

Syllabus for mid-terms examination

Course introduction

This course will help students to understand the system of analyzing, reviewing, and critiquing a work of literature. Literary criticism in practice is typically performed from the perspective of a particular school of critical thought. The purpose is to analyze a work's relevance and quality from that school's 'viewpoint'.

Objectives of the course

1. To enable students to understand the basic concepts of Aristotle about Imitation, Tragedy, Tragic plot and its three unities, Ideal Tragic hero, Catharsis and Tragic flaw of the protagonist
2. To make students understand the merits and demerits of Shakespearean plays
3. Students are supposed to go through these topics and prepare their assignments by reading the original text of Poetics

Course outline

Aristotle's Poetics

1. Theory of imitation
2. Aristotle's concept of Tragedy

Note: these two lectures are already delivered before the classes are closed due to epidemic.

3. Tragic Plot and Its parts
 - a. Introduction.
 - b. Plot contains the kernel of action.
 - b) Poet means a maker.
 - c) Plot must be a complete whole.
 - d) Beginning, Middle and end.
 - e) Magnitude.
 - f) Probability and necessity.
 - g) Aristotle rules out plurality of action.
 - h) Peripeteia and Anagnorisis.

4- The concept of ideal tragic hero

5- Catharsis

Preface to Shakespeare: Dr. Samuel Johnson

1- Merits and demerits of Shakespearean plays

Brief Introduction to Aristotle's "Poetics"

It covers Plato's concept of imitation and his allegation against poetry. Aristotle presented his own concept of imitation which is more broader and of more significance than Plato's concept of imitation.

Chapter no 1,2,3 must be read thoroughly.

1. Aristotle's concept of Tragedy

It includes definition of tragedy coined by different scholars and critics. It also includes the compact definition given by Aristotle given in chapter 6 of book.

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2. Tragic Plot and Its parts

- ❖ Introduction.
- ❖ Plot contains the kernel of action.
- ❖ Poet means a maker.
- ❖ Plot must be a complete whole.
- ❖ Beginning, Middle and end.
- ❖ Magnitude.
- ❖ Probability and necessity.
- ❖ Aristotle rules out plurality of action.
- ❖ Peripeteia and Anagnorisis.

Recommended Books:

Aristotle's Poetics by José Angel García Landa Universidad de Zaragoza

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262224737_Aristotle's_Poetics

<https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Poetics.pdf>

Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5429>

<https://www.sapili.org/livros/en/gu005429.pdf>

Recommended text extracts to explain from The Preface To Shakespeare

a. Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice

of mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason, but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes co-operated with chance; all perhaps are more willing to honour past than present excellence; and the mind contemplates genius through the shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity. The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

b. Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers,

the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those

general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

c. Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristic; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find, any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

d. This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

e. Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind;

exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Paper design for mid-term examination

There will be three questions carrying equal marks.

Frist question will consist of 2 extracts one from Poetics and other one from The preface to Shakespeare. Students will be asked to explain those extracts taken from original text books. Each extract will be of 5 marks. No choice will be given in mid-term paper.

Note: extracts from a Preface to Shakespeare and chapters from Poetics are recommended for help.

The second and third question of the paper will be subjective consisting of 10 marks each. Students will not have choice in this part too.

introduction:

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1. Aristotle's concept of Tragedy

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2. Tragic Plot and Its parts

1. Introduction.
2. Plot contains the kernel of action.
3. Poet means a maker.
4. Only relevant incidents are selected.
5. Plot must be a complete whole.
6. Beginning, Middle and end.
7. Magnitude.
8. Probability and necessity.
9. Aristotle rules out plurality of action.
10. Peripeteia and Anagnorisis.

Aristotelian Concept of Tragedy

Tragedy is the representation of action, and action consists of incidents and events. So, Plot is the arrangement of these incidents and events in the tragedy. According to Aristotle, Plot, is the first principle, the soul of tragedy. So much so Aristotle says that there can be a tragedy without character and but there can be no tragedy without plot. Out of six formative elements of a tragedy, i.e., Plot, character, thought, melody, diction, spectacle-Aristotle assigns the first place to plot. More space has been devoted to the discussion of the nature, structure, kinds, and the constituent elements of an ideal plot, than any other of the six formative or constituent elements of Tragedy.

Difference between a plot and story

The Greek word 'poet' means a 'maker'. The poet is a 'maker', not because he makes (writes) verses, but because he makes plots. Here, Aristotle differentiates between 'story' and 'plot'. The poet needs not to make his own story; indeed, it would be better if he chooses a traditional story and then proceeds to make his own plot out of it. He says that the stories taken from history, mythology, or legend are to be preferred, for they are familiar and easy to

understand, and they serve as guide-lines for characterisation. After chosen his story or after inventing it, the dramatist must subject it to a process of artistic selection and ordering. Only relevant incidents and situations are selected, and they are arranged in a skilful way that they seem to follow each other necessarily and inevitably.

Definition of plot

The incidents should be 'serious', likely to arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Aristotle describe that the tragic plot must be a complete whole.

By 'complete' he means that the plot must have a proper beginning, middle, and end. It must have a beginning, i.e., it must not necessarily flow out of some previous situation. The beginning must be clear and intelligible. It must not provoke confusion to ask 'why' and 'how'. It was the common Greek practice to give the antecedents through the Prologue. Aristotle says that an effective beginning is the sure test of a dramatist's skill. The middle is something that is consequent upon a situation that has gone before, and which is followed by the catastrophe. So the middle is everything between the first incident and the last. The middle is followed by the end. 'The end' is that which is consequent upon a given situation, but which is not followed by any further incident or situation.

The plot must have a certain magnitude. It must have a certain "length". Here 'Magnitude' means 'size'. It should be neither too small nor too large. However, it should be long enough to allow the process of change from prosperity to adversity initiated by 'the beginning', to be properly and completely developed, but not too long for the memory to understand it as a whole. Aristotle describes, if it is too long, the beginning would be forgotten before the end.

Aristotle conceives that the plot of a tragedy is an organic whole, and also have an organic unity in its action. An action is a process of change from happiness to misery or vice versa, and tragedy must depict only one such action. There may be a number of incidents and events in the play, but together they must constitute one, and only one, action. Thus the plot may have variety, but still be a unity and a whole.

Aristotle correlates organic unity of plot with probability and necessity. The plot deals with action, incidents and events, which is possible according to the laws of probability and necessity. Thus probability and necessity imply coherence and order and are essential for artistic unity and wholeness. Moreover, Aristotle says that here probability implies that the tragic action

must be credible or convincing. If the poet deals with something improbable event, he must have the skill to make it convincing and credible. He concludes that a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility.

Aristotle says that tragedy is an imitation of a 'serious action', and that its purpose is to arouse pity and fear. This means that tragedy is a story of suffering with an unhappy ending, because it is only such a story that is likely to arouse both pity and fear. This means, in other words, that the plot of a tragedy must be a fatal one.

Types of Plot

According to Aristotle, Tragic plots may be of three kinds, (I) Simple, (II) Complex, and (III) Plots based on or depicting incidents and events of suffering, and depending on their effect. The words Simple and Complex, have been used here in technical terms. A Simple plot is one which does not have any Peripety and Anagnorisis, but the action moves forward uniformly without any violent or sudden change. But Aristotle prefers Complex plots. An ideal tragic plot, according to Aristotle, must not be Simple. It must be Complex, i.e., it must have Peripeteia, i.e., "reversal of intention", and Anagnorisis, i.e., "recognition of truth". Peripeteia implies ignorance of truth, while Anagnorisis is the realisation of truth by some signs, or by chance, or better still, by the logical development of events. An ideal plot is one in which Anagnorisis follows or even coincides with Peripeteia, i.e., with the false step taken by the hero or his well-wishers.

In the end Aristotle says that in making their plots, the poets should take great care to make their denouements or 'resolutions', it should be very effective and successful.

Chapter 7,8,10 (Reading from original Text book of poetics)

a) Ideal Tragic Hero

The term hero is derived from a Greek word that means a person who faces adversity, or demonstrates courage, in the face of danger. However, sometimes he faces downfall as well. When a hero confronts downfall, he is recognized as a tragic hero or protagonist. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, characterizes these plays or stories, in which the main character is a tragic hero, as tragedies. Here, the hero confronts his downfall whether due to fate, or by his own mistake, or any other social reason.

Aristotle defines a tragic hero as “a person who must evoke a sense of pity and fear in the audience. He is considered a man of misfortune that comes to him through error of judgment.” A tragic hero’s downfall evokes feelings of pity and fear among the audience. Aristotle distinguishes between comedy and tragedy, for tragedy involves the imitation of men better than they are in actual life. Hence tragedy presents a character in an idealised form. The tragic poet represents life as it might be, not as it necessarily is. The characters are better than we are. It is, however,, important to understand that the idealisation does not mean that the characters are good in a strictly moral sense. It merely means that the characters live a more complete and intense life than the real men and women dare to in the real world.

The Main Features of the Tragic Character

In chapter 15, Aristotle speaks of dramatic characters and the four points to aim at in the treatment of these characters. The four points are :

- (i) that the characters should be good
- (ii) . that they should be appropriate;
- (iii) that they should be close to reality or true to life;
- (iii) that they should be consistent.

(i) Goodness.

The first characteristic demanded by Aristotle has struck many critics as somewhat strange and extraordinary. But it is essential to Aristotle’s theory because it is the very foundation for the basic sympathy in the reader or audience, without which tragic emotions cannot be evoked, or the tragic pleasure conveyed. A character is assumed ‘good’ if his words and actions reveal a good purpose behind them. Aristotle based his statements on an assumption that his spectators have a ‘normally balanced moral attitude’, as Humphry House says. As such, they cannot be sympathetic towards one who is depraved or odious¹. Sympathy is necessary’as it is the very basis of the whole tragic pleasure. The bad man does to arouse pity in us if he falls from happiness to misery.

wicked persons have no place in tragedy, according to Aristotle. But we must remember that, by implication, we can see that Aristotle allows the “bad” or wicked man in a tragedy if he is indispensable to the plot. He says that he would not allow for “depravity of character” when it is not necessary and no use is made of it.

(ii) **Appropriateness.**

It means that the characters should be true to their particular age, profession, class, sex, or status.’ But they are^ individuals at the same time, for they are ‘men in action’ as represented in tragedy. The actions of people of the same type can, and do differ : in this lies their individuality. The choice made .by them in the crucial situation indicates their particular individuality. Aristotle, with his insistence that practice is the source of character, would have maintained that one who has been brought up in slavery would not suddenly develop nobility and heroism. He would, through the constant habit of doing the acts of a slave, become slave like. Aristotle has not made it clear as to what exactly the character is to be appropriate. It has been remarked th’at Aristotle could have also meant that the character should be appropriate to the historical or traditional portrait of him. For instance, Ulysses must be characterised as he has been historically presented. Any character taken from myth or traditional story must be true to what he has been presented as in that myth or story.

(iii) **Likeness.**

The third essential .is that of likeness. it is slightly difficult to assess what exactly he means by the term. If one interprets the term as likeness to the ‘original* in the sense of how the painter is true to the original, it would mean being true to the personage in history, or legend. This would curtail the freedom of the creative artist. It would be more acceptable to interpret the term as “true to life”—that the character must be true to life. The likeness to life as we know of it is necessary, for it is only then that we can identify ourselves with the characters. If we do not see the character as we see ourselves, the tragic emotions of pity and fear become irrelevant. We see that this likeness to life precludes the characters from being either too good or utterly depraved. The tragic character has thus to be a normal person, or “of an intermediate sort”. Only then will he be convincing.

(iv) Consistency.

The character must be seen as a whole, and consistent to what he is presented as from beginning to end. There is to be uniformity in behavior unless there is a proper motivation for any deviation. Any development in character has to take place according to intelligible principles, i.e., logically. There has to be probability or necessity in the character's actions and words. Aristotle allows for waywardness by saying that if the character is to be shown as being an inconsistent one, he should be consistently inconsistent. The character, in other words, should act and seem to think in a manner which we can logically expect from that particular individual.

a. Aristotle's concept of Catharsis

Catharsis in real meanings explains importance of tragedy. In Aristotle's eyes, tragedy is the purgation of emotions such as pity and fear that defines concept of catharsis. Whole "Poetics" of Aristotle emphasizes on catharsis of pity and fear. Thus, the word became matter of controversy between the critics. Aristotle defines tragedy and says that when protagonist, who is mixture of good and bad qualities, suffers and falls from prosperity to adversity, it causes the catharsis of pity and fear. Thus, the word "Catharsis" is not a simple noun instead it is a symbol of emotions. Every critic defines this word as per his knowledge and experience.

Purgation and purification best describe catharsis. Undoubtedly, Aristotle lays great importance on pity and fear and when spectators witness pain of the hero they feel pity for him. In a tragedy, the reader/spectator puts himself in place of the tragic hero and thinks what he could do if he were the hero. Every person feels the same as felt by tragic hero. Feelings and emotions are there in everyone. These are natural and everyone possesses them. What makes difference is their suppression. Some can suppress them easily whereas others cannot. Ultimately feelings of pity and fear arise and the same increase with every hardship faced by the tragic hero.

A tragedy, in true words, is the purgation of these feelings and emotions. Catharsis thus is synonymous for relief that is observed by every person after purgation of feelings. We know that feelings, no matter what their type is, create disturbance until they are released. A true tragedy, first provoke these feelings and then gives relief from them. Hence, catharsis has also been defined as the purgation of feelings that arise while observing a tragedy.

After seeing sufferings of the hero, it is certain that feelings of pity and fear arouse and the spectator refuses to take such steps, which cause sufferings. If we see the word catharsis in this context then it reveals that Catharsis is merely used for the purpose of teaching. Of course, spectator learns something from tragedy and every tragedy has a subject, which indeed has a moral lesson. Perhaps Aristotle uses this word for the purpose of teaching. It is necessary to remember that Aristotle emphasizes too much on the main character and says that he must be the combination of good and bad qualities. If the character is mixture of good and bad, the spectator, after witnessing sufferings does not dare to take such steps but if he is too good, it will be unjustified for a good man to suffer and instead of learning he will show his sympathy. If he is totally a bad person, then his sufferings are good because he deserves it. It is clear that Aristotle kept morality on his mind while defining tragedy. So, the word catharsis may be used for morality and for teaching purposes in the "Poetics".

Tragic catharsis might be a purgation. Fear can obviously be an insidious thing that undermines life and poisons it with anxiety. It would be good to flush this feeling from our systems, bring it into the open, and clear the air. This may explain the appeal of horror movies, that they redirect our fears toward something external, grotesque, and finally ridiculous, in order to puncture them. On the other hand, fear might have a secret allure, so that what we need to purge is the desire for the thrill that comes with fear. The horror movie also provides a safe way to indulge and satisfy the longing to feel afraid, and go home afterward satisfied; the desire is purged, temporarily, by being fed. Our souls are so many-headed that opposite satisfactions may be felt at the same time, but I think these two really are opposite. In the first sense of purgation, the horror movie is a

kind of medicine that does its work and leaves the soul healthier, while in the second sense it is a potentially addictive drug.

Catharsis in Greek can mean purification. While purging something means getting rid of it, purifying something means getting rid of the worse or baser parts of it. It is possible that tragedy purifies the feelings themselves of fear and pity. These arise in us in crude ways, attached to all sorts of objects. Perhaps the poet educates our sensibilities, our powers to feel and be moved, by refining them and attaching them to less easily discernible objects.

Chs. 13-14 Since it is peculiar to tragedy to be an imitation of actions arousing pity and fear ...and since the former concerns someone who is undeserving of suffering and the latter concerns someone like us ...the story that works well must ...depict a change from good to bad fortune, resulting not from badness one that arises from the actions themselves, the astonishment coming about through things that are likely, as in the Oedipus of Sophocles. A revelation, as the word indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, that produces either friendship or hatred in people marked out for good or bad fortune.

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. But to produce this effect by the mere spectacle is a less artistic method, and dependent on extraneous aids. Those who employ spectacular means to create a sense not of the terrible but only of the monstrous, are strangers to the purpose of tragedy; for we must not demand of tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents.

Let us then determine what are the circumstances which strike us as terrible or pitiful.

Actions capable of this effect must happen between persons who are either friends or enemies or indifferent to one another. If an enemy kills an enemy, there is nothing to excite pity either in the act or the intention -- except so far as the suffering in itself is pitiful.

Chapter no 14

Preface to Shakespeare by Dr. Samuel Johnson

Merits and Demerits of Shakespeare's plays

Merits of Shakespeare according to "Preface to Shakespeare"

(1) Representation of general nature:

Shakespeare is, more than anyone else, a poet of nature. Through his works he reflects life.

(2) His characters have a universal appeal:

Shakespeare's characters do not belong to the society of a particular place or time; they are universal, representing every man. His characters have a universal appeal. They act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles which are experienced by all mankind.

(3) Shakespeare's greatness does not rest upon individual passages:

It is because of this universality in the portrayal of characters that Shakespeare's plays are full of "practical axioms and domestic wisdom".

(4) The dialogue in his plays is based on the actual conversation of people:

Shakespeare's dialogue is thoroughly realistic. His dialogue is pursued with much ease and simplicity. And it seems to have been taken from the common conversation of human beings.

(5) Theme of love is not over-emphasized:

In a majority of the dramas of other dramatists love is the universal agent that causes all good and evil and hastens or retards every action. Shakespeare never assigns any excessive role to this passion in his plays. He catches his clues from the world of day-to-day life and exhibits in his plays only what he finds in life.

(6) Every character is distinctly individualized:

Shakespeare's characters are universally delineated but it is easy to distinguish one from another. In other words, there is no blurring of characters. No character shades off into another.

7) A realistic and convincing portrayal of human nature:

Shakespeare's characters are not exaggerated. He does not give us purely virtuous or utterly depraved characters. Even when the plot requires a supernatural agency, the tone of the dialogues of various characters is life-like and realistic.

(8) Reflection of life:

Shakespeare deserves praise because "his drama is the mirror of life". His characters express human sentiments in human language in situations derived from real life.

(9) Objection of some critics is answered:

Shakespeare's emphasis on general human nature has invited censure and hostility from some critics. Johnson answers that, in reality, Shakespeare assigns nature a prominent role and gives less room to the accidental features. He is careful of preserving adventitious distinctions. His story or plot may demand Romans or kings but what Shakespeare thinks about is the human element in them. The objection of the critics on this issue merely proves their petty-mindedness.

(10) Mixture of tragic and comic elements is defended:

Johnson agrees in the strictest sense that Shakespeare's plays are neither comedies nor tragedies. They are compositions of a distinct kind which show the real state of nature. Shakespeare's genius is proved in his power to give rise to joy and sorrow through the same play. Almost all his plays have serious as well as absurd characters and thus sometimes cause seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

(11) Appeal from rules of criticism to the reality of life:

Shakespeare's practice in mingling the comic and tragic elements in the same play is contrary to the rules of dramatic writing. But rules are not more important than the claims of realism:-

"There is always an appeal open from criticism to nature".

The object of literature is to give instruction by pleasing the reader.

(12) The artificial classification of Shakespeare's plays:

The division of Shakespeare's plays into comedies, tragedies and histories is not based on any exact or definite ideas of such labels. A comedy has generally been regarded as a play with a happy ending, no matter how distressing the incidents of the plot in general may be. A play is classified as a matter how light some of the scenes in the course of its plot may be. A historical play is believed to be one that depicts a series of actions in a chronological order. It is not always very exactly distinguished, from tragedy.

(13) Shakespeare's natural genius for comedy:

Shakespeare wrote his plays in accordance with his natural disposition. He did not know the "rules" of dramatic writing. Rymer correctly tells us that Shakespeare's natural disposition lay in the direction of comedy. In writing tragedy he had to toil hard. But his comic scenes seem to have been written spontaneously and with great success. Comedy was, indeed, congenial to his nature.

Demerits of Shakespeare according to Dr. Samuel Johnson

(1) Virtue sacrificed to convenience:

His first defect is that he sacrifices virtue to convenience. He carries his characters indifferently through right or wrong, and at the end dismisses them without further attention, leaving their examples to operate by chance. This fault is serious because of the fact that it is always a writer's duty to make the world morally better.

2) Carelessness about plot development:

Secondly, Shakespeare's plots are often very loosely formed and carelessly developed. He neglects opportunities of giving instruction or pleasure which the development of the plot provides to him. In many of his plays the latter part does not receive much of his attention.

(3) Anachronism/ Violation of chronology:

Thirdly, fault in Shakespeare's plays is anachronism — his violation of chronology. Shakespeare shows no regard to distinction of time or place. Thus we find Hector quoting

Aristotle in 'Troilus and Cressida', and the love of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies in 'A Mid-Summer Night's Dream'.

4) Coarseness of comic dialogues:

Fourthly, Shakespeare's plays also have faults of dialogue and diction. His comic scenes are seldom very successful when representing witty exchanges between characters.

(5) Excessive labor produces undesired effects in the tragic plays:

Fifthly, his tragic plays become worse in proportion to the labor he spends on them. Whenever he strains himself to produce effects, the result is tediousness, and obscurity.

(6) Verbosity and prolixity of words:

Sixthly, his narration shows an undue pomp of diction and unnecessary repetition. He uses more words than are necessary to describe an incident.

(7) Flamboyant speeches and inflated vocabulary:

Seventhly, the set speeches in some of his plays are dispiriting, cold and feeble. Sometimes the language is intricate even when the thought is not subtle, or the line is bulky though the image is not great. Sometimes trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas are expressed through high-sounding and inflated vocabulary.

(8) Losing intensity to feebleness:

Eighthly, what he does best, he soon ceases to do. Shakespeare cuts short his own highest excellence in arousing tragic feelings by the spectacle of the fall of a great man, or the misfortune of an innocent character, or a disappointment in love. The result is that the intense feelings aroused by him suddenly lose their intensity and become feeble.

(9) Weakness for quibbles and craze for Puns:

Lastly, Shakespeare could never resist a quibble. Whatever be the occasion of the dialogue, whether the situation is amusing or tense, Shakespeare seizes the opportunity of employing a pun.

(10) Shakespeare's violation of three unities:

Shakespeare's violation of the unities is not a defect:

There is one practice in Shakespeare's writing of dramas which is regarded by critics as a defect but which is really not a defect. This practice is his neglect of the unities of time and place.

In neglecting these unities, Shakespeare violated a law which had been established and recognized jointly by dramatists and critics.

But it is possible to defend Shakespeare for this violation of the law. His history plays do not, of course, come under the purview of this law because of their very nature and because time and place must keep changing in plays of this kind.

In his other plays, Shakespeare has largely preserved what is known as the unity of action. Although, being the dramatist of nature, Shakespeare does not unfold any hidden design of the story in his plays; his story has generally a beginning, a middle, and an end, as required by Aristotle.

There is a logical connection between incident and incident, and the conclusion follows naturally. Some incidents may be superfluous, but the plot as a whole develops gradually and naturally, and the end of the play marks also the end of our expectation.

Shakespeare's neglect of the unities of time and place:

Shakespeare neglects the unities of time and place. These unities have been held in high esteem since the time of Corneille. But a close examination of the principles on which these unities stand will show that they are not of much use.

Shakespeare is such a poet and dramatist of the world who has been edited and criticized by hundreds of editors and critics. Dr. Samuel Johnson is one of them. But among the literary criticisms about Shakespeare, “Johnson’s edition was notable chiefly for its sensible interpretation’s and critical evaluations of Shakespeare as a literary artist.” As a true critic in his Preface to Shakespeare, Johnson has pointed out Shakespeare’s merits or excellences as well as demerits.

In his Preface to Shakespeare, Dr. Samuel Johnson brings out the excellences first, then he turns to his demerits. Johnson does not consider him a faultless dramatist- even he takes the faults “sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit.”

Shakespeare’s greatness lies in the fact that he is “the poet of nature”. Johnson says, “Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to the reader a faithful mirror of human nature.”

His writings represent the ‘ general nature’, because he knows “Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature.” Therefore his characters are “the genuine progeny of common humanity.” “In the writing of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.” Thus Johnson indicates the universal aspects of Shakespeare’s writings.

Johnson further comments on Shakespeare's characterization.

He says,

“Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion.”

On the contrary, other dramatists portray their characters in such a hyperbolic or exaggerated way that the reader can not suit them to their life.

“The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing.” And the mingled drama can convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy, for it best represents the life.”

Johnson regards Shakespeare's mingling of tragedy and comedy as a merit, because he can not "recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both."

Thanks.

Final term syllabus

Objective: –

The course intends to provide a critical understanding of the developments in literary criticism from the beginnings to the end of 19th century. Moreover some selected texts/critics are prescribed for detailed study whose contribution to this area constitutes a significant benchmark in each era. It also provides a conceptual framework for developing an understanding of the function and practice of traditional modes of literary criticism.

Prescribed Texts:

Mid-term syllabus

Aristotle: Poetics

William Wordsworth: Preface to Lyrical Ballads

Final term syllabus

1. Matthew Arnold: The Function of Criticism in the Present Time
Matthew Arnold: The study of Poetry
2. T. S. Eliot: Tradition and the Individual Talent

Recommended sources

<https://englishsummary.com/functions-criticism-present-time-arnold/>

<http://learningliteratureoverhere.blogspot.com/2016/08/a-study-of-poetry-matthew-arnold.html>

<http://victorian-era.org/Victorian-authors/matthew-arnold-function-of-criticism.html>

<https://englishsummary.com/functions-criticism-present-time-arnold/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJOoPJG7Rts>

<https://www.slideshare.net/NutanE/mathew-arnold-study-of-poetry>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ9L2cSxWmw>

<http://janiriddhi1315.blogspot.com/2014/03/main-concepts-of-tradition-and.html>

<http://zarnabhathi111.blogspot.com/2016/04/paper7-main-concept-of-tradition-and.html>

<https://neoenglish.wordpress.com/2010/12/08/tradition-and-the-individual-talent-critical-summary/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBG9lwdFgRs>

<https://www.slideshare.net/Mustheenak/tradition-and-individual-talent-74873214>

Questions related to Matthew Arnold

- i. How does Arnold finally define criticism?
- ii. What is the nature of the "critical effort", and what, according to Arnold, is the "highest function of man"? How do we know this to be so? Can criticism fulfil this highest function, or is it the case that only art can do so?
- iii. What is the relationship between the "critical power" and the "creative power" (1516)? Why can't there be a truly great period of literary creation without criticism? What, for instance, was the problem with the romantics' exercise of their creative genius? (1517-18)
- iv. Throughout the essay, what value is given to the notions or terms: "high standard," "best," "poetic truth," the power of "criticism of life," consolation and stay, excellent rather than inferior? The study of poetry
- v. What is Arnold's touchstone theory?

The function of criticism at the present time: Matthew Arnold

It was in Arnold's first collection of critical writings, 'Essays in Criticism' in 1865, that his essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" was published. Criticism ought to be a 'dissemination of ideas, an unprejudiced and impartial effort to study and spread the best that is known and thought in the world', is what Matthew Arnold says in his essay- The Function of Criticism at the Present Time (1864).

He writes that when assessing a particular work, the goal is 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. Psychological, historical and sociological backgrounds are immaterial. This attitude was very influential and particularly noteworthy with later critics.

Fundamental argument in function of criticism

The fundamental argument of the essay describes what Matthew Arnold felt to be the existing attitude that the constructive, creative capacity was much more important than the critical faculty. His extensive definition of criticism, however-"the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is"-causes to be criticism a necessary pre-requirement for a valuable creation.

In his pursuit for the best, a critic Arnold believed that it should not only restrict or limit himself to the literature works of his own country but should draw significantly on foreign literature and ideas to a large extent, because the spreading of ideas should be an objective venture.

At a particular point in his career, Matthew Arnold was well-liked and a much-accepted poet. But later in his life, his interest turned with vigor to criticism of both literary works and forms and the social fabric of society. According to Matthew Arnold, Criticism, in his essay, The Function of Criticism at the Present Time, functions as an attempt or an effort that is not necessarily dependent upon any creative art form; rather criticism is intrinsically valuable in itself, whether its value sprouts from bringing joy to the writer of it or whether that value roots from making sure that the paramount ideas reach society.

He connects criticism with creative power right through the essay and terminates with an idea that links to the earlier one above when he emphasize that that writing criticism may actually produce in its practitioner a sense of ecstatic creative joy just like someone engaging in what we normally think of creative writing feels.

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

The Study of Poetry by Matthew Arnold

Arnold's most famous piece of literary criticism is his essay "The Study of Poetry." In this work, Arnold is fundamentally concerned with poetry's "high destiny;" he believes that "mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us" as science and philosophy will eventually prove flimsy and unstable. Arnold's essay thus concerns itself with articulating a "high standard" and "strict judgment" in order to avoid the fallacy of valuing certain poems (and poets) too highly, and lays out a method for discerning only the best and therefore "classic" poets (as distinct from the description of writers of the ancient world). Arnold's classic poets include Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer; and the passages he presents from each are intended to show how their poetry is timeless and moving. For Arnold, feeling and sincerity are paramount, as is the seriousness of subject: "The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner." An example of an indispensable poet who falls short of Arnold's "classic" designation is Geoffrey Chaucer, who, Arnold states, ultimately lacks the "high seriousness" of classic poets.

At the root of Arnold's argument is his desire to illuminate and preserve the poets he believes to be the touchstones of literature, and to ask questions about the moral value of

poetry that does not champion truth, beauty, valor, and clarity. Arnold's belief that poetry should both uplift and console drives the essay's logic and its conclusions.

“The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.”

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own [from *The Hundred Greatest Men—ed.*], as uttering the thought which should, in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work [*The English Poets—ed.*] it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry “the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science”; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry “the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge”; our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows

of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize “the breath and finer spirit of knowledge” offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: “Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there not charlatanism?”—“Yes” answers Sainte-Beuve, “in politics, in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man’s being” [Les Cahiers—ed.]. It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as in criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the

best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes; constantly in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to overrate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings and circumstances, have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest, and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated.

Questions related to individual talent and tradition

- I. What does he mean by "tradition"? How can we tell what is traditional? What relationship should the writer have to the writings of the past?
- II. What does it mean to say that the author should not be personal, and that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates"? What should take the place of these personal or autobiographical emotions?
- III. Why might poets wish to escape from personality? What does it mean to say, "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things"?
- IV. Give your views about the impersonal nature of poetry?

2. Tradition and Individual Talent by T.S Eliot

Introduction:

As a critic T. S. Eliot was very practical. He called himself "a classicist in literature". According to Eliot, a critic must obey the objective standards to analyze any work. He thought criticism as a science. Eliot's criticism became revolutionary at that time. 20th century got 'metaphysical revival' because of Eliot. He first recognized or accepted the uniqueness of 'metaphysical poets' of 17th century. Eliot came with new ideas in criticism's world in 19th century. Eliot believed that when the old and new will become readjusted, it will be the end of criticism. He says:

"From time to time it is desirable, that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature and set the poets and the poems in a new order."

Eliot demands, from any critic, ability for judgment and powerful liberty of mind to identify and to interpret. Eliot planned numerous critical concepts that gained wide currency and had a broad influence on criticism. 'Objective co-relative', 'Dissociation of sensibility', 'Unification of sensibility', 'Theory of Depersonalization' are few of Eliot's theories, which becomes 'cliché' now. He emphasizes on 'a highly developed sense of fact'. He gave new direction and new tools of criticism. 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."

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Main Concepts of the Essay:

This essay is divided into three parts:

1. The concept of tradition
2. The theory of impersonal poetry
3. The conclusion with a gist that "the poet's sense of tradition and the impersonality of poetry are complimentary things."

1. The concept of tradition

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. It is supposed that his chief merit lies in such parts. This undue stress on individuality shows that the English have an uncritical turn of mind. They praise the poet for the wrong thing. If they examine the matter critically with an unprejudiced mind, they will realise that the best and the most individual part of a poet's work is that which shows the maximum influence of the writers of the past. To quote his own words: "Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual part of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."

The Literary Tradition: Ways in Which It Can Be Acquired

This brings Eliot to a consideration of the value and significance of tradition. Tradition does not mean a blind adherence to the ways of the previous generation or generations. This would be mere slavish imitation, a mere repetition of what has already been achieved, and “novelty is better than repetition.” Tradition in the sense of passive repetition is to be discouraged. For Eliot, Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. Tradition in the true sense of the term cannot be inherited, it can only be obtained by hard labour. This labour is the labour of knowing the past writers. It is the critical labour of sifting the good from the bad, and of knowing what is good and useful. Tradition can be obtained only by those who have the historical sense. The historical sense involves a perception, “not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence: One who has the historic sense feels that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer down to his own day, including the literature of his own country, forms one continuous literary tradition” He realises that the past exists in the present, and that the past and the present form one simultaneous order. This historical sense is the sense of the timeless and the temporal, as well as of the timeless and the temporal together. It is this historic sense which makes a writer traditional. A writer with the sense of tradition is fully conscious of his own generation, of his place in the present, but he is also acutely conscious of his relationship with the writers of the past. In brief, the sense of tradition implies (a) a recognition of the continuity of literature, (b) a critical judgment as to which of the writers of the past continue to be significant in the present, and (c) a knowledge of these significant writers obtained through painstaking effort. Tradition represents the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages, and so its knowledge is essential for really great and noble achievements.

Dynamic Conception of Tradition: Its Value

Emphasising further the value of tradition, Eliot points out that no writer has his value and significance in isolation. To judge the work of a poet or an artist, we must compare and contrast his work with the works of poets and artist in the past. Such comparison and contrast is essential for forming an idea of the real worth and significance of a new writer

and his work. Eliot's conception of tradition is a dynamic one. According to his view, tradition is not anything fixed and static; it is constantly changing, growing, and becoming different from what it is. A writer in the present must seek guidance from the past, he must conform to the literary tradition. But just as the past directs and guides the present, so the present alters and modifies the past. When a new work of art is created, if it is really new and original, the whole literary tradition is modified, though ever so slightly. The relationship between the past and the present is not one-sided; it is a reciprocal relationship. The past directs the present, and is itself modified and altered by the present. To quote the words of Eliot himself: "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered." Every great poet like Virgil, Dante, or Shakespeare, adds something to the literary tradition out of which the future poetry will be written.

The Function of Tradition

The work of a poet in the present is to be compared and contrasted with works of the past, and judged by the standards of the past. But this judgment does not mean determining good or bad. It does not mean deciding whether the present work is better or worse than works of the past. An author in the present is certainly not to be judged by the principles and the standards of the past. The comparison is to be made for knowing the facts, all the facts, about the new work of art. The comparison is made for the purposes of analysis, and for forming a better understanding of the new. Moreover, this comparison is reciprocal. The past helps us to understand the present, and the present throws light on the past. It is in this way alone that we can form an idea of what is really individual and new. It is by comparison alone that we can sift the traditional from the individual elements in a given work of art.

Sense of Tradition: Its Real Meaning

Eliot now explains further what he means by a sense of tradition. The sense of tradition does not mean that the poet should try to know the past as a whole, take it to be a lump or mass without any discrimination. Such a course is impossible as well as undesirable. The past must be examined critically and only the significant in it should be acquired. The sense of tradition does not also mean that the poet should know only a few poets whom he admires. This is a sign of immaturity and inexperience. Neither should a poet be content merely to know some particular age or period which he likes. This may be pleasant and delightful, but it will not constitute a sense of tradition. A sense of tradition in the real sense means a consciousness, “of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations”. In other words, to know the tradition, the poet must judge critically what are the main trends and what are not. He must confine himself to the main trends to the exclusion of all that is incidental or topical. The poet must possess the critical gift in ample measure. He must also realise that the main literary trends are not determined by the great poets alone. Smaller poets also are significant. They are not to be ignored.

2. Theory of impersonal poetry

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 & 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 sulfurous acid; there are two gases needed: oxygen and sulfur 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 (sulfurous 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.

According to Eliot the poet's mind is like a tare or utensil in which numerous feelings, phrases & images can be stored or seized. When a poet wants them he utilizes them and unites them. It doesn't mean that the poem created by the poet shows his personality or nature.

Eliot explains very basic thing of his point that, what is expressed by the poet is merely a medium, not a personality. He says:

"...the poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality..."

In this medium, the impressions and experiences come together in unusual and unexpected ways. And other thing is some impressions and experiences seem valuable for a person, yet they may not be important for poetry. Same way some trivial experiences & impressions can become so important for poetry. Then Eliot says about context that without context nothing can be understood. He says:

"This balance of constructed emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it."

He gives example from “The Revenger’s Tragedy” (by Thomas Middleton). He puts some line from that without context to explain this point. Then he says that emotion in poetry remains very complex thing, and poet’s own personal emotion may be simple or flat. So every time poet’s own emotion cannot be taken place in poem. And if the poet is always looking for new emotion in poem, then it will be perverse. A poet has not to find new emotions but he has to use ordinary emotions. He has to deal with every known/unknown emotion. Eliot here twists ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’. He says it ‘an inexact formula’. To write poetry is a great deal. When a poet becomes personal while writing poetry, he will be considered as a ‘bad poet’. Because he becomes unconscious, where he should be conscious and he becomes conscious where he must be unconscious. When a poet escapes from his personality, then & then the great poem comes out. A poet must not show his emotion in poetry. Eliot says:

“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.”