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing* which was published first in 1977 and whose expanded edition came out in 1999 is Showalter's break-out work. This book is a pioneering masterpiece for feminist critics.

In her introduction to *A Literature of Their Own* Showalter says:

> In the atlas of the English novel, women's territory is usually depicted as a desert bounded by mountains on four sides: the Austen peaks, the Brontë cliffs, the Eliot range and the Woolf hills. This book is an attempt to fill in the terrain between these literary landmarks and to construct a more reliable map from which to explore the achievements of English women novelists. (p. iii)

The book which follows admirably fulfills this plan by outlining the contours and circumstances of its authors' careers as well as their lives. In addition, it summarizes and classifies scores of minor writers—all widely known in their times but forgotten now. In the course of this survey, we get a succinct social history of middle class 19th and early 20th century England.

A Survey of the Book

Taking her title from an observation of John Stuart Mill in 1869—"If women lived in a different country from men and had never read any of their writings, they would have a literature of their own" (Mill, 1970, p. 207)—Showalter suggests that women themselves were slowly growing aware of their separateness and leaving

a record of that awareness in their works. It is the growth of a collective self-consciousness—the history of a distinct literary subculture—that *A Literature of Their Own* sets out to record.

Showalter contends that all literary subculture can be traced through three major phases: first a phase of "imitation" and "internalization" in which the subculture largely adopts the values and the literary forms of the dominant tradition—a phase which here extends from the widespread appearance of the male pseudonym in the 1840s to the death of Gorge Eliot in 1880; next a phase of "advocacy" and "protest" in which the subculture rejects prevailing values and begins to declare its autonomy—a stage which Showalter associates with the years between 1880 and the winning of the vote in 1920; and finally a phase of "self-discovery"—a turning inward and a search for identity—which here begins around 1920 and continues to the present. Having survived a culture's equivalent of childhood and adolescence, Showalter's model implies that the female literature tradition now approaches its maturity.

Showalter labels these stages of development the "feminine", the "feminist", and the "female". These problematic names have provoked a hot discussion among critics. Ruth Yeazell argues that "feminine is a word difficult to associate with the massive achievement of the Brontës, Gorge Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell" (Yeazell, 1978, p. 282). Although these words are ambiguous in academic meanings, they can never reduce this book's value.

What Showalter gives us is not the single life-history of British women writers, but a perceptive and wide-ranging family chronicle. One of the pleasures of reading *A Literature of Their Own* lies in discovering previously forgotten branches of the family, in tracing hitherto buried lines of kinship and inheritance. Showalter suggests that we have failed to sense such connections before can be partly attributed to our insistent concentration on the extraordinary few, such as George Eliot and Virginia Woolf. Showalter recovers for us many of more ordinary ones—sensation novelists like Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton; feminist like Olive Schreiner and Sarah Grand; suffragettes and radicals like Elizabeth Robins and Dora Marsden. *A Literature of Their Own* is illuminating and richly informative. To follow the account of Braddon's Lady Audley as she pushes her husband down a well or of Robin's militant heroine, Vida Levering, as she blackmails her Parliamentary ex-lover into backing the suffrage bill by threatening to seduce his new fiancée into the women's movement is to share Showalter's delight in the narrative exuberance of the female imagination. To see the direct kinship between the murderous wives of sensation fiction and Eliot's deadly Madame Laure in Middlemarch is to recognize anew the way in which great art feeds and

thrives on the not-so-great.

However, most Victorian novels were restrained by the conventions of sexual behavior except for their murder plots. Even the sensationalists of the 60s never gave full development of their lurid fantasies of escape and revenge. “By the second volume guilt has set in. In the third volume we see the heroine punished, repentant, and drained of all energy” (Showalter, 2004, p. 180). But Showalter still believes that the very constraints under which the Victorians labored produced novels that ironically seem richer and more satisfying than many that followed. “The repression in which the feminine novel was situated…forced women to find innovative and convert ways to dramatize the inner life, and led to a fiction that was intense, compact, symbolic, and profound” (Showalter, 2004, pp. 27-28). Beginning with the writers of the 80s and 90s, Showalter finds in these novelists the disturbing signs of evasion, retreat and the defensive maneuvers of denying the full truth of women’s experience. It is as if the lifting of repression left women terrified by their own once-buried impulses and desires. While the Victorians could compose fiction that explicitly affirmed the social order half-consciously, their successors responded to new freedom by producing a literature of anxiety and flight.

Though the modes of evasion vary from time to time, the image of a narrowly enclosed female space haunts in Showalter's book. The typical case here is naturally Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. In the chapter on Woolf, Showalter (2004) launches a fight to destroy the modern Angel in the Bloomsbury House:

> I think it is important to demystify the legend of Virginia Woolf. To borrow her own murderous imagery, a woman writer must kill the Angel in the House, that phantom of female perfection who stands in the way of freedom. For Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, the Angel was Jane Austen. For the feminist novelists, it was George Eliot. For mid-twentieth-century novelists, the Angel is Woolf herself. (p. 265)

If Showalter seems tolerant of remote literary ancestors, she ultimately decides to break the bondage of female repression by subverting the icon status of Woolf. Showalter harbors the fear that Woolf-worship has already become a cult to some extent with the vague notion of "androgyny" invoked as its major faith. In such a context, it is intellectually valuable to discover the limits of Woolf's vision—the peculiar impersonality and sexlessness of her world. The celebration of androgyny, Showalter argues, was Woolf's way of denying her own sexuality and of the fleeing life itself. Woolf's androgynous ideal is a repressive flight from the realities of being a woman and an inhuman attempt to transcend the body.

Yet if Woolf's idea can be "deadly" and "disembodied" (Showalter, 2004, p. 297), Showalter's exploration on Woolf focuses on the person and the flesh on the contrary. Speculating on Woolf's anxieties about menstruation, childbirth, menopause, and her jealousy of Vanessa and her rage against Leonard, the chapter is a document of Woolf's inadequacies not as an artist but as a woman. Though Showalter intentionally responds to the current idealization of Woolf's life, though her psychological argument is often stimulating and persuasive, Showalter leaves out Woolf's novels when she composes this chapter. Showalter offers the conflicts and failures of a novelist's personal history as the principal measure of her achievement. This approach seems to lack academic power.

A Look Into the New Edition

Showalter could have the opportunity to strengthen her academic weakness when the expanded edition of *A Literature of Their Own* came out in 1999. But it seems that she misses this chance. After rethinking 20 years' acceptance of and discussion about the book, Showalter adds a

new introduction “Twenty Years On: A Literature of Their Own Revisited” and a new conclusion “Laughing Medusa”. Toril Moi reveals Showalter’s untheorized assumptions in 1980s. Showalter writes back in the defensive introduction to the expanded edition by affirming that “the disciplines with answers for such questions were not philosophy and linguistics, but cultural anthropology and social history” (Showalter, 2004, p. xiv). Whether this simple declaration can satisfy Moi or not matters little to the present readers. The moment for *A Literature of Their Own* was the spring time of feminist criticism in the 1970s when scholars who just had begun women’s writing research were looking for professional guidance as Showalter offered. But the 1990s has witnessed the full development of feminist studies for which this book is no more than a history. Showalter’s fighting old battles, particularly with Toril Moi whose Sexual/Textual Politics is also an old book (1985), seems a kind of unnecessary self-wounding which betrays the valor of her cause.

One of the aims of *A Literature of Their Own* is to show how the development of female literary tradition is similar to the growth of any literary subculture. When the academic world is anticipating eagerly to see Showalter to deepen and sharpen her original thoughts in the expanded edition in the light of recent theories, Showalter just offers them an added chapter on important British novelists who have flourished since the book

was published. Showalter draws the history of British women novelists in the 20th century in broad stroke. She traces the continuity of the Victorian tradition in British women's novels up the present, but the emphasis on particular coherences and continuities in the literary tradition means that other continuities or the discontinuous effects of significant social upheavals and movements cannot be explored, including major conflicts and debates among 20th century feminists.

Moreover, this chapter is largely a discussion of Angela Carter and Showalter invokes her as the spirit of the new age. In the works of Angela Carter, Showalter reads the triumphant figure as both the transcendence of the female heritage which she once feared to hobble British women's writing and women's energized participation in a post-modern mainstream. Here Showalter breaks out the insularity of the British women's literature history and embraces the world. However, this dramatic shift from her early tragic portent to now comic celebration of being in the world feels too abrupt and perverse. The fact is British women writers have been very engaged in both the creation and contesting of nation and Empire. But disappointingly, Showalter sidesteps issues of gender, class, race, and nation in the new conclusion chapter.

Conclus
ion

A Literature of Their Own impresses the reader with Showalter's groundwork to revive the interest in long-forgotten women writers in British literature history. It is not her remarks on Brontës or George Eliot or Virginia Woolf that gives the book its enduring quality, but the range of its references to minor writers. Showalter's work is indeed a kind of rediscovery, mapping widely rather than mining deeply the territory of women's writing. Showalter, as her book's title indicates, has given women writers their own tradition. In a sense, feminist criticism came of age with this book. Whatever flaws the book may have, our debt to it is huge and should never be forgotten. *A Literature of Their Own* in many ways is an easy and energizing read. Its schematic certainties take hold of complex and devise materials. This masterpiece has nurtured women's writing and feminist criticism studies. It has stimulated research, prompted the publication of neglected women writers, and helped many young women go out to speak and act for themselves in the world.

The Second Sex Summary

The Second Sex presents Simone de Beauvoir's historical account of women's disadvantaged position in society. The text explains current theories that de Beauvoir disputes, summarizes her account of women's place in history, and provides alternatives for how women should be treated. The work contains two volumes: one on "Facts and Myths" that de Beauvoir attempts to deconstruct, and the second on "Lived Experience," in which she explains her own take on how women actually experience sexism day to day.

Within the first volume, de Beauvoir first focuses on biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism as three different, flawed theories for explaining the female condition. She explains that none of these theories fully explain every aspect of a woman's situation. Biology cannot account for the ways in which society conditions people to treat one another. Psychoanalysis ignores the question of why people are driven by certain motivations to begin with. And historical materialism is too fixated on economic theories to recognize how sexuality and other factors play into men's treatment of women, as well. This first part allows de Beauvoir to establish what kinds of explanations she will be working against when she provides her own theories in the following sections.

de Beauvoir then uses the second section of this volume to describe a history of women's treatment in society. She begins by tracing the ways in which primitive societies already mistreated women and regarded them as inferior to men. She then explains how the advent of private property pushed men to institutionalize their oppression of women, who became regarded as property as well. de Beauvoir then acknowledges that religion also shaped men's treatment of women by giving them moral excuses to limit women. In her fifth chapter, she considers more recent periods in which women's situation in society was slightly improved by the granting of greater rights. However, she concludes by pointing out that traditional systems of oppression continue to this day in the spheres of reproduction, sexuality, and labor.

In the last part of this first volume, de Beauvoir discusses the ways in which women are depicted in myths and understood in literary texts. She begins by broadly summarizing how women used to be

thought of as idols who represented nature and motherhood. However, she notes that even in this adulation women were feared and objectified by men. In her second chapter, she analyzes the work of several authors and philosophers who mythologized women in different, negative ways. She ends this part by considering how these myths and literary representations affect women in their day-to-day lives.

In her second volume, in which she considers women's lived experiences, de Beauvoir summarizes a woman's formative years, her different roles in society, the ways in which different women react to their positions, and how the modern woman is beginning to reclaim a certain kind of independence. Her section on a woman's formative years summarizes how a girl passes through childhood, into girlhood, and through sexual initiation in ways that are more traumatic and limiting than a male's experience of these phases. de Beauvoir also, more problematically, considers homosexuality as a phenomenon affecting women who reject the masculine sphere.

The second part of the second volume is the longest section of the book and summarizes the many different roles a woman can play in society. It is in this section that de Beauvoir presents her main ideas: women are limited in every role they can play in society, and are thus forced to adopt certain traits and coping mechanisms that have made them even more inferior in society. Because woman cannot be productive or creative, she gives herself up completely to serving men and children. As a result, however, most women are left miserable, unfulfilled, and temperamental. This leads de Beauvoir into the third part of this volume, in which she discusses how different women react to this situation either by becoming obsessed with themselves, giving themselves up completely to their lovers, or devoting themselves to mysticism.

Finally, de Beauvoir concludes her text by arguing that genuine equality between the sexes has not yet been achieved in her society, but would be beneficial for both genders. She describes how the independent woman of her day still faces greater challenges than men do because traditional values regarding marriage, reproduction, and femininity continue into her day. However, she also ends on the more optimistic note that if women are given equal opportunities, they can achieve just as much as men can.

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