

## Paper – V

### **1. New Historicism Analysis / Attempt an understanding of the worship of New Historicism in the light of the comment that it “has a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history”.**

New Historicism is a critical approach developed in the 1980s through the works of Michel Foucault and Stephen Greenblatt, similar to Marxism. Moving away from text-centered schools of criticism such as New Criticism, New Historicism reopened the interpretation of literature to the social, political, and historical milieu that produced it. To a New Historicist, literature is not the record of a single mind, but the end product of a particular cultural moment. New Historicists look at literature alongside other cultural products of a particular historical period to illustrate how concepts, attitudes, and ideologies operated across a broader cultural spectrum that is not exclusively literary. In addition to analyzing the impact of historical context and ideology, New Historicists also acknowledge that their own criticism contains biases that derive from their historical position and ideology. Because it is impossible to escape one's own “historicity,” the meaning of a text is fluid, not fixed. New Historicists attempt to situate artistic texts both as products of a historical context and as the means to understand cultural and intellectual history.

New Historicism differs from the old Historicism in large measure not based on the approach but rather on changes in historical methodology, the rise of the so-called New history. The term new history was indebted to the French term *nouvelle histoire*, itself associated particularly with the historian Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, members of the third generation of the *Annales* School, which appeared in the 1970s. The movement can be associated with cultural history, history of representations, and *histoire des mentalités*. While there may be no precise definition, the new history is best understood in contrast with prior methods of writing history, resisting their focus on politics and “great men;” their insistence on composing historical narrative; their emphasis on administrative documents as key source materials; their concern with individuals' motivations and intentions as explanatory factors for historical events; and their willingness to accept the possibility of historians' objectivity.

Since the 1950s, when Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault argued that each epoch has its own knowledge system, which individuals are inexorably entangled with, many post-structuralists have used historicism to describe the view that all questions must be settled within the cultural and social context in which they are raised, answers cannot be found by appeal to an external truth, but only within the confines of the norms and forms that phrase the question. This version of historicism holds that there are only the raw texts, markings and artifacts that exist in the present, and the conventions used to decode them.

New Historicist scholars begin their analysis of literary texts by attempting to look at other texts—both literary and non-literary—to which a literate public had access at the time of writing, and what the author of the original text himself might have read. The purpose of this research, however, is not to derive the direct sources of a text, as the New Critics did, but to understand the relationship between a text and the political, social, and economic circumstances in which it originated.

Since Stephen Greenblatt, a Renaissance Shakespeare scholar, played a pivotal role in the rise of New Historicism, the school developed largely in Shakespeare and English Renaissance Theatre studies. A major focus of those New Historicist critics led by Moskowitz and Stephen Orgel has been on understanding Shakespeare less as a genius than as a clue to the conjunction of the world of English Renaissance theatre and the complex social politics of the time. The focus of new historical analysis is to bring to the foreground the context and give it greater emphasis than previously recognized.

New Historicism developed in part based on the frustration of some literary scholars with the ahistorical approach of New Criticism, and the formalist tendencies of the structuralist and post-structuralist approaches that came after New Criticism. Yet, it also owes a debt to post-structuralism as well. It is distinct from the

older Historicism in large part because, "the movement follows poststructuralism in its assurance that literary works mean any number of things to any number of readers (the doctrine of the plurality of meaning), freeing New Historicists to find the warrant for their interpretations not in the author's intentions for his work but in the ideology of his age. Similarly, the New Historicist effort to assimilate the literary text to history is guaranteed by the poststructuralist doctrine of textuality, which states that the text is not aloof from the surrounding context, that there is a contiguity, an ebb and flow, between text and whatever might once have been seen as "outside" it."

## **2. Discuss Coleridge's views on poetic language and show why he seems to differ from Wordsworth on this / What are the views of S. T. Coleridge on poetic language? How do you feel he differs from William Wordsworth on this?**

The most remarkable part of *Biographia Literaria* lies in Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetry and poetic Diction. While critically analysing Wordsworth's theory Coleridge has offered his own views on the choice of rustic, themes and characters as well as the language of poetry.

In chapter XVII of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge refers to Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. In this preface, Wordsworth made three important statements which Coleridge found unacceptable. First Wordsworth asserts that the proper diction of poetry consists in the language or the real conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. So he chose humble and rustic life, Coleridge points out that this statement is imperfect at all his characters are not chosen from low and rustic life, eg the characters in poems like "Ruth", "Michael", "The brothers" etc. Coleridge argues that their language and sentiments do not necessarily arise from their social standing. They spring from the general causes which will produce identical feelings in every kind of life either in town or in the country. Moreover, Coleridge maintains that Wordsworth's theory of poetic Diction can be applicable to certain classes of poetry only but it can never be a rule of general application. In this connection, he refers to Aristotle's conception of poetry as essentially ideal, so that individual characters in poetry should be general and typical, and their feelings should be typical and representative of the whole class.

Examine Wordsworth's theory of Poetic Diction. Coleridge maintains that the language of the rustic purified from its defects and grossness will not differ materially from the language of any other man of common sense, however, learned or refined he may be. He points out that the experience of the rustic is very limited; the facts at his disposal are society; so he cannot think logically. He is unable to connect with fact and express himself logically, as an educated man can. Therefore, the language of the rustic lacks expressive visions (and range) making itself unfit for poetry. Coleridge also finds fault with Wordsworth's conviction that the best part of the human language is derived from the objects into which the rustic daily communicate. The argues that rustic life is narrow and the rustic is actually acquitted with only a few things of life. Therefore, the words and the combinations of words derived from the very few objects with which the rustic are familiar, cannot be considered to form the best part of human language is derived from the reflections on the acts of the mind itself; It is formed by the use of appropriate signs and symbols for the process of human; imagination and reflection which the uneducated man cannot have. Whatever noble and poetic phrases the rustic use, are derived not from nature, but from repeated, listening to the Bible and to the sermons.

Giving his critical assessment of the language of prose and poetry as reflected in Wordsworth's theory of Poetic Diction, Coleridge objects to the ambiguity in the use of the word real. Wordsworth maintains that the language of poetry is selection of the real language of men. Coleridge argues that everyone's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, the activities of his faculties and the depth and quickness of his feelings. Everyman's language has its individual characteristics the common properties of the class to which he belongs and the words and phrases of universal use. He points out that the language used in the poems of Wordsworth differs greatly from the language of a common peasant. Coleridge opines that for the word real; we should substitute the word 'ordinary'. He also objects to Wordsworth's addition of the words

“in a state of excitement”, for emotional excitement may result in a more concentrated expression, but it cannot create a noble and richer vocabulary. Moreover, a common uncultivated mind, overpowered by a strong passion can utter broken words or repeat the sets of words and phrases known to him already. It would be very difficult for a poet to make such language fit for poetry.

Coleridge also disagrees with Wordsworth regarding the statement that there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition”. Coleridge asserts that there is and there ought to be an essential difference between the languages of prose and that of poetry. Coleridge argues that language of written prose obviously differs from that of common conversation, in the same way as reading differs from talking. Even though some words are common to prose and poetry, they are differently arranged in the two compositions, making the language of the two essentially different. This difference arises from the fact that the poetry use meter and meter requires a different arrangement of words. Coleridge has already pointed out that metre is not a mere superficial decoration, but an essential organic part of a poem. Therefore there must be an ‘essential’ difference between the language of prose and that of poetry. The use of meter creates a different atmosphere in poetry and the metaphors as well as similes used by a poet are different in quality, but not art. There are passages which will suit the one, but not the other.

Thus, Wordsworth theory of poetic Diction is critically examined by Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* and while making an assessment of these views, Coleridge offers his own views on the language of poetry in general.

### **3. Tradition and the Individual Talent: Any Question / Show how T. S. Eliot systematically develops the concept of the Impersonal theory of poetry in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ / How, in your opinion does T. S. Eliot inscribe a modernist literary aesthetic in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'?**

George Watson writes about Eliot: “Eliot made English criticism look different, but not in a simple sense. He offered it a new range of rhetorical possibilities, confirmed it in its increasing contempt for historical process, and yet reshaped its notion of period by a handful of brilliant institutions.” “Tradition and the Individual Talent” was originally published across two instalments of the ‘Egoist’ in 1919 and later, in 1920, became part of T.S. Eliot’s full length book of essays on poetry and criticism, ‘The Sacred Wood’. “Tradition and the Individual Talent” expresses Eliot’s idea about the concept of ‘tradition’ and the individual or unique talent of someone and also expresses the relationship between the ‘tradition’ and the ‘individual talent’ and their interdependence on each other.

The essay is divided into three parts. The first part gives us Eliot’s concept of tradition, and in the second part is developed his theory of the impersonality of poetry. The short, third part is in the nature of a conclusion, or summing up of the whole discussion. Eliot begins the essay by pointing out that the word ‘tradition’ is generally regarded as a word of censure. It is a word disagreeable to the English ears. When the English praise a poet, they praise him for those-aspects of his work which are ‘individual’ and original. This undue stress on individuality shows that the English have an uncritical turn of mind. Eliot seems quite in favour of such ‘criticality’. He thinks “criticism is as inevitable as breathing”. Then he talks about tradition. The Englishmen, while analysing the poet, admire those aspects which are different from the poet’s predecessors. Then Eliot talks about tradition and ‘historical sense’. He says that if the form of tradition remained only in blind adherence of dead people or ancestors, then it would be lost or such tradition should be destroyed. He says: “Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves in the first place, the historical sense.”

In this second part Eliot tries to define the process of ‘depersonalization’ and its relation with the sense of tradition. The main aspect of this theory is the relation of poetry with the poet. Eliot says: “Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry.” Eliot says that in most of the criticisms, we find the name and the creativity of poet, but when we seek for enjoyment of poetry we seldom

get it. In this part Eliot says that the difference between mature and immature poets can be found out by liberty of special and very varied feelings that can enter into new combinations.

Eliot gives illustration from science-chemistry. In the process of being sulphurous acid; there are two gases needed: oxygen and sulphur dioxide. And also they must have the presence of filament 'platinum'. He compares this platinum with the poet. In this whole process filament of platinum plays vital and inevitable role. But yet that role is indirect. In the process platinum remains quite unaffected by any gases. It remains inert, neutral and unchanged. Similarly the result (sulphurous acid) that comes out from the process has no any trace of platinum. Eliot insists that the mind of the poet should be like that shred of platinum. It should give its total contribution in creating poetry, then also it should remain unaffected and separate when poetry has come out.

At the end, in this third part Eliot says that this essay stops at the starting of mysticism. And it can be applied by the responsible person, who really interested in poetry. It is very hard thing to take interest in poetry and to keep a poet aside. We usually read poem with the name and fame of the poet. We cannot separate them from each other. Eliot says: "There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet." Going to emphasize the "theory of impersonality" of poetry, Eliot here openly criticises Wordsworth. He completely rejects Wordsworth's conception of Poetry i.e., "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, emotions recollected on tranquillity." Eliot's new definition of poetry is that "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."

#### **4. 'Biographia Literaria': Any question / In the Biographia Literaria, what are Coleridge's views an Imagination?**

'Biographia Literaria' was begun by Coleridge as a literary autobiography but ended up in discussions about Kant, and Schelling and Coleridge's perceptive criticism of Wordsworth's poetry and a comprehensive statement on creative imagination which constitutes his most signal contribution to literary criticism and theory. Arthur Symonds justly described the work as 'the greatest book of English criticism'. Coleridge's whole aesthetic - his definition of poetry, his idea of the poet, and his poetical criticism - revolve around his theory of creative imagination.

Coleridge builds his theory on the basic distinction between Fancy and Imagination - terms which were used before him more-or-less indistinguishably to express the same import. Central to the narrative is concern about the reconciliation between head and the heart, concern with this reconciliation, in general, moves everything towards a discussion of the imagination; and in spite of its disappointing brevity, Chapter - XIII offers central insights into imagination, which is principle of growth and creativity.

The Chapter XIII of 'Biographia Literaria' deals with the distinction between the primary and secondary imagination, and it has been described by the critic George Watson as "the Waterloo of English Aesthetics". The charge is obvious. The two concepts "Fancy" and "Imagination" have been developed in an incomplete or sketchy manner. This is because those concepts cover the area of philosophy and metaphysics. Imagination in its real sense denotes the working of poetic minds upon external objects or objects visible to the eyes. Imaginative process sometimes adds additional properties to an object or sometimes abstracts from it some of its properties. Therefore, imagination thus transforms the object into something new. It modifies and even creates new objects. According to Coleridge, imagination has two types: Primary and Secondary.

According to him the primary imagination is "the living power and prime agent of all human perception". Primary is perceiving the impressions of the outer world through the senses. It is a spontaneous act of the human mind, the image so formed of the outside world unconsciously and involuntarily. It is universal and

is possessed by all. According to him the secondary imagination is the poetic vision, the faculty that a poet has “to idealize and unify”. It is an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will. It works upon the raw materials that are sensations and impressions supplied the primary imagination. It is the secondary imagination which makes any artistic creation possible and root of all poetic activity. It is considered as shaping and modifying power.

Coleridge regards fancy to be the inferior to imagination. It is according to him a creative power. It only combines different things into different shapes, not like imagination to fuse them into one. According to him, it is the process of “bringing together images dissimilar in the main, by source”. It has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. Fancy, in Coleridge’s eyes was employed for tasks that were “passive” and “mechanical”.

Coleridge owned his interest in study of theory of imagination. He is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative activity. While most of the critics use Fancy and imagination almost as synonyms, Coleridge is the first critic to distinguish between them and define their respective roles. He distinguishes between primary and secondary imagination. Coleridge’s treatment of the subject is characterized by greater depth, penetration and philosophical subtlety. The critics W. K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks summarize up this argument in a very logical order: “Imagination, according to this writer, for Coleridge reconciled sameness with difference, the general with concrete, idea with image, the representative with individual order with emotion. The purpose of Imagination is to bring about a synthesis between art and nature”.

### **5. Aristotle’s concept of Plot and Character / What are Aristotle’s views on the Plot of Tragedy in Poetics? How does he explain the relative importance of Plot and Character? / State and briefly discuss Aristotle’s enumeration of the constituent elements of Tragedy.**

The same period which had produced Plato, one of the great masters of criticism, witnessed the arrival of another outstanding genius in the person of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), a pupil of the former philosopher, whose work he was to develop on lines of his own thereby bringing to light in connection with art leading principles of great and permanent value. Aristotle’s Poetics is the first important document in the history of Western criticism. It was written around 330 B.C. although written in the distant past its themes and discussions are of timeless value and fundamental to the aesthetic and literary criticism. The text of the Poetics as such remains fragmentary and incomplete. Its twenty-six short chapters are not always coherent. However, the Poetics is undeniably a seminal work, in literary criticism.

Every tragedy, according to Aristotle, contains six parts which determine its quality. They are: Spectacle, Melody, Diction, Character, Thought, and Plot. The most important of these six is the plot. To us who are accustomed to regard drama as a means of character revelation this view of Aristotle must appear strange. The Elizabethan drama, for instance, is primarily a drama of character, and in the play of other periods also men and women act and behave according to their character. What is true of drama is true of fiction also. In the novels of Fielding, Jane Austen, Thackeray, etc. the story is rooted in human psychology, so that if their characters have different natures, the story would also change.

Aristotle argues that, among the six formative elements, the plot is the most important element. He writes in The Poetics. The plot is the underlying principle of tragedy’. By plot Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. Incidents mean action, and tragedy is an imitation of actions, both internal and external. That is to say that it also imitates the mental processes of the dramatic personae. In answering a question once he said that a tragedy could be written without a character but not without a plot. Though his overstatement on plot, he accepts that without action there cannot be a tragedy. The plot contains a beginning, a middle and an end, where the beginning is what is “not posterior to another thing,” while the middle needs to have something happened before, and something to happen after it, but after the end “there is nothing else.”