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BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE HONOURS MAJOR

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equipping with excellence

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CPA COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES

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Detailed Syllabus:

Module 1: Foundations of Literary Criticism

1. Introduction to Classical Literary Criticism: Rasa, bhava, Rhetoric, Logos, Yugen, Wabi-sabi

2. Introduction to Classical Literary Criticism

Essential Reading: M. H. Abrams: A Glossary of Literary Terms (focus on terms mimesis, catharsis, and verisimilitude)

3. Plato's Theory of Mimesis

Essential Reading: Plato, Republic (selections from Book X on the nature of art and imitation)

4. Aristotle: Catharsis

Essential Reading: Patricia Waugh, Literary Theory and Criticism, an Oxford Guide (Chapter 1, excerpt on Catharsis)

5. Dante: Promoting the Vernacular

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present (Promoting the Vernacular: Dante's De Vulgari Eloquentia)

6. Anandavardhana: Dhvani

Essential Reading: Neeraja A. Gupta, Dhvani: A Historical Overview (focus on the concept of dhvani or suggestion in Indian aesthetics)

Module 2: Neoclassical Criticism and the age of Enlightenment

7. The Rise of Neoclassicism

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present (Chapter 12, excerpt on Neoclassicism)

8. John Dryden

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present (Chapter 12, excerpt on Neoclassicism)

9. David Hume

Essential Reading: David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (from Four Dissertations)

MODULE 3 Romanticism and the Rise of Modern Criticism

10. Introduction to Romanticism

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present (Chapter 17 on Romanticism in England)

11. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Essential Reading: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (excerpts on imagination and fancy)

12. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Essential Reading: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet" (Excerpts)

13. Matthew Arnold

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present (Excerpt "Matthew Arnold")

14. Leo Tolstoy

Essential Reading: Leo Tolstoy, "What is Art?" (excerpt on the purpose and definition of art)

MODULE 4. Delving into Modernity

15 T. S Eliot: Impersonality theory

Essential Reading: T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (excerpt on the concept of the "individual talent")

16. New Criticism

Essential Reading: Stephen Matterson, "New Criticism" (from Literary Theory and Criticism, an Oxford Guide by Patricia Waugh, Chapter 12, excerpt on methods and characteristics)

17. Wimsatt and Beardsley

Essential Reading: W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"

18. Sigmund Freud

Essential Reading: Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (excerpt on the psychoanalytic interpretation of literature)

Module 1: Foundations of Literary Criticism

- Classical literary criticism refers to early theories that explain the nature, purpose, and effect of literature. These theories originated in ancient civilizations such as India, Greece, and Japan. Classical critics were concerned with how literature represents life, evokes emotions, teaches moral values, and creates aesthetic pleasure. Concepts like Rasa, Mimesis, Catharsis, and Yūgen form the foundation of modern literary studies.
- Rasa Theory: The concept of Rasa is the cornerstone of Indian literary criticism, formulated by Bharata Muni in the *Natyashastra*. Rasa means the aesthetic essence or emotional flavour experienced by the audience while watching a performance or reading a literary text.
- Rasa is not the emotion of the character but the refined emotional experience of the reader or spectator. According to Bharata, Rasa is produced by the combination of Vibhava (cause), Anubhava (expression), and Vyabhichari Bhava (transitory emotions).
- The theory identifies nine Rasas, including love, compassion, heroism, fear, and peace. The ultimate aim of Rasa is aesthetic delight and spiritual elevation.
- Bhava: Bhava refers to the emotional states portrayed by characters in a literary work. These emotions are the foundation from which Rasa is evoked.
- Bharata classifies Bhavas into three types: Sthayi Bhava (permanent emotions) such as love or anger; Vyabhichari Bhava (temporary emotions) like doubt or excitement; and Sattvika Bhava, which includes involuntary physical reactions such as tears or trembling. While Bhava belongs to the character, Rasa belongs to the audience.

Greek Classical Criticism

- Rhetoric is the art of effective and persuasive speech and writing, systematized by Aristotle. It focuses on how language can influence an audience. Aristotle identified three modes of persuasion: Ethos (the speaker's credibility), Pathos (emotional appeal), and Logos (logical reasoning). Rhetoric plays an important role in drama, poetry, and prose by shaping argument, style, and audience response.
- Logos refers to logical reasoning and rational structure in speech and writing. It appeals to the intellect of the audience through facts, examples, and coherence. In literary criticism, Logos helps evaluate how effectively a text presents arguments or ideas. A strong use of Logos makes literature convincing and intellectually engaging.

Japanese Aesthetic Theory

- Yūgen is a Japanese aesthetic principle that refers to deep, subtle, and mysterious beauty. It suggests emotions and meanings rather than stating them openly. Yūgen values silence, suggestion, and emotional depth, allowing readers to sense what is beyond words. It is commonly found in Japanese poetry, especially haiku and Noh drama.
- Wabi-Sabi is a Japanese aesthetic philosophy that finds beauty in simplicity, imperfection, and impermanence. It appreciates naturalness, aging, and incompleteness rather than perfection or grandeur. In literature and art, Wabi-Sabi reflects humility, quietness, and acceptance of the transient nature of life.

Classical Western Literary Criticism

(Based on M. H. Abrams – A Glossary of Literary Terms)

- Mimesis means imitation or representation of life and is a key concept in classical Western criticism. Introduced by Plato and Aristotle, it explains how literature mirrors human actions and reality. Plato viewed imitation as potentially misleading, while Aristotle considered it natural and educational. According to Aristotle, literature does not copy reality but creatively represents universal truths.
- Catharsis is a central concept in Aristotle's theory of tragedy, explained in *Poetics*. It refers to the emotional purification or release experienced by the audience through feelings of pity and fear. By witnessing tragic events, the audience achieves emotional balance and moral understanding. Catharsis thus gives tragedy a psychological and ethical function.
- Verisimilitude means the appearance of truth or realism in literature. Even when a work is fictional, it should feel believable and logically consistent. Characters, events, and actions must follow internal logic. Verisimilitude helps readers emotionally engage with the text and accept its reality.
- Classical literary criticism provides essential frameworks for understanding literature across cultures. Indian, Greek, and Japanese theories emphasize emotional response, realism, persuasion, and aesthetic depth. Concepts such as Rasa, Mimesis, Catharsis, and Yūgen continue to influence modern literary analysis and interpretation.

Plato's Theory of Mimesis

- Plato (427–347 BCE) was a great Greek philosopher and a student of Socrates. He is one of the most important figures in Western philosophy and literary criticism. Plato founded the Academy in Athens, one of the earliest centers of higher learning. His ideas are presented in the form of dialogues, among which *The Republic* is the most influential. In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato discusses art and poetry and introduces

his theory of Mimesis, expressing concern about the moral and psychological effects of art on society.

- Plato's theory of Mimesis (imitation) is one of the earliest and most influential ideas in Western literary criticism. In *The Republic*, especially Book X, Plato examines the nature of art and poetry and argues that most forms of art are imitations of reality. He views poetry and art with suspicion because they move people emotionally and distract them from truth and reason.

Meaning of Mimesis

- The Greek word mimesis means *imitation or representation*. According to Plato, art does not present truth directly but merely copies the physical world, which itself is only a copy of a higher reality. Therefore, art is twice removed from truth.
- Plato's criticism of art is based on his Theory of Forms. Forms or Ideas are perfect, eternal, and unchanging realities. The physical world is an imperfect copy of these Forms. Art and poetry imitate the physical world, not the Forms.
- Thus, art is an imitation of an imitation, making it three steps away from truth.
- To explain imitation, Plato uses the example of a bed:
 1. The ideal bed exists as a Form created by God.
 2. A carpenter makes a physical bed, which is a copy of the ideal Form.
 3. A painter or poet creates an image of the bed, which is only an appearance.

This shows that the artist has no true knowledge of reality.

- Plato strongly criticizes poets, especially Homer, whom he believes misrepresent gods and heroes. Poets appeal to emotion rather than reason. Poetry encourages irrational behavior and moral weakness. It corrupts the youth by presenting false ideas of virtue and justice.
- Therefore, Plato suggests that poets should be banished from the ideal state unless their work promotes truth and morality.
- Plato argues that art excites emotions like pity, fear, and pleasure. These emotions weaken rational thinking. Poetry encourages people to indulge in feelings rather than control them. This threatens the moral discipline of individuals and society.

Plato believes art has a powerful influence on the human mind.

- Since it lacks truth and knowledge, it can mislead people.
- Art imitates appearances, not reality.
- It fails to teach true virtue or wisdom.

Thus, art is morally and educationally harmful.

Plato does not completely reject art.

- He allows art that supports reason, truth, and moral values.
- Art should educate citizens and uphold ethical ideals.
- Only such art has a place in the ideal state.
- Plato's theory of Mimesis presents art as a dangerous imitation that distances people from truth and reason. His criticism is rooted in his belief in rationality, morality, and the ideal state. Though often seen as harsh, Plato's theory highlights the ethical responsibility of art, making it a cornerstone of classical literary criticism.

Aristotle: Catharsis

- Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher and student of Plato. He made significant contributions to logic, ethics, politics, and literary theory. Unlike Plato, who criticized art, Aristotle defended its value in understanding human nature. His ideas on drama, particularly tragedy, are explained in his work *Poetics*, where he introduces the concept of Catharsis.
- Catharsis (Greek *katharsis*) literally means purification or cleansing.
- In literary theory, it refers to the emotional release or purification experienced by the audience while watching tragedy.
- Aristotle argues that tragedy arouses pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*), and through these emotions, the audience undergoes catharsis.
- Catharsis helps people reflect on human life, understand suffering, and develop empathy.
- Tragedy teaches lessons about virtue, human limitations, and the consequences of actions.
- Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was a Greek philosopher and a student of Plato who made significant contributions to philosophy, ethics, and literary theory. Unlike Plato, who criticized art for its moral dangers, Aristotle defended tragedy as a valuable literary form. In his *Poetics*, he analyzed the purpose, structure, and effects of tragedy, focusing on how it affects the audience emotionally and intellectually. One of his most influential concepts is catharsis, which explains why people find pleasure in tragic literature.
- Aristotle asks why audiences enjoy tragedies that depict suffering, horror, and misfortune. Plato offered a different perspective, suggesting that humans enjoy tragedies because they allow emotional indulgence—tears, anger, and intense feelings. However, Plato believed this indulgence was harmful, making people more emotional and less rational. Aristotle disagreed, arguing that the pleasure we experience from tragedy is not from indulging in emotion but from the aesthetic representation of tragic events, which “tames the horrible” through art.
- Meaning of Catharsis: The Greek term *katharsis* literally means purification, cleansing, or purgation. In tragedy, Aristotle uses it as a technical term to describe the healthy release of emotions, particularly pity and fear. Catharsis allows the audience to experience intense emotions safely and constructively, leading to emotional balance, insight into human life, and intellectual enrichment. Through catharsis, tragedy provides both pleasure and moral or psychological benefits.

- **Pity and Fear:** Aristotle identifies pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*) as the key emotions evoked by tragedy. Pity is felt for virtuous, good, human characters who suffer undeserved misfortune, while fear arises from recognizing our own human vulnerability and mortality. Crucially, the audience must maintain a degree of emotional distance from the characters. We feel pity for the hero not because we share their suffering directly, but because we observe it and identify with their humanity.
- **The Tragic Hero:** The tragic hero is central to catharsis. According to Aristotle, the hero must be good and morally admirable, yet flawed in a human way (*hamartia*). This flaw leads to a reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*), where the character falls from happiness to misery. The hero's misfortune evokes both pity and fear, reflecting human limitations and vulnerability. Tragedy, therefore, deals with ordinary human life rather than perfect or superhuman figures, making the emotional experience relatable and meaningful.
- **Aristotle vs Plato:** Aristotle's approach to tragedy sharply contrasts with Plato's. While Plato saw tragedy as morally corrupting and emotionally indulgent, Aristotle argued that it benefits the audience by providing catharsis and aesthetic pleasure. Plato focused on the moral impact of literature, whereas Aristotle emphasized form, structure, and technique, separating literature from its moral or political context. This shift laid the foundation for later formalistic literary criticism.
- **Significance:** Aristotle's theory of catharsis highlights the positive psychological, ethical, and aesthetic effects of tragedy. By evoking pity and fear and providing aesthetic satisfaction, tragedy educates the audience about human nature, vulnerability, and moral responsibility. Aristotle's insights into plot, character, and structure remain central to literary theory, explaining why tragedy continues to engage audiences across cultures and eras.
- **In summary,** Aristotle's concept of catharsis shows that tragedy allows audiences to experience intense emotions safely while gaining insight into human life. Through pity, fear, and aesthetic appreciation, tragedy provides emotional purification, intellectual reflection, and pleasure. Aristotle's formal and systematic approach to literature rescued it from Plato's moral critique, establishing art as a source of both emotional and intellectual benefit.

MODULE 2: Neoclassical Criticism and the Age of Enlightenment

- **Introduction to Neoclassicism:** The Neoclassical period, roughly spanning the 17th and 18th centuries, is associated with the Age of Enlightenment, a time of reason, order, and intellectual progress in Europe. Neoclassicism marked a return to the principles of classical antiquity, particularly Greek and Roman literary and artistic ideals. Writers and critics emphasized clarity, decorum, balance, and universal truths, reflecting the Enlightenment's focus on rationality, logic, and social order. Literary works were expected to instruct as well as entertain, upholding moral and ethical values in alignment with societal norms.
- **Key Features of Neoclassical Criticism:** Neoclassical critics stressed reason over imagination, advocating for literature that adhered to rules of structure, proportion,

and decorum. Poetry and drama were evaluated based on principles derived from Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, including the three unities of time, place, and action in drama, and the importance of verisimilitude (the appearance of reality). Literary merit was judged on the basis of wit, elegance, and moral purpose, rather than personal expression or emotional excess. Critics of the period also promoted the use of classical genres and forms as models for contemporary writing.

- Central to Neoclassical criticism was a belief in universal human nature and reason, which could be understood and represented through literature. Writers were expected to portray life in a rational and ordered manner, showing human virtues and vices clearly to guide audiences toward moral and ethical understanding. Literature was therefore a tool for education and social improvement, reflecting the Enlightenment ideal that knowledge and reason could improve society.
- Major Figures and Contributions: Prominent Neoclassical critics and writers include John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and Nicolas Boileau. They codified literary rules, emphasized decorum and correctness, and valued the classical ideal of harmony and proportion in writing. These critics influenced not only poetry and drama but also literary essays, criticism, and even philosophy, shaping the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment.
- In essence, Neoclassical criticism reflects the Enlightenment's values of reason, order, and universality. It prioritized literary form, moral purpose, and social instruction, deriving inspiration from classical antiquity. The Neoclassical period represents a pivotal moment in literary history, where literature was seen not only as art but also as a vehicle for rational thought, ethical reflection, and social improvement.

Unit 8 - John Dryden Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism From Plato to the Present* (Chapter 12, excerpt on Neoclassicism)

- English Neoclassicism developed in the late 17th century after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. It emphasized order, balance, reason, clarity, and classical models, but without blindly copying them.
- Ben Jonson is often considered the founder of English Neoclassicism. He admired ancient Roman and Renaissance writers and supported rule-based, disciplined writing instead of uncontrolled imagination.
- Unlike French Neoclassicism, which was rigid and state-controlled under Louis XIV, English Neoclassicism was flexible and independent. English writers respected classical rules but adapted them to suit English taste and tradition.
- Translations such as Dryden's version of Boileau's *Art Poétique* introduced classical ideas, but English critics resisted strict French rules and absolutism.

- Critics like Thomas Rymer supported strict classical laws and criticized Shakespeare, while others like John Dennis argued that literature must change with time and praised modern writers like Milton.
- This flexibility allowed English literature to value writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Donne, creating a rich and inclusive literary tradition.

John Dryden (1631–1700): Life and Career

- John Dryden was born on 19 August 1631 in Northamptonshire, England, into a Puritan family.
- He studied at Westminster School under Dr. Richard Busby and later at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he excelled academically.
- Dryden lived through major political changes and adapted his views accordingly. He supported Cromwell during the Commonwealth and later supported Charles II after the Restoration.
- He was appointed England's first Poet Laureate in 1668, becoming the leading literary figure of his age, often called the "Age of Dryden."
- After the Glorious Revolution (1688), he lost his official positions and devoted his later years to translation and criticism.
- Dryden died in 1700 in London.

Dryden's Contribution to Literature and Criticism

- Dryden is called the "Father of English Criticism" and a pioneer of modern English prose (Samuel Johnson).
- His criticism covers poetry, drama, satire, translation, ancient vs. modern writers, and the purpose of literature.
- His major works include:
 - Poems: *Heroic Stanzas*, *Astrea Redux*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Mac Flecknoe*
 - Plays: *All for Love*, *Aurangzebe*, *Marriage à la Mode*
 - Religious poems: *Religio Laici*, *The Hind and the Panther*
 - Translations: *Fables*, *Ancient and Modern*
- Dryden believed poetry should delight and instruct, balancing imagination with moral truth.

An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668): Summary and Ideas

- *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is Dryden's most important critical work, written as a dialogue among four speakers: Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander.
- The discussion takes place on a barge on the River Thames and defends English drama against French criticism.

Main Debates in the Essay

1. Ancients vs. Moderns
 - Crites supports the ancients.
 - Eugenius supports modern writers, arguing they benefit from greater knowledge and experience.
 2. Classical Unities
 - Crites supports strict unity of time, place, and action.
 - Neander argues that rigid rules limit creativity and enjoyment.
 3. English vs. French Drama
 - Lisideius praises French drama for order and discipline.
 - Neander defends English drama for its variety, emotional depth, and realism.
 4. Tragicomedy
 - Dryden supports tragicomedy, saying mixing tragedy and comedy increases pleasure and realism.
 5. Rhyme vs. Blank Verse
 - Dryden initially supports rhyme for serious drama but later accepts blank verse as more natural.
- Dryden defines a play as:

“A lively image of human nature... for the delight and instruction of mankind.”
 - He praises Shakespeare as the “father of English drama” for his natural genius and Ben Jonson for his learning and craftsmanship.
 - John Dryden shaped English Neoclassicism by blending classical principles with English freedom and flexibility.
 - His critical ideas laid the foundation for later critics like Pope, Johnson, Arnold, and T.S. Eliot.
 - Dryden’s work shows a balance between reason and imagination, rules and creativity, making him a central figure in English literary history.

Unit 9 - David Hume Essential Reading: David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (from Four Dissertations)

The Age of Enlightenment

- The Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, was an intellectual movement in the late 17th and 18th centuries. It emphasized reason, science, and critical thinking over tradition and authority. Thinkers challenged the power of monarchies and churches and believed that knowledge could improve society.
- Influenced by the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment philosophers sought to reform politics, society, and education.
- Key thinkers included John Locke (natural rights), Voltaire (freedom of speech and religion), Montesquieu (separation of powers), Rousseau (general will), Kant (dare to think for yourself), and Descartes (rational reasoning).

- Ideas spread through works like Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and influenced revolutions in America and France. Romanticism later emerged as a reaction against the Enlightenment, valuing emotion and imagination over pure reason.

David Hume

- David Hume (1711–1776) was a major Scottish Enlightenment philosopher. Born in Edinburgh, he studied law but later pursued philosophy and writing. Hume explored how human emotions and passions shape morality, religion, and art.
- His key works include *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, and *The Natural History of Religion*. Hume is known for his clarity, skepticism, and emphasis on the role of feeling alongside reason.

Four Dissertations

- Hume's *Four Dissertations* (1757) examines the influence of human passions on life, art, and religion. The essays are *The Natural History of Religion*, *A Dissertation on the Passions*, *Of Tragedy*, and *Of the Standard of Taste*.
- Hume argues that emotions like hope, fear, and sympathy shape religious belief, moral judgments, and aesthetic experience. These essays explore how human feelings explain our responses to art and culture.

"Of the Standard of Taste"

- Hume begins by noting that tastes differ widely across people, cultures, and history. Beauty seems subjective, but he argues that a standard of taste exists. True genius, like Homer, survives time and is admired across generations.
- Hume explains that failure to appreciate art is usually due to a lack of delicacy of taste, or refined perception, not the artwork itself.
- He illustrates this using a story from *Don Quixote*, where two men accurately detect subtle notes in wine, proving their refined taste. Similarly, in art, a sensitive critic can perceive qualities others miss. Established rules and great models help confirm judgment and guide critics. For Hume, taste combines experience, refinement, and freedom from prejudice to identify true beauty.
- Hume concludes that while taste is partly subjective, a true standard is grounded in human nature. The ideal critic, with delicacy of taste, experience, and impartiality, can discern beauty reliably. Great art endures across time and culture, proving its universal value. Hume balances reason and feeling to explain why some works are timeless while others fade.

Module 3: Romanticism and the Rise of Modern Criticism

Unit 10 - Introduction to Romanticism

Essential Reading: M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present* (Chapter 17 on Romanticism in England)

- Romanticism began in the late 18th century as a reaction against Neoclassicism, which focused on strict rules, reason, and logic. It emphasized individuality, emotion, and creativity. Influenced by Rousseau, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, it first developed in Germany and then spread to England. The early period was marked by optimism and hope for human liberation.
- Early Romantic poets like William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge celebrated nature, childhood, and emotional experience. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) marked the start of English Romanticism. Key works include Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.
- As the 19th century progressed, optimism faded due to revolutionary violence and industrial capitalism. Later poets, such as Byron and Shelley, wrote about rebellion, social injustice, and the sublime. Mary Shelley explored creation and social responsibility in *Frankenstein*, and Keats focused on beauty and imagination in works like *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to a Nightingale*.
- Romantics criticized the growing bourgeois society for being materialistic and morally mediocre. They opposed urban life and industrial cities, instead valuing nature, rural life, and simplicity, inspired by Rousseau. Nature was seen as alive, symbolic, and connected to human emotions.
- Romanticism emphasized emotion and intuition over reason. Poets were creators who transformed experience through imagination. Their works reflected personal vision, often using first-person narration.
- Romantics rejected artificial poetic language and drew inspiration from folk tales, ballads, and native traditions. This focus helped develop a sense of national identity and cultural uniqueness.
- Romantic writers were fascinated by exotic lands, distant times, and the supernatural, often using Gothic elements. Examples include Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.
- In England, Romanticism grew during the decline of monarchy, rise of middle class, and imperial expansion. Neoclassical ideals of order gave way to individual experience, originality, and the sublime. Philosophers (Locke, Hume, Burke) and critics (Young, Duff, Warton) promoted creative imagination. Romantics admired the Middle Ages, primitive societies, and native literature.

- Early British Romantic writers included Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, and Robert Burns. The movement reached maturity with Wordsworth (who saw nature as a universal spirit) and Coleridge (who developed the theory of poetic imagination). Like European Romantics, they initially supported the French Revolution and aimed to transform a world fragmented by social, cultural, and intellectual dualisms.
- William Blake combined mysticism and myth to harmonize the world's opposites. In works like *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), he shared his unique religious views and criticized social injustice and the rigid rationality of Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire and Rousseau.
- Wordsworth and Coleridge: Wordsworth saw nature as expressing a universal spirit, while Coleridge used German philosophy to explain the powers of the poetic imagination. Their *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) emphasized everyday language, emotion, and imagination. Writers debated whether literature should have a political purpose; T.J. Mathias said yes, William Hazlitt separated politics and aesthetics but supported literary freedom from absolutism.
- Second Generation Romantics: Later Romantics like Shelley, Keats, Byron, and Mary Shelley became more critical and disillusioned. Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* stressed imagination over reason. Keats developed "negative capability", where the poet abandons ego to fully absorb and express experience, contrasting with Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime." Byron satirized hypocrisy and fought for Greek independence.
- Women writers also contributed: Mary Shelley explored the dangers of ambition in *Frankenstein* (1818), and Dorothy Wordsworth influenced her brother and Coleridge through her journals, letters, and poems.
- Core Ideals of English Romanticism: English Romanticism sought to heal a fragmented world through imagination, emotion, and nature, opposing industrialization, rigid rationalism, and social injustice. It valued individual creativity, aesthetic vision, and moral insight, often drawing on folklore, myth, and national identity.
- By the late 19th century, Romanticism declined due to Realism and Naturalism, which emphasized everyday reality, and scientific advances (e.g., Darwin), which challenged idealized views of nature.

Unit 11 - Samuel Taylor Coleridge Essential Reading: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (excerpts on imagination and fancy)

- Wordsworth defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and emphasized "emotion recollected in tranquillity".
- In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge challenged Wordsworth's practical use of rustic language and identified inconsistencies between Wordsworth's theories and his actual poetry.

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was a central figure in English Romanticism known for his eloquence, but his life was marked by failed projects and an unhappy marriage.
- While Wordsworth explored rustic life, Coleridge dealt with the supernatural, establishing a productive intellectual tension between them.
- Background and Intellectual Development: Samuel Taylor Coleridge struggled with addiction to laudanum (opium), but despite this difficulty, he produced a large amount of important intellectual work. A major turning point in his life was his friendship with William Wordsworth, which began in 1795. Together they published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, a work that is considered the beginning of the Romantic Movement in England. Coleridge's travels to Germany also greatly influenced him. There he encountered the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, whose ideas shaped his later thinking about literature and criticism.
- *Biographia Literaria* (1817) - *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817, is one of Coleridge's most important critical works. It is a unique book because it combines autobiography, philosophy, metaphysics, and literary criticism. In this work, Coleridge tries to provide a strong philosophical foundation for literary criticism. He believes that criticism should not be based only on personal opinion but must be supported by deep philosophical thinking.
- Structure of the Work - The book is divided into two main parts. In Chapters I to XIII, Coleridge presents his intellectual autobiography and explains how his life experiences and philosophical studies shaped his ideas. These chapters prepare the ground for his important theory of imagination. In Chapters XIV to XXII, he directly criticizes Wordsworth's poetic theory, especially the idea presented in the 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry should use the "real language of men."
- Critique of Wordsworth - Coleridge disagrees with Wordsworth's belief that poetry should use ordinary language. He argues that poetic language cannot be the same as everyday prose. According to him, poetry must be more refined, thoughtful, and philosophical. He believes that poetry requires artistic shaping and cannot simply copy common speech. Therefore, he challenges Wordsworth's idea that the language of poetry and the language of ordinary people are the same.
- Fancy and Imagination - One of Coleridge's most famous ideas in *Biographia Literaria* is his distinction between Fancy and Imagination. Fancy is a mechanical mental ability that only rearranges existing images and ideas. It does not create anything truly new. Imagination, however, is a powerful and creative faculty. Coleridge divides imagination into two types: Primary Imagination and Secondary Imagination. The Primary Imagination is the basic human power that helps us perceive and understand the world. The Secondary Imagination is the higher creative power of poets, which reshapes and transforms reality into art. This distinction is central to his theory of poetry.
- Philosophical Foundations - Coleridge's ideas are deeply influenced by German philosophy, especially German Idealism. He discusses complex topics such as perception, consciousness, and the relationship between the self and the external

world. He rejects the idea that the mind works like a machine. Instead, he believes that the mind is active and creative. For him, true literary criticism must be based on philosophical principles, not just personal taste.

- Purpose of the Early Chapters - The first thirteen chapters of *Biographia Literaria* are important because they prepare readers for Coleridge's main theory of imagination. In these chapters, he builds the philosophical foundation needed to understand his ideas about poetry and creativity. They serve as an introduction to his famous definition of imagination in Chapter XIII and help explain why imagination is so important to Coleridge's Definition of Imagination and Fancy
- In *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge divides Imagination into two types: Primary and Secondary. The Primary Imagination is the basic human power of perception. It is the living and creative force through which we understand the world. Coleridge describes it as a repetition in the human mind of God's act of creation, meaning that perception itself is creative and active. It is universal and involuntary, shared by all human beings.
- The Secondary Imagination is an echo of the Primary Imagination, but it operates with conscious will. It is the special creative power of the poet or artist. It reshapes and transforms reality. Coleridge says it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create," meaning it breaks down ordinary experience and rebuilds it into something new and unified. It is not mechanical but vital and organic.
- Fancy, on the other hand, is very different. It is not creative but mechanical. Coleridge describes Fancy as a kind of memory freed from time and space. It simply rearranges ready-made materials that it receives through association. It cannot truly create or unify; it can only combine fixed images. While Imagination transforms and fuses ideas into organic unity, Fancy merely assembles them without changing their nature.

Primary and Secondary Imagination

- Primary Imagination is the natural human ability to receive impressions from the outside world and organize them into meaningful understanding. It works automatically and is common to everyone.
- Secondary Imagination is the artistic and creative power. It takes the raw material provided by the Primary Imagination and reshapes it into art. This process requires conscious effort, intellect, and will. Coleridge calls it a "magical" and synthetic power because it unifies different elements into a harmonious whole. It is the source of all true creativity.

Imagination as an "Esemplastic" Power

- A major strength of Coleridge's theory is his idea that Imagination is an "esemplastic" (shaping and unifying) power. It blends different elements into one organic whole. This is very different from Fancy, which only joins separate pieces together without truly fusing them.

- For example, in great poetry such as that of William Shakespeare, imagination transforms experience into powerful symbolic unity. Fancy, however, might simply produce decorative comparisons, such as a simple simile. Because Imagination harmonizes opposites—such as emotion and reason, the familiar and the strange—it allows poetry to express universal truths. Critics like I. A. Richards have praised this aspect of Coleridge’s theory, especially its ability to explain how poetry reconciles contradictions.

Coleridge’s Critique of Wordsworth

- After defining Imagination and Fancy in Chapter XIII, Coleridge turns to practical criticism, especially of the poetry of William Wordsworth. He agrees with Wordsworth’s aim of giving freshness to ordinary things and deepening human emotion. In fact, his discussions with Wordsworth first inspired his interest in imagination.
- However, Coleridge disagrees with Wordsworth’s theory that poetry should use the “real language of men.” He argues that true poetic language must come from deep reflection and thought, not simply from rustic or common speech. He also points out what he considers inconsistencies in Wordsworth’s own poems, questioning whether a poet can maintain a simple style while expressing profound ideas.

Coleridge’s Principles of Good Poetry

- Coleridge argues that the immediate purpose of poetry is pleasure, although its ultimate aim is truth. He stresses the importance of organic unity, where every part of the poem—rhyme, metre, imagery, and theme—works together harmoniously.
- He also introduces the idea of “poetic faith,” which he famously calls the “willing suspension of disbelief.” This means that readers temporarily set aside doubt in order to fully experience the poem. Unlike neoclassical critics who saw poetry mainly as imitation, Coleridge argues that poetry is an act of imagination and creative power.

Coleridge’s Idea of the Ideal Poet

- According to Coleridge, the ideal poet is someone who brings the whole soul into activity. Through the power of Imagination, the poet balances and reconciles opposite qualities—thought and feeling, image and idea, emotion and order, the general and the concrete. The poet creates unity out of diversity. This power of harmonizing opposites is what makes true poetry possible.

Conclusion

- Coleridge’s ideas form a bridge within Romanticism. While Wordsworth focused on nature and common life, Coleridge developed a deeper philosophical theory of imagination and creativity. His distinction between Imagination and Fancy remains

one of the most influential concepts in literary theory. Even though some critics debate its religious and philosophical basis, his idea that Imagination transforms and recreates reality continues to be a powerful explanation of artistic creation.

Chapter 12 - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life and Intellectual Background

- Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was born in Boston in the parish house of the First Unitarian Church, where his father was a minister. He entered Harvard at the young age of fourteen and developed an independent style of learning. Instead of strictly following formal education, he preferred wide reading and trusted his own intuition.
- Throughout his life, he read deeply from sources such as the Bible, Plato, Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Eastern religious texts. His travels to Europe, especially his friendship with Thomas Carlyle, influenced him greatly. However, he shaped these influences into his own original philosophy. Emerson is known as the Father of American Transcendentalism, a movement which believed that the physical world is a symbol of deeper spiritual truth.

Emerson's View of the Poet

- In *The Poet*, Emerson presents a spiritual and philosophical idea of the poet. He rejects the view that a poet is merely an entertainer or skilled craftsman. Instead, he sees the poet as a visionary and prophet who reveals eternal truths. Emerson criticizes superficial critics, whom he calls “umpires of taste,” for focusing only on rules and forms without understanding that beauty depends on the soul. For him, the true poet is a “Sayer” and “Namer” who announces truths that others cannot see. Poetry is not decorative language but a powerful expression of living thought. A real poem grows naturally from inspiration, just like a plant grows from its seed.

The Poet and Nature

- Emerson believes that nature speaks in symbols. The universe is the external expression of the soul, and every physical fact represents a deeper spiritual reality. While ordinary people use objects only for practical purposes, the poet sees their symbolic meaning. The poet can “re-attach” things to the whole of nature and reveal their spiritual significance. Even modern objects like factories or railways can be understood as part of divine order. Thus, the poet acts as a transcendental seer who interprets nature's hidden language and shows that the physical world expresses a universal soul.

The Poet's Higher Perception

- According to Emerson, human beings live among symbols but fail to recognize their meaning. The poet possesses a higher intellectual perception that allows him to see beyond appearances. He understands that physical forms are temporary, but the thoughts or ideas behind them are permanent. Like a person with magical sight, the poet turns the world into glass and shows the true connections between things. He sees that all life is constantly changing and rising toward higher forms. Therefore, the poet's speech flows naturally with the movement of life itself.

The Poet as "Namer" and Language-Maker

- Emerson calls the poet the "Namer" because he gives true names to things based on their inner essence. Language, according to Emerson, was originally created by poets. Every word was once a living metaphor that expressed a deep connection between thought and object. Over time, these words lost their freshness and became ordinary. Emerson famously says that "language is fossil poetry." This means that language once had vivid imaginative power, but that power has become buried over time. The poet's task is to revive this original energy and restore words to their true symbolic meaning.

Theory of Language

- For Emerson, language is not a neutral tool but a record of human imagination. Every word began as a creative act of genius. The etymologist may discover that even the dullest word once held a bright image. The poet must reconnect language with its original creative force. By doing so, he does not simply create art but performs an important intellectual function: he helps people understand spiritual truth through symbols.

The Poet's Role in Society

- Emerson believes that the poet's purpose is to reveal the spiritual truth hidden within the physical world. Most people see only the practical use of things, but the poet sees their deeper meaning. True poetic creation is not artificial or mechanical but inspired and organic. The poet must surrender his ego and become a channel for universal life. In doing so, he liberates humanity from narrow thinking and shows the unity of all existence.

Conclusion

- Emerson's transcendental philosophy presents the poet as a spiritual guide and interpreter of symbols. The poet connects the material world with eternal truth and restores vitality to language. Through imagination and intuition, the poet reveals that

nature, language, and the soul are deeply connected. Thus, in Emerson's view, poetry is not mere art but a powerful means of spiritual awakening and human liberation.

Chapter 13 - Mathew Arnold

- The Victorian era (1837-1901) was characterized by industrial progress, colonial expansion, and a focus on realistic portrayal of life, acting as a reaction against Romanticism.
- Society faced significant challenges, including moral degradation, poverty, class struggle, and cultural erosion due to scientific advancements and industrialization.
- Darwin's theory of evolution and Origin of Species caused widespread questioning of traditional Christian faith foundations.
- The early period of Victorian criticism (1835-1860) included writers like Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas Carlyle, and Lord Tennyson, who focused on social injustice, humanitarian concerns, and moral seriousness.

The Middle Period (1860–1880): “Art for Life’s Sake”

- The Middle Victorian period believed that art should serve moral and social purposes. Writers thought literature must guide society, improve character, and address social problems. Important figures of this period include Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, George Eliot, Alfred Lord Tennyson (in his later phase), and Robert Browning. These writers believed that literature should promote moral values and respond to the problems of industrial society.

The Later Period (1880–1900): “Art for Art’s Sake”

- The Later Victorian period reacted against the moral seriousness of earlier writers. This period promoted the idea that art exists only for beauty and does not need to serve moral or social purposes. Key figures include Walter Pater, who pioneered aestheticism; Oscar Wilde, who expressed aesthetic ideas in his plays and essays; and Algernon Charles Swinburne, who celebrated beauty and musical style in poetry.

Matthew Arnold: Life and Career

- Matthew Arnold was born in 1822 and educated at Rugby and Oxford. In 1857, he became Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He is regarded as one of the founders of modern English literary criticism. Arnold lived during a time of rapid industrial change, and much of his writing reflects concern about the moral and spiritual condition of modern society. He died in 1888.

Arnold's Poetry

- Arnold's poetry, mainly written in the 1850s, deals with themes such as faith, nature, love, and the spiritual crisis of Victorian England. He was deeply concerned about the loss of religious faith and the growing materialism of industrial society. His famous poem *Dover Beach* expresses sadness over the decline of faith in the modern world. *The Scholar Gipsy* contrasts peaceful rural life with the restlessness of modern existence. *Thyrsis* is a pastoral elegy written in memory of his friend Arthur Hugh Clough.

Arnold's Literary and Social Criticism

- Arnold's important prose works include *Essays in Criticism*, *Culture and Anarchy*, and *Literature and Dogma*. He believed that industrial society had made people mechanical and overly concerned with material success. Arnold criticized the Victorian middle class, calling them "Philistines" because they valued money and practicality over culture and beauty. He believed society needed intellectual and moral improvement.

"The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"

- In his essay *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, Arnold explains the role of criticism in society. He argues that criticism should not simply judge literature but should create an "order of ideas" and spread the best ideas. Although he believes creative genius is higher than criticism, he insists that creativity can flourish only when criticism prepares a healthy intellectual environment. His main principle is "disinterestedness," meaning criticism must remain unbiased and free from political or religious influence. He defines criticism as a "free play of the mind" that seeks to see things as they truly are.

Arnold's Idea of Culture

- In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold defines culture as the pursuit of human perfection. He believes culture develops both "sweetness and light," meaning beauty and intelligence. Culture helps society move beyond narrow thinking and materialism. According to Arnold, criticism should guide society toward moral and intellectual improvement by promoting the best that has been thought and said in the world.

Culture and Anarchy – Summary

- In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold defines culture as the "study of perfection." By perfection, he does not mean material success or external progress, but an inward condition of the mind and spirit. He believes that industrial society focuses too much on machinery, wealth, and practical achievements, while ignoring moral and spiritual development. For Arnold, culture is not simply knowledge or art; it is the pursuit of human improvement and inner harmony.

- Arnold fears that without culture, society will fall into “anarchy,” meaning disorder, selfishness, and narrow class interests. He divides Victorian society into three groups: the Barbarians (the aristocracy), who value honour and manners; the Philistines (the middle class), who are materialistic and obsessed with wealth; and the Populace (the working class), who are often uneducated and driven by immediate needs. According to Arnold, each group has strengths, but none truly represents culture.
- Arnold believes that the State should act as a guiding moral authority to promote culture. He opposes excessive individualism and argues that freedom must be balanced by order and discipline. Borrowing the phrase “sweetness and light” from Jonathan Swift’s *The Battle of the Books*, Arnold explains that sweetness represents beauty and charm, while light represents intelligence and reason. True culture is the harmonious balance of both.
- Arnold also compares two traditions: Hebraism and Hellenism. Hebraism emphasizes moral obedience, religious duty, and strictness, while Hellenism values intellectual curiosity, beauty, and reason. Arnold argues that society needs a balance between these two forces. Through *Culture and Anarchy*, he calls for a higher ideal of life based on beauty, reason, and moral purpose rather than blind faith in wealth or rigid religious rules.

The Study of Poetry (1880)

- In his essay *The Study of Poetry*, Arnold stresses the importance of “high seriousness” in poetry. He famously declares that poetry is “a criticism of life.” As religion and philosophy lose their influence in modern society, poetry will take their place as a moral and spiritual guide. However, for poetry to perform this high function, readers must learn to distinguish good poetry from bad poetry.
- Arnold identifies two wrong ways of judging poetry: the “personal estimate” and the “historical estimate.” The personal estimate means judging a poem according to one’s personal feelings or preferences, which leads to biased opinions. The historical estimate means judging a poem based on its historical importance rather than its actual quality. For example, Arnold respects Geoffrey Chaucer as an important historical figure, but he argues that Chaucer’s poetry does not always possess the “high seriousness” of truly great poetry.
- Instead, Arnold proposes the “real estimate,” which judges poetry based on its truth, seriousness, moral depth, universality, and lasting value. Great poetry must offer profound insight into life and maintain high artistic quality.

The “Touchstone” Method

- To help readers judge poetry correctly, Arnold introduces the “touchstone” method. A touchstone is a stone used to test the purity of gold or silver. Similarly, Arnold suggests that short passages from the greatest poets can be used to measure the quality of other poetry. He recommends lines from poets such as Homer, Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare, and John Milton as standards of excellence. If a poem shows

the same depth, seriousness, and power as these great examples, it can be considered great.

- Arnold believes this method protects criticism from personal bias and historical exaggeration. It encourages objective judgment based on quality and truth rather than emotion or reputation.

Literary Criticism

- Matthew Arnold makes an important distinction between the “real estimate” of literature and the “personal” or “historical” estimate. He argues that not all poets who were historically influential are necessarily great artists. The historical estimate judges a writer based on their importance in literary history, while the personal estimate is based on individual likes and dislikes. Both methods can lead to biased judgments. Instead, Arnold supports the “real estimate,” which evaluates literature based on its quality, seriousness, truth, and lasting value. He believes that truly great literature expresses universal truths about life. However, Arnold does not focus much on technical details of style or historical background; instead, he emphasizes moral depth and intellectual seriousness.

Conclusion

- Matthew Arnold laid the foundation of literary humanism, which believes that literature has the power to uplift, civilize, and morally guide humanity. His concept of “disinterestedness” introduced a more objective and balanced approach to literary criticism. By comparing English literature with the best works of Western literature, Arnold widened the scope of criticism beyond narrow national boundaries. He believed that literature plays a crucial role in guiding society, especially during times of confusion and moral crisis. His ideas influenced later critics such as T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis. Arnold also stressed the importance of “inwardness,” meaning spiritual and intellectual depth, as opposed to the materialism and external focus of modern industrial society.

Chapter 14 - Leo Tolstoy: "What Is Art?"

- Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was a famous Russian novelist, short story writer, and social critic. He is widely admired for major works such as *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Cossacks*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, and *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Along with fiction, he wrote important religious and philosophical works such as *A Confession*, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, and *What Is Art?*. His ideas about art were deeply influenced by his Christian beliefs. *What Is Art?* was first written in Russian in 1897 and later published in English in 1898 due to censorship problems in Russia.

Tolstoy's Aim in *What Is Art?*

- By the late nineteenth century, Tolstoy had become dissatisfied with European ideas of art, especially the belief in “art for art’s sake.” He felt that art had become too focused on beauty and pleasure and had lost its moral purpose. Through *What Is Art?*, Tolstoy tries to redefine the true meaning and function of art. He connects art closely with morality, religion, and social responsibility.

Art as Communication

- Tolstoy rejects the idea that art is simply beauty. According to him, art is a form of communication. A work of art is created when an artist experiences a genuine emotion—such as joy, sorrow, anger, or love—and consciously expresses it through words, sounds, images, or movements. When the audience feels the same emotion, art has succeeded. He describes art as a process in which one person “infects” others with the feelings he has experienced.

Good Art and Bad Art

- Tolstoy explains that good art must express sincere and genuine feelings. It should unite people by sharing common human emotions and promote moral and spiritual growth. True art encourages love, compassion, and truth. In contrast, bad art is artificial, insincere, and created only for the pleasure of the rich or educated elite. Such art excludes the common people and fails to serve humanity.
- Tolstoy strongly criticizes much European art of his time. He argues that works by artists such as William Shakespeare, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Richard Wagner are often too complex and accessible only to educated elites. He believes that art had become corrupted by wealth, luxury, and the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure instead of sincere emotional communication.

Art and Morality

- For Tolstoy, art cannot be separated from morality. He believes that true art must serve the good of humanity and follow the Christian “law of love.” Art should bring people together, promote empathy, and elevate the human spirit. According to Tolstoy, art is a human activity in which a person consciously communicates lived emotions to others, so that they also experience those same feelings. Thus, art becomes a moral force that strengthens unity and compassion among people.
- Tolstoy emphasizes that art is not meant for pleasure or beauty, but is a vital human activity, similar to speech. While speech communicates thoughts, art communicates feelings. True art happens when a person consciously expresses an emotion with the intention of sharing it with others. For example, a boy who felt fear when encountering a wolf can tell a story in a way that allows the listeners to feel the same

fear. These feelings can be based on real experiences or imagined situations, but the key is that the audience experiences the same emotion as the artist.

Art Transmits All Emotions

- According to Tolstoy, any emotion can become art, including love, joy, sorrow, courage, fear, admiration, humor, and serenity. Art can transmit these feelings through words, music, painting, dance, drama, or other forms of expression. What makes an activity truly artistic is that the audience is “infected” by the same feelings the artist experienced. If people experience the artist’s emotions, whether the subject is small and simple or grand and dramatic, it qualifies as true art.

Art Connects Humanity Across Time

- Tolstoy also argues that art unites people by sharing human experiences across time and space. Through art, individuals can feel the emotions of contemporaries as well as people who lived centuries ago. Without this capacity to transmit and share feelings, humanity would be more divided, isolated, and even hostile. In this way, art is as essential to human life as language, because it allows people to communicate, empathize, and progress morally and spiritually.

Tolstoy vs Traditional Views

- Tolstoy rejects the traditional definitions of art. He says art is not a display of beauty or the manifestation of divine ideas, it is not a game to release energy, it is not merely producing pleasing objects, and it is not simply expressing emotions for enjoyment. Instead, the main purpose of art is to connect humans emotionally, promote shared understanding, and advance moral and spiritual development.
- Tolstoy’s radical view challenged the prevailing notion of “art for art’s sake.” He argues that true art is about sharing feelings and uniting humanity. While critics think his moral standards are too strict and exclude some great works of literature and music, his idea that art is fundamentally about human connection has been extremely influential in aesthetics, ethics, and the social role of art.

Module IV - Delving into Modernity – Modern Literary Criticism

- Earlier criticism (Victorian and 19th century) judged literature based on morality, the author’s life, or historical lessons. With the 20th century, critics began studying literature as an independent object, focusing on the text itself rather than outside factors.

- **Key Features of Early 20th Century Criticism:**
Modern criticism rejected old traditions, including Victorian norms and Romantic subjectivity. Critics adopted more systematic approaches using linguistics, psychology, and philosophy. Language experimentation became common, with techniques like stream of consciousness, symbolism, irony, and ambiguity. Stories often became fragmented, using broken structures, collage, and multiple perspectives. Themes of alienation, disillusionment, and social breakdown were frequent, while myths and symbols were used to give meaning to modern chaos. Urban life, industrialization, and mechanization also became important subjects.
- **Foundations of Modern Criticism:**
Russian Formalism (1910s–1920s) focused on “literariness,” emphasizing that a text’s form conveys its meaning. Practical Criticism, led by I.A. Richards in the 1920s, emphasized close reading of the text itself, ignoring the author’s biography or context. Early Modernist writers like Eliot, Pound, and Joyce experimented with form, influencing critics to study structure and technique closely.
- Early Modernists and critics explored new ways to represent the uncertainty, fragmentation, and rapid changes of modern life, using innovative forms, techniques, and themes to reflect the modern world.

Chapter 15 – T.S. Eliot: Impersonality Theory

- **Introduction to T.S. Eliot:**
T.S. Eliot (1888–1965) was a major modernist poet and literary critic. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, he studied at Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Oxford, gaining a strong background in literature and philosophy. His poetry, including *The Waste Land* (1922) and *Four Quartets* (1943), broke traditional forms and used fragmented narratives, multiple voices, and allusions to myth and classical literature. Eliot moved to England, became a British citizen in 1927, and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948. His critical essays, like *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, shaped modern literary theory. Eliot stressed the impersonality of art, using myth, literary allusion, and everyday speech to capture modern alienation and uncertainty.
- **Tradition and the Individual Talent:**
Eliot’s essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919) is a foundational modernist text. It challenges the Romantic idea that poetry is personal emotion, emphasizing impersonality instead. The essay has three parts: first, it explains tradition and continuity in literature; second, it develops Eliot’s idea that poetry should be impersonal, with the poet acting as a “catalyst” to transform emotions into art; third, it concludes the discussion.
- **Part I – Tradition:**
Eliot redefines tradition, not as imitation of the past but as a living cultural inheritance. He argues that the past and present exist together and influence each other. All literature forms a continuous, indivisible order. When a new work appears, it changes the relationship among all works in the literary tradition. A poet must have

“historical sense,” understanding their work as part of this ongoing continuum, rather than as an isolated act of genius. By tradition, Eliot means an awareness of major writers from Homer to the present, especially in Western Europe.

- Impersonality in Poetry:

Eliot emphasizes that honest criticism should focus on the poetry itself, not the poet. The mature poet transforms emotions into a new artistic form, without letting personal feelings intrude. Poetry should be understood as part of a larger living whole, connecting the work of past and contemporary poets. In this view, the poet’s personal mind matters less than the text they create, which exists as an independent object.

- Part II – Impersonality in Poetry:

Eliot argues that great poetry is not an expression of the poet’s personal emotions or personality. Instead, it is created through a detached, impersonal process that fuses experiences and feelings into an artistic whole. Criticism should focus on the poem itself, not the poet’s life. Poems exist within a literary tradition, and a new work must be evaluated in relation to past poetry, forming a “living whole.”

- Eliot uses the chemical analogy: just as platinum acts as a catalyst in a reaction without being part of the final product, the poet’s mind transforms emotions into poetry without leaving personal traces. Poetry may arise from a single emotion, multiple feelings, or even latent emotions, combining them under the right artistic conditions. For example, Dante’s *Inferno* shows some parts drawing directly on emotion, while others create intense poetry without a specific emotional source.

- Eliot rejects Wordsworth’s idea of poetry as “emotion recollected in tranquillity.” Instead, poetry is a concentration of experiences fused in passive attention and creative alertness. The poet needs both conscious craftsmanship and unconscious sensitivity. A bad poet misuses these, overthinking when they should be intuitive, or being careless when they should be deliberate. Eliot famously concludes: “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.” Only poets with genuine emotions can transform them effectively into art.

- Eliot illustrates impersonality with a passage from Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*. The character’s intense emotions are expressed dramatically through imagery, but this does not reflect Webster’s personal feelings. The poet’s emotions are depersonalized, structured, and transformed into art that belongs to the literary tradition. Eliot warns against creating “new emotions” for novelty, advocating instead the artistic transformation of ordinary or even unfelt emotions.

- Part III – Good vs. Bad Poetry:

Eliot concludes by defining good and bad poetry. Bad poetry releases raw personal emotion; good poetry transforms private feelings into something universal, showing no trace of the poet’s personality. True poetry is impersonal and disciplined. Poets must have strong emotions but use them artistically rather than as confession. The more perfect the poet, the more their personal self disappears into the work.

- Conclusion:

Eliot’s ideas influenced New Criticism, structuralist, and poststructuralist debates. His

emphasis on impersonality, textual analysis, and tradition reshaped literary criticism. *Tradition and the Individual Talent* remains foundational, redefining originality and showing that poetry achieves greatness through disciplined artistry rather than self-expression.

Chapter 16 - New Criticism

- New Criticism developed between the late 1930s and the 1950s and is considered to have transformed the teaching of literature and shaped English Studies. It was not led by a single critic, had no official manifesto, and no clearly defined beginning. There was no set group or membership, so there is no “typical” New Critic.
- Origin:
The term *New Criticism* was first introduced by American critic Joel Elias Spingarn in a 1910 lecture at Columbia University. He argued that literature should be evaluated based on its intrinsic qualities, not external factors such as the author’s life or historical context. Later, in 1941, John Crowe Ransom highlighted that New Criticism encouraged new, challenging ways to examine literature.
- Theoretical Roots:
New Criticism draws from English Romanticism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s concept of “organic unity,” from his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), was influential. Coleridge argued that a poem’s form and content are inseparable and together create a unified effect. New Critics believed that understanding a text’s internal structure was essential to grasping its meaning. Brooks and Warren applied this idea in *Understanding Poetry*, describing a poem as an organic system of relationships. Other important influences include John Keats’s idea of “negative capability” and T.S. Eliot’s concept of the “objective correlative,” both of which emphasized the importance of the text’s structure and expressive methods over the poet’s personal feelings.
- New Criticism was expressed through several influential books. I.A. Richards wrote *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929), while Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren co-authored *Understanding Poetry* (1938). These works helped establish the methods and focus of New Criticism.
- Key figures whose approaches shaped New Criticism include John Crowe Ransom, I.A. Richards, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, R.P. Blackmur, William Empson, Yvor Winters, and W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley. Early work by F.R. Leavis is also often associated with the movement, and critical essays by T.S. Eliot (and to a lesser extent Ezra Pound) contributed to its development.
- Important New Critical texts include Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), Brooks’s *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947) and *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939), Tate’s *Essays of Four Decades* (1974), and Wimsatt’s *The Verbal Icon* (1954). Two

journals closely linked to New Criticism were *The Southern Review* (1935), edited by Brooks and Warren, and *The Kenyon Review* (1939), founded by Ransom.

- The Literary Text as an Organic System:

Brooks and Warren described a poem as “an organic system of relationships,” emphasizing that literary works are governed by a special use of language. In literature, words carry literal meanings (denotation) and suggestive meanings (connotation), sound, rhythm, and resonance with other words. Unlike everyday language, which is primarily functional, literary language is non-functional, doing more than conveying simple information. Literary texts are autonomous systems, and readers must adjust their approach to account for this difference. Empson focused on ambiguity, Tate on tension, Ransom on the concrete universal, and Brooks on paradox to explain poetry’s distinctiveness.

- Autonomy of the Text:

New Critics believed that the text exists independently from the author or the world outside it. The poem is a self-contained system; meaning arises from its internal relationships, not from external references. Brooks famously called the poem a “well-wrought urn,” a spatially enclosed object containing all its meaning. Because of this autonomy, paraphrasing a poem is considered a “heresy,” since paraphrase destroys the text’s internal system of relationships and the experience of the poem. As I.A. Richards said, “*it is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is.*”

- Intentional and Affective Fallacies:

Two major concepts developed by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in *The Verbal Icon* are the intentional fallacy and the affective fallacy. The intentional fallacy warns against judging a text by the author’s intended meaning, because intention is often unclear and threatens the autonomy of the text. The affective fallacy warns against judging a text by the emotional response of the reader, since this confuses the poem with its effects. Both fallacies emphasize keeping critical focus strictly on the text and its internal dynamics, not external factors like authorial biography or reader response.

- Anti-Historicism and Teaching Practice:

New Critics also rejected historicism, insisting that literature should not be treated as historical evidence. Focusing on context or authorial life neglects the text’s figurative language, tropes, and artistic structure. Close, detailed reading (close reading) of the text itself was the foundation of New Critical practice, promoting objectivity and discipline in literary criticism. By isolating the text from author, history, and reader response, New Criticism professionalized literary study and established its methodological rigor.

Chapter 17 on Wimsatt and Beardsley's "*The Intentional Fallacy*":

- W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (1907–1975) and Monroe C. Beardsley (1915–1985) were American literary critics and philosophers. Wimsatt wrote works like *The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson* and *The Verbal Icon*, while Beardsley focused on aesthetics in books like *Aesthetic Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. Both were central figures in New Criticism, a movement that emphasized analyzing the text itself rather than the author or reader.
- Their important essays, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946) and "The Affective Fallacy" (1949), challenged traditional literary criticism. The first rejects using an author's intention to interpret a work, while the second argues against judging a work based solely on the reader's emotions. These essays helped define New Criticism's approach of focusing only on the text.
- The question of authorial intention was already debated by critics like C.S. Lewis and E.M.W. Tillyard in *The Personal Heresy* (1939). Tillyard thought poetry reflected the poet's personality, so understanding the poet mattered. Lewis argued that poetry is separate from the poet, and the focus should be on the work itself. Wimsatt and Beardsley sided with Lewis, claiming that an author's intentions are neither available nor useful as a standard for criticism.
- Meaning of Intention - By "intention," they mean the author's plan, purpose, attitude, or feelings that supposedly guided the work. Classical criticism focused on form and imitation, while Romantic criticism emphasized personal expression. Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that relying on the author's intention is unnecessary, and the text itself should be the focus of literary analysis.
- The main contribution of Wimsatt and Beardsley is that a literary work should be studied as an independent object, not as a reflection of the author or the reader's feelings. Their ideas gave New Criticism a clear method: close reading and analysis of the text itself.
- Wimsatt and Beardsley open "*The Intentional Fallacy*" by challenging the long-held idea that a poet's intention should guide literary criticism. They reference debates like C.S. Lewis vs. E.M.W. Tillyard (*The Personal Heresy*, 1939) and essays in periodicals like the *Southern* and *Kenyon Reviews*. The New Critics argue that the author's intention is neither accessible nor desirable as a standard for judging a literary work. Instead, criticism should focus on the work itself, not the author's effort, feelings, or personality.
- By "intention," they mean the author's plan, design, purpose, or emotional attitude while writing. Classical criticism emphasized imitation and form, whereas Romantic criticism valued personal expression. Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that intention should not determine the success of a poem, since literary judgment concerns the text as an independent object.
- Propositions About Poetry

1. A poem is deliberately created, but this does not make the author's intention the standard of success.
2. Intention is difficult to know: if a poem succeeds, it shows what the poet achieved; if it fails, external evidence adds little.
3. Judging a poem is like judging a pudding or machine: we ask whether it works, not what was meant. A poem "should not mean but be."
4. Even lyric poems are dramatic, expressing a speaker's response to a situation, not necessarily the author's personal feelings.
5. Revision does not guarantee the poet's original intention—it only shows an aim to improve the work.

- Once created, a poem does not belong to the author or the critic. It becomes a public object of language, independent from private intentions. This is central to New Criticism: the work must be judged on its own merits, not by effort, biography, or psychology.
- Wimsatt and Beardsley classify evidence into three types:

Internal evidence: found in the text itself (structure, imagery, tone, rhythm) → legitimate for criticism.

External evidence: author's letters, diaries, or statements of intent → irrelevant.

Intermediate evidence: public sources used by the author (literary tradition, myths, history) → admissible only if it clarifies the text, not the author's mind.

- They emphasize that biographical or psychological criticism reduces literature to private feelings and is therefore not true literary criticism. Even in complex works like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, external notes or allusions can aid understanding, but they do not reveal the poet's intention.

Chapter 18 Sigmund Freud: "Dostoevsky and Parricide"

- Sigmund Freud – Background - Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was a physiologist, medical doctor, psychologist, and founder of psychoanalysis. His major works include:

The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) – introduces the unconscious mind and dream analysis.

Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) – outlines psychosexual development.

Totem and Taboo (1913) – links primitive rituals with the Oedipus complex.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) – introduces the death drive.

The Ego and the Id (1923) – develops the structural model of the psyche (id, ego, superego).

- Freud studied how hidden desires, memories, and conflicts in the unconscious mind influence behavior. When applied to literature, psychoanalysis helps critics explore hidden meanings, desires, and conflicts in texts.
- Freud's essay "*Dostoevsky and Parricide*" (1928) was written as a preface to a German translation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). He analyzes Dostoevsky's life, his epilepsy, and his writing through psychoanalysis, focusing on the theme of parricide (killing of the father). Freud links the author's personal psychology to his literary themes.
- Summary of *The Brothers Karamazov* - The novel explores faith, morality, free will, and evil through the Karamazov family:

Fyodor Pavlovich – corrupt, selfish father.

Dmitri – passionate, impulsive eldest son.

Ivan – intellectual, skeptical middle son.

Alyosha – gentle, spiritual youngest son, novice monk.

Smerdyakov – illegitimate son, servant, epileptic, bitter, cynical.

- All sons resent their father for cruelty, greed, and depravity. Tensions rise over inheritance and Grushenka, a woman both Dmitri and Fyodor desire. Fyodor Pavlovich is murdered, and Dmitri is wrongly suspected because of his behavior, while Smerdyakov is the true killer, influenced by Ivan's atheistic philosophy ("everything is permitted" if there is no God).
- Dmitri is convicted despite Smerdyakov's confession, accepting punishment and finding spiritual redemption through suffering.
- Ivan is tormented by guilt and descends into madness.
- Alyosha remains a moral and spiritual center, emphasizing compassion, forgiveness, and faith in humanity.
- Major themes include parricide, faith vs. doubt, guilt, responsibility, and redemption. Dostoevsky suggests that suffering can lead to spiritual renewal, a central idea Freud analyzes psychologically in the essay.
- Freud observes a strong link between the murder of the father in *The Brothers Karamazov* and the real-life fate of Dostoevsky's father. Biographers noticed this connection and applied psychoanalytic theory to interpret it. Freud suggests that the trauma of his father's death may have been a turning point in Dostoevsky's neurosis,

though explaining this fully requires understanding psychoanalytic concepts, which may be unfamiliar to some readers.

- From childhood, Dostoevsky experienced deathlike attacks, long before being diagnosed with epilepsy. These were sudden episodes of melancholy, lethargy, and fear of death. He even left notes asking that his burial be delayed because he feared falling into a deathlike sleep at night. Freud interprets these attacks as a psychological identification with a dead person or someone the child wishes dead, often the father. The attack functions as self-punishment for the unconscious wish to harm the father.
- Parricide and the Oedipus Complex

Freud explains parricide as a primal human fantasy, closely linked to the Oedipus complex:

- The child harbors ambivalent feelings toward the father: hatred mixed with admiration.
- The boy wants to replace the father and possess the mother, but fears castration as punishment.
- This fear forces the child to suppress the wish, which then becomes unconscious guilt.
- Freud adds that constitutional bisexuality can complicate this process. If a boy has strong bisexual tendencies, he may unconsciously diverge toward femininity, positioning himself in the mother's role as an object of the father's love, further reinforcing guilt and internal conflict.

Key Psychoanalytic Points

- Dostoevsky's childhood experiences, trauma, and identification with his father shaped his personality and literary themes.
- Parricide in his novel mirrors the psychological conflicts of the Oedipus complex.
- Early deathlike attacks are a manifestation of unconscious desires and guilt.
- Freud uses these patterns to explain Dostoevsky's obsession with moral guilt, punishment, and suffering in his works.

Freud's Aim

- In "*Dostoevsky and Parricide*" (1928), Freud offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. He connects the murder of Dostoevsky's father with the murder of Fyodor Pavlovich in the novel. Dostoevsky's father was abusive and despised, and he was killed when Dostoevsky was young. Freud suggests that parricidal urges existed unconsciously in Dostoevsky, and after his father's death, guilt over these wishes contributed to psychological disturbances, including epileptic-like attacks (which Freud considered partly hysterical self-punishment).
- From childhood, Dostoevsky experienced deathlike seizures: sudden depression, fear of dying, lethargy, and somnolence. He was so afraid of dying in his sleep that he left notes asking his burial to be postponed. Freud interprets these attacks as identification with a dead person. Psychologically, this often represents unconscious wishes for the

father's death, with the seizures serving as self-punishment for these forbidden thoughts.

- Freud draws parallels between Dostoevsky and Smerdyakov, the character who kills Fyodor Pavlovich:
- Both experience epileptic attacks.
- Dostoevsky's seizures reflect unconscious guilt, while Smerdyakov acts out the crime.
- Freud argues that Dostoevsky's Oedipal guilt contributed to his psychological and creative life: he transformed inner conflict into art, whereas Smerdyakov collapses under it and kills himself.

Freud links Dostoevsky's experience to the Oedipus complex:

- A boy has ambivalent feelings toward his father: hatred (wish to remove him) and admiration (identification).
- The boy unconsciously wishes to take the father's place and possess the mother, but fears castration, so the wish is repressed.
- The suppressed wish produces unconscious guilt, which can manifest as psychological or physical symptoms (like Dostoevsky's seizures).
- Freud notes that if a child has strong bisexual tendencies, the Oedipal conflict may become more complicated:
- The boy may unconsciously try to identify with the mother rather than eliminate the father.
- Fear of punishment (castration) still blocks resolution, leaving the child in deep inner conflict.
- This unresolved conflict forms part of Dostoevsky's psychological foundation, which he channels into literary creativity.

