



COURSE CODE: MAEGD 301  
COURSE NAME: LITERARY AND  
CRITICAL THEORY II

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND  
ONLINE EDUCATION  
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**ENGLISH  
BLOCK I**



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# BLOCK I

## MODULE I: NEW CRITICISM & RUSSIAN FORMALISM

### UNIT 1: THE ROOTS OF NEW CRITICISM AND RUSSIAN FORMALISM

### UNIT 2: ASSUMPTIONS, KEY TERMS KEY FIGURES, IDEAS AND APPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS

### UNIT 3: THE TEXT AND THE LEGACY OF NEW CRITICISM

## MODULE II: PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

### UNIT 4: FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS (ASSUMPTIONS, METHODOLOGY, KEY TERMS)

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## **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this course is to introduce to the students major texts and movements in Literary Criticism and Theory from New Criticism and Theory to the present. Students are expected to understand how criticism and theory help the reader to interpret literary texts, explain literature and connect art forms to life and society. Students are expected to see how different critical texts and schools offer different tools and methods of reading and interpretation.

**The course is divided into two Blocks.**

### **INTRODUCTION : BLOCK I**

**MODULE I: New Criticism & Russian Formalism** has three units in it. ***Unit 1: The Roots of New Criticism and Russian Formalism*** will introduce you to two of the important trends of criticism New Criticism and Russian formalism. Both have not only revolutionized the teaching of literature but has also helped in the definition of English Studies and has been a crucial starting point for the development of critical theory in the second half of the twentieth century. ***Unit 2: Assumptions, Key Terms Key Figures, Ideas and Applications, Limitations*** will deliver on the important exponents of both New criticism and Russian formalism and their chief critical examinations, the terminologies used and popularised by these critics that have applications in critical reading even today. This unit will also discuss about one of the most important critics of Russian formalism, Mikhail Bakhtin and his important terminologies. ***Unit 3: The Text and the Legacy of New Criticism*** we will read how New Criticism, in spite of a short lived trend, the effect set by this movement has been tremendous. In this unit, we will see how the movement left its legacy and how the results impact us decades after its end.

**MODULE II: Psychoanalytic Criticism** will exclusively deal with psychoanalytic criticism and contribution of Sigmund Freud in this domain. ***Unit 4: Freud and Psychoanalysis (Assumptions, Methodology, Key Terms)*** highlight on Psychoanalysis that has emerged as one of the most significant theories of the twentieth century. Mostly known as a form of therapy to treat mental illness, it has developed into a form of literary criticism using the



techniques so employed in the reading of literature. In this unit you will be able to learn the key assumptions and key term which will enable you to understand the succeeding units.

**Unit 5: Sexuality and Social Suppression** will introduce learners to the concept of sexuality and how society suppresses it, or society acts as an agent in the suppression of sexuality. This will be discussed in terms of Freud and Michel Foucault's concept of sexuality. **Unit 6: Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism** will see how Psychoanalysis has influenced the fields of anthropology, culture, history, literature, arts and related fields of humanities. The influence is quite evident in literary criticism in which critics belonging to different critical schools have interpreted texts using a psychoanalytic framework, have adopted and adapted to substantiate interpretation.

## **MODULE I: NEW CRITICISM AND RUSSIAN FORMALISM**

## ***UNIT 1: THE ROOTS OF NEW CRITICISM AND RUSSIAN FORMALISM***

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1. Learning Objectives
- 1.2. New Criticism
- 1.3. Historical Background
- 1.4. Key features
- 1.5. Russian Formalism: Historical Background
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### ***1.0 INTRODUCTION***

From the end of the 1930s and into the 1950s, a new form of criticism is widely considered to have revolutionized the teaching of literature. This form is New Criticism which rather than being a critical movement is instead better known as an empirical methodology or more specifically a reading practice. New Criticism has not only revolutionized the teaching of literature but has also helped in the definition of English Studies and has been a crucial starting point for the development of critical theory in the second half of the twentieth century. While aligned to Structuralism and Russian Formalism, it has also helped in the emergence of more recent critical trends like post-structuralism, Feminism, Marxism etc.

Russian Formalism, like New Criticism aimed at asserting that art is autonomous. Though the former was more focused on defamiliarization, making the world seem strange or new. According to the Russian Formalists this was what made literature literary. For writing to have literariness, it had to meet certain formalistic criteria: i.e., using language in such a way that its

meaning was its form: not tied to, or created by history or outside sources. To be innovative, literature must say things about the world in a new, and necessarily (at least initially) strange way.

### **1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This unit will introduce you to New Criticism and Russian Formalism, the two dominant forms of literary criticism that emerged in the twentieth century. The unit will:

- familiarize you with the intellectual background of New Criticism and Russian Formalism
- enable you to identify the origins and the key figures associated with these schools of literary criticism
- enable you to understand and analyse the key concepts in both Russian formalism and New Criticism

### **1.2 NEW CRITICISM**

Although the term New Criticism was first coined in the nineteenth century, it was not until American critic and poet John Crow Ransom, founder of the *Kenyon Review* wrote a book titled *The New Criticism* (1941), that it became established in common academic and literary usage. Ransom's other two essays, "Wanted: An Ontological Critic" (1941) and "Criticism Inc" (1938) are also important to develop an understanding of this critical theory. New Criticism, as a reading practice also found its expression in I.A. Richard's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) and in Cleanth Brooks and Robert Pen Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (1938). In England New criticism found expression in the works of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

### **1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

New Criticism is said to have its origin in two sources. One is English Romanticism and the other is the socio-political intricacies of the Anglo-American world. Its theoretical origin can be traced back to the work of I.A Richards, specifically rooted in English Romanticism. Although it may seem odd as the New Critics were sceptical about the subjective intervention of Romantic poetry, S.T. Coleridge's writings on poetry, notably his *Biographia Literaria* (1847) gave special sustenance to the roots of New Critical Theory. In Chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge talked about the organic unity of a poem which was greatly emphasized by the New Critics for whom form and meaning was inseparable. This concept was applied by the New Critics in analysing any work of literature. For instance, Brooks and Warren are found to have derived (from Coleridge) the approach to their works. In *Understanding Poetry* "they refer to a poem having 'an organic system of relationship' and emphasized that 'the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering one or more factors taken in isolation'. Moreover, Coleridge's claim that poetry 'brings the whole soul of man into activity' was often cited by the New Critics who believed that poetry was a powerful combination of the intellectual and the emotional. The New Critics were also inspired by John Keats' description of 'Negative Capability' and T.S. Eliot's notion of 'Objective Correlative'.

The second major origin of New Criticism can be traced to the new critical practices pioneered by the American critic John Crowe Ransom and Allan Tate. These critics were known as the Fugitives and the Southern Agrarians. They were called so because they promoted the values of the Old South in reaction against the alleged dehumanization of science and technology in the industrial North. Initially the Fugitives were a literary group based in Nashville, Tennessee with Ransom, Tate, and Warren as its members. However, by the 1930s this literary group had evolved into a group called the Agrarians, made up of a broader base of intellectuals than the Fugitives and was more politically defined. The members of this group published many essays and lectures where they expressed their views on what they saw as the Agrarian organic unity of the South, which in turn geared up the later development of New Criticism. They expressed the belief that—a meaningful

literature grew out of, and was part of particular social circumstances. Some of the important journals associated with New Criticism are *The Fugitives*, a poetry magazine edited by Ransom from 1922 to 1925, *Southern Review*, edited by Penn, Warren and Cleanth Brooks, *The Kenyan Review*, run by Ransom and the *Sewanee Review* edited by Tate and others. The Agrarian group ceased to exist by 1997 when Tate, Ransom, Warren and Brooks turned away from politics to literary criticism.

Ransom's "Criticism Inc" (1938) is one of the important works in the self-identification of New Criticism. Another important book of Ransom, *The New Criticism* (1941), based on Eliot, Richards and others gave the movement its name. In "Criticism Inc" Ransom states that criticism should become 'more scientific, or precise and systematic'. He further states that students should 'study literature and not merely about literature'. Moreover, "criticism is not ethical, linguistic or historical studies, which are merely 'aids'; the critic should be able to exhibit not the 'prose core' to which a poem may be reduced but 'the differentia, residue, or tissue, which keeps the object poetical or entire. The character of a poem resides for the good critic in its way of exhibiting the residuary quality'" (Selden, 29). Another important practitioner of New Criticism is Cleanth Brooks. His and Warren's textbook anthologies, *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943) are often regarded as having spread the New Critical doctrine throughout generations of American university literature students. Brook's *The Well- Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* is his most characteristic book of close readings in which the essay on the eponymous urn of Keats' Ode is considered to be the best exemplification, explicitly and implicitly, of New Critical practice. Such important works give a clear definition of New Criticism:

New Criticism is clearly characterized in premise and practice: it is not concerned with *context* – historical, biographical, intellectual and so on; it is not interested in the 'fallacies' of 'intention' or 'affect'; it is concerned solely with the 'text in itself', with its language and organization; it does not speak a text's 'meaning', but how it 'speaks itself'...; it is concerned to trace how the parts of the text relate, how

it achieves its 'order' and 'harmony', how it contains and resolves 'irony', 'paradox', 'tension', 'ambivalence' and 'ambiguity'; and it is concerned essentially with articulating the very 'poem-ness'- the formal quintessence- of the poem itself. (Selden, 29)

#### **1.4 KEY FEATURES**

The New Critics always looked at any individual work of art as an organic form. Organic form as a concept was important to the New Critics. They inherited this concept from the English Romantics who viewed the world as being organic and the "objects within it are organisms that interact with each other in a larger organic universe" (Guerin, 83). Hence, for the New Critics, a close detailed analysis of the text was the main purpose of criticism. The text was thought to be an autonomous object and while reading the text the reader ought to exclude all sort of speculation about its origin and effects.

The emphasis on organic form led the New Critics to a rejection of the act of paraphrasing:

To paraphrase a poem is to translate it from one medium to another, and therefore to substitute one kind of meaning, a meaning that arises from the textual context- that is the poem's 'organic system of relationships'- into a medium in which that system does not operate. (Waugh, 171)

Hence, to paraphrase a poem is to destroy its context, the experience of the poem and its full meaning. In *The Well-Wrought Urn*, Brooks has called such dualistic view of literary work as 'heresy of paraphrase' and this view was rightly adopted by the New Critics.

However, apart from this heresy of paraphrase, there are two major textual approaches associated with New Criticism- Intentional Fallacy and Affective Fallacy. Wimsatt and Beardsley developed these two concepts in their essays which were published in 1946 and 1949 and later collected in *The Verbal Icon*:

Both essays, influenced by Eliot and Richards, engage with the ‘addresser’ (writer)-‘message’ (text) - ‘addressee’ (reader) nexus outlined in the Introduction, in the pursuit of an ‘objective’ criticism which abjures both the personal input of the writer (‘intention’) and the emotional effect on the reader (‘affect’) in order purely to study the ‘words on the page’ and how the artifact ‘works’. The first essay argues that ‘the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art’. (Selden, 31)

In other words, in intentional fallacy, the critic or the reader makes the mistake of not divorcing the literary work from any intention the author might have had for the work. Hence, the intention of the author is irrelevant to the judgment of a literary work. Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that intention was neither available nor desirable in the formation of literary judgment. There are basically two reasons for such a view: first, the intention of the author is never clear and may always be a matter of dispute and secondly, it may threaten the integrity of the text by introducing the figure of the author. Therefore, it is better to take note of external evidence when it seems worthy, being careful of the fact that the work is seen as a work unto itself. “For the New Critics, removing authorial intentionality was part of a strategy of sealing off the boundaries of the text and ensuring that only the words on the page were the true focus of critical judgment”( Waugh, 171).

The New Critics were also opposed to judging any work of art by its effect on the reader, particularly its emotional effect. They followed the same strategy in attacking ‘affective fallacy’. In the opinion of Wimsatt and Beardsley, the literary text cannot be judged by the way it emotionally affects the reader. Even if a text deals with a highly emotive subject, it has to be judged as a text rather than be judged judging by the intensity that its subject might generate. Hence, to include a text’s impact in one’s analysis is to ignore the dynamic of the text and invite impressionism, relativism and subjectivity:

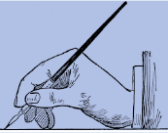


The New Critics feared that validating the effects that a text had on its readers meant validating subjectivity and therefore threatened their fundamental belief that as a discipline criticism had to be objective and discursive. (Waugh, 172) Thus, close, detailed analysis of the text was the main purpose of New Criticism. For the New Critics the text was an autonomous object and they sought to exclude speculation about its origin and effects.

Although New Critics favoured poetry over other literary forms, techniques like close reading and structural analysis of works also applied to drama, novel and other literary forms. Marx Schorer's essays "Technique as Discovery" (1948) and "Fiction and the Analogical Matrix" (1949), attempts to deploy new critical practice in relation to prose fiction. "In Technique as Discovery" Schorer states that "'technique' is the difference between content or experience, and achieved content or art. When we speak of content as such we are actually speaking of experience and not art. Only when we speak of the 'achieved' content, the form, the work of art as a work of art, that we speak as critics". The novel's 'technique' is language and its 'achieved content' or discovery can be analysed in terms of that 'technique'. But this has not been possible in terms of prose fiction. In the second essay "Fiction and the Analogical Matrix", Schorer "extends his analysis of the language of fiction by revealing the unconscious patterns of imagery and symbolism (way behind the author's intension) present in all forms of fiction and not just those which foreground a 'poetic' discourse. He shows how the author's 'meaning', often contradicting the surface sense is embedded in the matrix of linguistic analogues which constitute the 'text'" (Selden, 32).

Thus, New Criticism is neither concerned with 'content'- historical, biological, intellectual and so on,- nor with the fallacies of 'intension' or 'effect'. It is solely concerned with the text itself, with its language and organization; it does not seek a text's 'meaning' but how it 'speaks itself'. The theoretical basis for the New Critics are no doubt challenged and superseded by more recent developments in literary theory, however, New criticism has to a large extent endured as a teaching practice. It had led to the professionalization of literary study and the validation of English as a

discipline. New Criticism has brought about a reformation in poetic canon. The New Critics certainly theorized about prose fiction as well as poetry, but they were basically concerned with the poetic canon. They placed a special emphasis on lyric poetry. New Critical texts, such as *Practical Criticism*, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, *Understanding Poetry*, and *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, show the New Critics' obsession with poetry. This in turn had helped to reshape the existing poetic canon. For instance, revaluation of the Metaphysical Poetry of the seventeenth century, especially that of John Donne by T.S. Eliot has generated a fresh critical interest in metaphysical poetry.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS	
	<p>1. Why is New Criticism considered to be so important today? Jot down five reasons.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

## **1.6 RUSSIAN FORMALISM: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Russian Formalists were a group of writers who flourished during the period of Russian Revolution of 1917. Along with the Futurists, the Formalists were actively involved in the debates concerning art and its connections with ideology. Prior to the Revolution, the Formalists focused mainly on artistic forms and techniques on the basis of linguistics studies. Thus, the Formalist studies were well established before the Revolution. There were basically two schools of Russian Formalism: one is the Moscow Linguistic Circle, founded in 1915 and led by Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev. The second group was the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (Opojaz), founded in 1916 and led by Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum and Yuri Tynyanon. Leo Takubinsky and Vladimir Propp were also associated with this movement. The Russian formalists studied the form of literary work rather than its content, with a special focus on the use of devices such as rhythm, metre, rhyme, metaphor, syntax or narrative technique. Some of the defining features of Russian Formalism were the sharp emphasis on the difference between literature and life, complete rejection of the usual biographical, psychological and sociological explanation of literature and the development of highly ingenious methods for analysing works of literature and for tracing the history of literature on its own terms.

The Formalists aimed at producing a theory of literature with the writers' 'technical' prowess and 'craft' skill. "They treated literature as a special use of language which achieves its distinctness by deviating from and distorting 'practical' language" (Selden, 23). Their main concern was to find out how a literary text generated or possessed *literariness*. Literariness can be defined through an emphasis on the difference between poetic language and practical language. "While practical language is used for acts of communication, literary language has no practical function at all and simply makes us 'see' differently" (Selden, 41). Practical language uses words to accomplish a goal, but literary language or poetic language is oriented towards the words themselves. Thus, practical language seeks to be transparent,

whereas poetic or literary language is deliberately difficult so that we pay attention to it. (Waugh, 215).

Another important achievement of Russian Formalism is the concept of ‘defamiliarization’. Victor Shklovsky, one of the most important formalist writers, observed that in our day to day life we see things automatically without really paying any attention to them. In this matter, art plays a very important role. It teaches us to focus our attention on things we normally take for granted. In other words it gives us back the awareness of things which have become habitual objects of our everyday awareness. Thus, unlike the romantic poets, the Formalists were not much interested in the perceptions themselves as in the nature of the devices which produce the effect of ‘defamiliarization’. “‘Defamiliarization’ changes our response to the world but only by stimulating our habitual perceptions to a processing by literary form” (Selden, 43).

The Formalists also use the concept of ‘defamiliarization’ to explain literary history. The Formalists developed several models of literary history but they shared one common viewpoint that literary history needed to be explained in terms of forces internal to literature itself rather than as a result of a writer’s unique creative process or the forces of social history. According to the Formalists there are four stages through which literary changes take place. First, the world is defamiliarized through literary devices. Second, a readership becomes familiar with the devices of defamiliarization and so those devices cease to perform their function. Thirdly, those devices are defamiliarized by the writers. Finally, the old devices are replaced by the new ones which come from a past, out of the reader’s sensibilities or from popular literature. These devices function for a while and the process starts again.

The Russian Formalists were also interested in the theories of narratives, especially in the distinction of ‘story’ and ‘plot’:


Whereas for the Greek Tragedians, plot, is the artful disposition of the incidents which make up a story, the Russian Formalists stress that ‘only plot’ is strictly literary while ‘story’ is merely raw material awaiting the organizing hand of the writer.... The Formalists... often linked theory of plot with the notion of defamiliarization: the plot *prevents* us from regarding the incidents as typical

and familiar. Instead, we are made constantly aware how artifice constructs or forges (makes/ counterfeits) the ‘reality’ presented to us. (Selden, 45)

‘Motivation’ is another important concept within Russian Formalists’ narrative theory. Tomashevsky called the smallest unit of a plot a ‘motif’ which can be understood as a single statement or action. He distinguishes between ‘bound’ and ‘free’ motifs. “A bound motif is one which is required by the story, while a ‘free’ motif is inessential from the point of view of the story. However, from the literary point of view, the ‘free’ motifs are potentially the focus of art” (Selden, 25). For example, the device of having Raphael relate the War in Heaven is a ‘free’ motif, because it is not part of the story in question. However, it is formally *more* important than the narration of the War itself, because it enables Milton to insert the narration artistically into his overall plot (Selden, 45).

The Prague Linguistic Circle, founded in 1926 was closely linked to Russian Formalism. One of the central figures of this school was Roman Jakobson who was a linguist. He was born in Moscow and there he co-founded the Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1915 along with Osip Brodsky and Boris Tomashevsky. He was also involved in a second Russian Formalist group, the Society for the Study of Poetic Language which was formed in 1916. This group also had Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Eichenbaum as its active members. The Prague Linguistic Circle was founded by Jakobson in 1926 which engaged critically with the work of Saussure. It strongly believed in the poetic function of language which does not seek to convey information but focuses on its own utterances, for its own sake. Moreover, in his essay “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” (1956), he refers to metaphor and metonymy, the two major rhetorical figures on which depends the development of any form of discourse. In metaphor, one thing is substituted by another through selection and association and in metonymy a part is substituted by the whole. The principle of combination is, thus, involved in the process of metonymy. Hence, it is through selection and combination that language operates and as stated by Jakobson, poetic language uses both selection and combination in order to produce equivalence. However, in Jakobson’s opinion

the use of metaphor in literary romanticism and symbolism has been widely acknowledged while the predominance of metonymy in realism has always been neglected.

	<b>CHECK YOUR PROGRESS</b>
1. List the important concepts of Russian Formalism.	
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### ***1.7 SUMMING UP***

After reading this unit you have come to know what New Criticism and Russian Formalism are. Though New Criticism has its origin in America and Russian formalism emerged in Russian literary context, these two trends find affinity in their dealing of criticism as a structural and systematic study, rather than a study based on the work's different backgrounds. This is the reason why we have placed them in the same module so that you can learn them side by side. A study of the background of both the critical theories will enable you to understand the key concepts, their similarities, differences and limitations that we are going to discuss in the succeeding unit.



## 1.8 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Write critically about the origin and development of New criticism
2. What are the key ideas of New Criticism that were different from the previous critical theories?
3. Explain the concept “defamiliarization” as understood by the Formalists.
4. Write a note on Prague Linguistic Circle and the role it played in the development of Russian Formalism
5. Do you find any similarity between New Criticism and Russian Formalism? If yes, then state how is New Criticism similar to Russian Formalism.



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## ***UNIT 2: ASSUMPTIONS, KEY TERMS, KEY FIGURES, IDEAS AND APPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS***

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Key Figures and Assumptions
  - 2.2.1 Key figures of New Criticism
  - 2.2.2 Key assumptions of New Criticism
  - 2.2.3 Key figures of Russian Formalism
  - 2.2.4 Key assumptions of Russian Formalism
  - 2.2.3 Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin School
- 2.3 Limitations of New Criticism
- 2.4 Limitations of Russian Formalism
- 2.5 Summing Up
- 2.6 Assessment Questions
- 2.7 References and Recommended Readings

### ***2.0 INTRODUCTION***

Any discussion on critical theory and criticism cannot be completed without a proper mentioning of the major exponents of that theory and the concept they have applied to their studies. Both New and Russian formalism reacted against the historicist reading of a text and rejected unsystematic, subjective and impressionistic ways of dealing with literature. Both movements draw attention to the fact that literature is nothing but the use of language, and that all the meaning is derived from the text and the reader's job is to determine that meaning. Let us see in this unit what have these group of critics contributed newly to the trend of criticism.

### ***2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

After reading this unit you will be able to know

- the important exponents of both New criticism and Russian formalism and their chief critical examinations
- the terminologies used and popularised by these critics that have applications in critical reading even today.
- about one of the most important critics of Russian formalism, Mikhail Bakhtin and his important terminologies.

## 2.2 KEY FIGURES AND ASSUMPTIONS

### 2.2.1 Key figures of New Criticism

John Crowe Ransom, I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, R. P. Blackmur, William Empson, W. K. Wimsatt can be said as some major contributors of New criticism.

**I.A Richards (1893-1979):** I. A. Richards initiated the practice of practical reading of a literary text and thus made a direct connection between the text and the reader. His work contributed in laying the foundation of New Criticism, a literary theory which emphasized the close reading of a literary text, especially poetry, in an effort to discover how a work of literature functions as a self contained and self-referential aesthetic object. He made literary criticism factual, scientific and complete and was instrumental in making scientific objectivity an integral part of New Criticism. (Scientific objectivity denotes a formal and methodical reading of a text, analysis of which should not be influenced by particular perspectives, value commitments, community bias or personal interests etc.) Author of *Principle of Literary Criticism* and *Practical Criticism*, I. A. Richards, as a critic carried forward the idea of ‘exclusive textual orientation’ and ‘close reading’ later propagated by the New Critics. He is also the contributor of the term ‘ambiguity’ which he considered as a basic trait of any language.

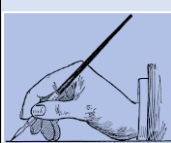
**John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974):** He is an important figure in the development of New Criticism. His series of essays entitled *New Criticism* (1941) and “Criticism, Inc.”, an influential essay published in *The World as Body* (1938) express a core of critical principles underlying the practice of most “New Critics”, whose views always differed in other respects. Ransom is motivated by the desire to make literary criticism “more scientific, or precise and systematic”. He further urges that the emphasis of criticism must move from historical scholarship to aesthetic appreciation and understanding of a text. According to him criticism should exclude historical background or study, personal view or impression, paraphrase, moral content, linguistic analysis, such as word meaning, allusions etc. He is the one who asserted that poetry and prose are different in nature and therefore the texture of meanings cannot be the same in both.

**William Empson (1906-1984):** Empson is considered as one of the leading critics of New Criticism for his work *Seven Types of Ambiguity* in which he carried forward the principles of I.A. Richards on nature and function of language. He emphasised that that language, which is constituted of words, has layers of meanings. The cluster of meanings words carry in a text need proper linguistic analysis to unfold the connotations. His applications show careful analysis of words, sentences, phrase etc in a particular work of literature. He meticulously worked on texts like *Othello* and *Paradise Lost* to unfold the multi-layered meanings of these texts.

**F.R. Leavis (1895-1978):** F. R. Leavis is a central figure in English literary criticism. He was one of the new academics in Cambridge in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Though he stood aloof from New Criticism, he was at the same time influenced by Richards’s Practical Criticism courses, which he attended. As a critic, Leavis attempted to foster rigorous international standards informed by a sense of the moral and cultural importance of literature, as well as to reevaluate the English literary tradition. Along with T.S. Eliot and the New Critics, Leavis believed that literary criticism should be a separate and serious discipline. In other words, he too was concerned with the specificity of the “text itself”; “the work in front of him as something that should contain within itself

the reason why it is so and not otherwise” (‘The Function of Criticism’ in *The Common Pursuit*, 1952). However, he is different from the New Critics in his belief that literary studies cannot be confined to isolated works of art or to a realm of purely literary values. The study of literature, according to him, was “an intimate study of the complexities, potentialities and essential conditions of human nature” (Habib, 33).

**William Wimsatt:** William Wimsatt, together with M.C Bredsley contributed two important concepts of New Criticism. In their essays “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” they talk about the authorial ‘intention’ and their ‘affect’ on the readers. Both these two things, according to them, should be avoided to achieve a scientific critical reading, as intention and affect are not embedded in a text. Thus, the speaker in a poem is not the author, rather the dramatic persona. In the same way terms like authenticity, originality etc should be replaced by terms such as integrity, relevance, unity etc.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the difference between ‘aesthetic truth’ and ‘scientific truth’?

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2. What is the important assumption of William Empson?

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2. What do you understand by ‘ambiguity’ in criticism?

### **2.2.2 Key assumptions of New Criticism**

#### ***Intentional Fallacy***

William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley coined the expression “Intentional Fallacy” in their joined authored articles named “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective fallacy”. A ‘fallacy’ is an invalid mode of reasoning, and Wimsatt and Beardsley claimed that it is fallacious to base a critical judgement about the meaning or value of a literary work on ‘external evidence’ concerning the author’s intention. Before Wimsatt and Beardsley, critics like T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis and E.M.W. Tillyard had already developed the idea that the critic should concentrate on the poem, not the poet. But the expression became more popular with Wimsatt and Beardsley because:

the article was fresh, polemical, and forcefully argued; its thesis soon became a theoretical corner-stone for the New Criticism, which was developing in North America in the 1940s and 1950s; above all, it

was an assault on much more than intention. Its target was a certain kind of Romanticism (a concept that crops up several times in the original article) along with an assortment of associated notions, including ‘sincerity’, ‘fidelity’, ‘spontaneity’, ‘authenticity, genuineness’, ‘originality’. (Waugh, 177)

According to the authors:

...intention, as we shall use the term, corresponds to what he intended in a formula which more or less explicitly has had wide acceptance....In order to judge the poems performance, we must know what he intended. Intention is designed or planned in author’s mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author’s attitudes toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write. (Wimsatt and Beardsley 3)

So, in their view i. authorial intentions are not there in the text, ii. authorial intentions dismantle the integrity of a text. For any criticism or critical reading such intentions are not essential. It can be obtained by ‘close’ reading and attending rhetorical and linguistic components of a text. Author cannot be a guide to the meaning as interpretation must be justified textually.

### *Affective Fallacy*

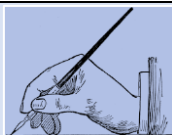
Both Beardsley and Wimsatt define affective fallacy as an error of misconception that arises from evaluating a text by its effect. Thus, affective fallacy is an error of judging text on the basis of its emotive effect on the reader. As a result of this fallacy, criticism ends in impressionism and relativism and objective criticism becomes almost impossible. Later Beardsley altered his observation and said that, “it does not appear that critical evaluation can be done at all except in relation to certain type of effect that aesthetic objects have upon their perceivers.” Opposite to this is the “Objective Criticism”, in which instead of describing the effects of a work, focus is given to the features, devices and form of the work by which such effects are achieved. It also led to the rise of Reader Response theory in 1970s.

## *Metaphor*

The New Critics emphasized “close reading” as a way to engage with a text, and paid close attention to the interactions between form and meaning. Therefore, on account of being intrinsic properties of a literary text, New Critics focused their attention on the variety and degree of certain literary devices, specifically metaphor, irony, tension, and paradox. Metaphor implies a comparison between two dissimilar things. According to I.A. Richards metaphorical meaning in text is not the literal meaning, rather a new and distinctive one that adds richness to poetry. (He describes a metaphor as having two parts: the tenor and the vehicle. The tenor is the subject to which attributes are ascribed. The vehicle is the object whose attributes are borrowed.) Richards further explains that though a metaphor has a link with the tenor or subject, actually it is a third entity stemming out of the link between tenor and vehicle. Thus, Metaphors, instead of being an embellishment, constitute the crux of language.

## *Ambiguity*

William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is considered to be the fundamental text of New Criticism. Though it categorises different types of ambiguities, fundamental to the concept is that words have multiple meaning, that language is many sided. Real ambiguity adds complexity and richness, but “impression of incoherence” or “weakness or thinness of thought” can make ambiguity confusing and a hindrance to true understanding.



### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is the argument behind ‘Intentional Fallacy’?

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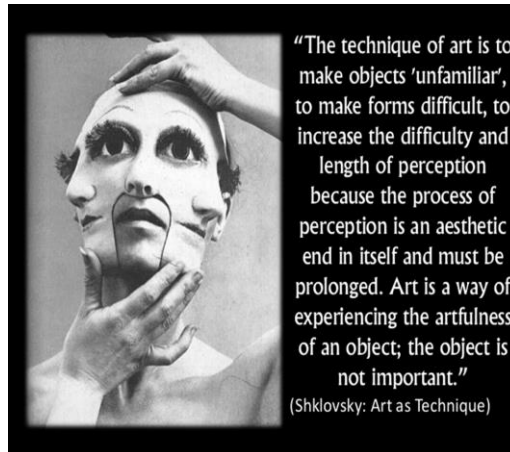

### 2.2.3 Key Figures of Russian Formalism

Russian formalists' work is often viewed as the first modern attempt at systematic, comprehensive, and scientifically oriented literary theorizing. Among the major exponents of Russian Formalism names of Viktor Shklovsky, Yury Tynyanov, Boris Eichenbaum, Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukorovsky, Peter Bogatryrev, Osip Brik, Boris Tomashevski and Vladimir Propp are but a few.

**Viktor Shklovsky:** Victor Shklovsky, who was the founding member of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language, was a dominant figure in the earlier phase of Formalism. The concept of **estrane** or **defamiliarization** was introduced by him in his essay "Art as Technique" (1917) where he states, "the technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and the length of perception..." (ibid 2). When our normal perceptions become habitual, they become automatic and unconscious and it is the task of art to give us back the awareness of things which has



become habitual objects of our everyday awareness. In other words, the purpose of a work of art is to change our mode of perception from the automatic to practical to the artistic. He also distinguished between story and plot. He indicated that "Great literature tries to move away from



([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327390929\\_Russian\\_Formalism/](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327390929_Russian_Formalism/))

storyline to plot." Story is a series of events connected by time, place, character and cause and effect. But plot is the way the author tells and arranges the story and creates the structure.

**Boris Eichenbaum:** Another important figure of Russian Formalism was Boris Eichenbaum who was a co-founder of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (1916). In his famous essay "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'" (1926, 1927), he expounded the evolution of the central principles of the formalist method. He stated that the formalists were concerned not with establishing one or another method or theory, but with establishing a discipline that, like other genuine sciences, would progress, not just change over time. He also argued that "poetry uses words differently from their function in ordinary speech, disrupting 'ordinary verbal associations'" (Eichenbaum, 129). The suggestion here is that poetry, or more specifically, poetic form, comprises a kind of speech of its own, which is cumulatively developed by a tradition of poets. Rhythms are developed that are peculiar to poetry, and so are shades of meaning and syntactical structures. ...Also the Formalists adopted a new understanding of literary history which rejected the idea of some linear, unified tradition. Rather, literary tradition involved struggle, a destruction of old values, competition between various schools in a given epoch, and persistence of vanquished movements alongside the newly dominant groups (Eichenbaum, 130, 134-135). The Formalists insisted that literary evolution had a distinctive character and it 'stood alone, quite independent of other aspects of culture.'

Clearly, such a model of literary theory anticipates later theories such as those of Pound and T.S. Eliot” (Habib, 21).

**Roman Jakobson:** Roman Jakobson was the founder of **Prague Linguist Circle** and **Moscow Linguist Circle**. He was also associated with OPOYAZ. Jakobson believed that literary research and linguistic study should go hand in hand. His whole engagement with research was basically directed towards finding relation between language and literature. In his important essay “Linguistics and Poetics” Jakobson made it clear that poetics deals with poetry's verbal structure, which should not to be confused with the structure of poetry, while linguistics is the science of verbal structure, which therefore subsumes poetics.

At the same time, he also expounded the similarities that exist between the basic parts of both linguistics and poetics. He argued that the fundamental parts of linguistics; addresser, message, context, contact, code and addressee, unknowingly combine elements of poetics. These elements are visible in the word choice of the addresser, and thus will shape the message as well as its context, contact and code, and impact the addressee in a particular way. Jakobson gave many examples of the ways in which poetics affects this basic linguistic function, such as in literature, famous speeches, children’s tales and rhymes and even our everyday speech. One of his most lasting contributions was his development of the model of the “communication theory of language” based on his delineation of language functions.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



#### **OPOYAZ**

Russian acronym in English for **Society for the Study of Poetic Language** which, along with the Moscow

Linguistic Circle, was one of the precursor groups to Russian Formalism. The group was formed in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1916, by a group of students and professors working in language studies. It was chaired by the poet Osip Brik and its membership

included Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaum, and Roman Jakobson. The group was interested in uncovering the working mechanisms of literary technique, or more precisely identifying the specific quality of language use that separated the literary text from the non-literary text. By 1923 OPOYAZ merged with the Moscow Linguistic Circle.

#### **Moscow Linguist Circle:**

The **Moscow linguistic circle** was a group of social scientists in semiotics, literary theory, and linguistics active in Moscow from 1915 to 1924. Its members included Filipp Fedorovich Fortunatov, Roman Jakobson, Grigory Vinokur, Boris Tomashevsky, and Petr Bogatyrev. MLC researched on the relation between literature and language. They particularly promoted research into prosody, myth and traditional and contemporary folklore. The group was a counterpart to OPOJAZ, together with Prague linguistic circle.

#### **Prague Linguist Circle:**

The **Prague Linguistic Circle** or **Prague school** was an influential group of literary critics and linguists who came together in Prague with the common desire to create a new approach to linguistics during the years 1928–1939. Roman Jakobson, Nikolai Trubetzkoy, and Sergei Karcevsky, as well as the famous Czech literary scholars René Wellek and Jan Mukařovský were the members. They developed methods of structuralist literary analysis, but their work constituted a radical departure from the classical structural position of Ferdinand de Saussure. They suggested that their methods of studying the function of speech sounds could be applied both synchronically, to a language as it exists, and diachronically, to a language as it changes. The functionality of elements of language and the importance of its social function were key aspects of Prague School's research program. Prague school is the first effective form of a structuralist linguistics characterized by a pronounced interest in *langue* rather than *parole*. As with its

predecessors, Opoyaz and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, the group sought to bring together poetics and linguistics.

#### **2.2.4 Key assumptions of Russian Formalism**

##### **Dialogism**

Bakhtin defines the novel as a “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (*Discourse in the Novel*, 262). Thus, it becomes clear that Bakhtin’s view of the novel is dependent upon his broader view of the nature of language as “dialogic”. On the basic level, “Dialogism” refers to the fact that the various languages that stratify any “single” language are in dialogue with one another. He further explains that there is no direct, unmediated relation between a word and its object. In other words, language is not somehow a neutral medium, transparently related to the world of objects. Any utterance, whereby we assign a given meaning to a word, or use a word in a given way, is composed not in a vacuum in which the word we initially encounter it is empty of significance. Rather, even before we utter the word in our own manner and with our own signification, it is already invested with many layers of meanings, and our use of the word must accommodate those other meanings and in some cases compete with them. Our utterances will in its very nature be dialogic: it is born as one voice in a dialogue that is already constituted; it cannot speak monologically, as the only voice, in some register isolated from all social, historical, and ideological contexts.

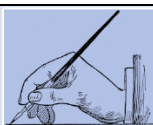
##### **Polyphony**

The origin of the concept ‘polyphony’ can be traced to Bakhtin’s famous work *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Politics*. The literary meaning of ‘polyphony’ is “multiple voices” but Bakhtin meant it to be something more specific that, so far, had been achieved only by Dostoevsky, and that represents the fundamental meaning conveyed by the form (rather than the overtly expressed ideology) of Dostoevsky’s novels. (Waugh, 219). In Dostoevsky, the multiple voices the readers hear are strictly subordinated to the author’s

controlling purpose, his 'truth'. In contrast to this 'monologic' type of novel, Dostoevsky developed a new 'polyphonic' form, whose orchestration was non-authoritarian in its refusal to unify the various points of view expressed in the various characters. The consciousness of the various characters did not merge with the author's nor did they become subordinated to the author's view point; they retained an integrity and independence, and we are not only subjects of the author's word, but subjects of their own directly significant word as well. Thus, the work had multiple centres- all major characters and the author- and was in this specific sense polyphonic. Polyphony represents the most far-reaching representation of human freedom and open time ever achieved.

### **Heteroglossia**

Heteroglossia refers to the multiple variations of languages and ideas/perspectives within those languages, a circumstance where what we usually think of as a single, unitary language is actually comprised of a multiplicity of languages interacting with, and often ideologically competing with one another. In Bakhtin's terms, any given "language" is actually stratified into several other "languages". This "other-languages" is "heteroglossia" and it is an indispensable prerequisite of the novel. "Dialogism", on the other hand, refers to the fact that the various languages that stratify any "single" language are in dialogue with one another. "Dialects" are only a small part of such languages, which reflect different understanding of life, and only as a consequence the different ways of speaking that a linguist might detect. Novels bring different 'languages of heteroglossia' into dialogic interaction. They create implicit arguments among points of view that may not have actually disputed each other in real life; and they explore the possible implications of such conflicts for an understanding of life as a whole.



### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. How, do you think, the concepts of Heteroglossia, Dialogism and polyphony are interrelated?


### **2.2.5 Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin School**

In the later period of formalism the so-called Bakhtin School became popular. Mikhail Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov were associated with this School. However, it is Mikhail Bakhtin who successfully formulated an innovative and radical philosophy of language as well as a comprehensive “theory” of the novel. Bakhtin did not treat literature as a direct reflection of social forces and instead focused on the social nature of language, literature, and meaning. He showed how the dynamic and active nature of language was given expression in certain literary traditions. He stressed not only on the way texts reflect society or class interests, but rather the way

language is made to disrupt authority and liberate alternative voices. “In Bakhtin’s view, literature not only contains great ideas, but also discovers them, so that much of what we think of as the contribution of philosophers is really their transcription of ideas implicit in literary works and genres” (Waugh, 218).

Bakhtin is best known for his radical philosophy of language, as well as his theory of the novel. His writings, though originated in Russia in the 1920s, were not widely read until after the 1960s, when ideas were adopted by many academic spheres and contributed to new directions in philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory. He is also known for such key concepts as ***Polyphony, Heteroglossia, Carnival and Dialogism***. His important works include *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* (1990), *Rabelais and his World* (1965), *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1963), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1975) and *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1979).

Bakhtin, who has written on a number of topics, is best known for his three theories of the novel. He formulated his theory of the ‘polyphonic novel’ in the late 1920s. The term is discussed above in the “Key Assumption” section.

Bakhtin’s second theory of the novel, which grows out of his theory of language, applies to realistic novels such as *Middlemarch* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Anna Karenina*. Unlike the linguists who often assume that the fundamental unit of language is sentence, Bakhtin believed that it is not sentence but concrete utterance, someone saying something for some specific reason to a specific person in a specific situation. Utterances, unlike sentences are unrepeatable; they do not simply instantiate the resource of language but use those resources to engage in dialogue. Hence, Bakhtin’s view of the novel is dependent upon his broader view of the nature of language as “dialogic” and as comprised of “heteroglossia”. We have discussed this term above.

The idea of “chronotope” or “time-space” was developed by Bakhtin in his third theory of the novel. By this term Bakhtin meant to indicate that the field of possible actions varies. These differences define different social

situations, different views of the world and different literary genres; and some views and genres are more naïve than others. For instance, in the realistic novel each personality is unique, with dark depths, and each develops over time, in interaction with specific historical and social conditions that are in turn shaped by the specific personalities then living. However, in the adventure story, the events always happen in the ‘nick of time’, but novelistic time is time without nicks, time in which multiple forces and choices develop gradually. These aspects of the novelistic chronotope all explain ‘the surplus of humanness’ and the radical openness of time (Waugh, 221).

Bakhtin also popularized the concept of “**carnival**” or “**carnavalesque**”. It has its origin in Bakhtin’s book on Rabelais which is a literary-historical research on medieval festivals. The term has been extensively plundered by contemporary literary and cultural theorists to help explain texts and events in which the world is ‘temporarily turned upside down’. Bakhtin himself writes that the Carnival time is special precisely because it gives license to the prevailing social hierarchies to be reserved. Bakhtin recognizes that the tradition of carnival dwindled in Europe following the Renaissance and the eventual replacement of feudalism with capitalism. As a result, he says, the public spirit of the carnival metamorphosed into the “carnavalesque”, that is, the spirit of carnival rendered into literary form. The person who most fully represented this spirit was Francois Rabelais and the book which holds the greatest purchase on Bakhtin’s imagination is Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. The comic violence, bad language, exaggeration, satire and shape-shifting which fill this book are for Bakhtin, the greatest example of carnivalesque literature.

Bakhtin raises a number of themes developed by later theorists. Both Romantics and the Formalists and even the New Critics regarded texts as organic unities, as integrated structures in which all loose ends are finally gathered up into aesthetic unity by the reader. His emphasis on the carnival breaks up this unquestioned organicity and promotes the idea that major literary works may be multi-levelled and restricted to unification.





## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are Bakhtin's theory of novel?

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2. What do you understand by "carnivalesque"?

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### ***2.3 LIMITATIONS OF NEW CRITICISM***

In the 1940s and 1950s the doctrine of New Criticism gained much momentum and became an important part of the syllabus in schools, colleges and universities. But this formalistic approach which had been influencing teachers, readers and students throughout the universities of the United States did have its own limitations. In the second half of the century, with increasing social flux, New Criticism began to see its influence diminish. Many readers and scholars found that in focusing solely on the text, New Criticism tended to be detrimental to the development of inter textual criticism. Its ahistorical approach to the study of literature was faulted for depoliticizing literature and, thereby, upholding a political status quo. As such, in the 1950s and 1960s the primacy of New Criticism was challenged.

Stephen Matterson in “The New Criticism” has listed out some of the limitations of New Criticism. He refers to the reader-response theorists’ challenge to the New Critical sense of the text as a spatial unit. These theorists saw:

the text operating sequentially and temporally, rather than spatially and considered it as an energy in which meaning was constructed through a relationship with the active reader, rather than something which the reader received from the text....[Thus] The fundamental question raised by the reader-response theory involves the location and production of meaning, and of necessity challenged the new critical view that meaning was located within the boundary of the text.”(Waugh 174).

Further, he also referred to De Man's observance of the dehistoricization of the text:

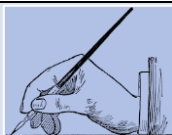
There are really two aspects to this. The first is that the formalist approach actually devalues the power of literature to mean something in the world. This is an aspect of dehistoricization, because the literary text is thereby divorced from the social and historical context in which it may otherwise function meaningfully. ... The second concern with New Critical dehistoricization involves the view that New Criticism was itself not at all ideologically innocent, and that the claim to focus on the bounded space of the text was a gesture arising from a covertly held conservative position. (Waugh, 174)

Hence, New Criticism, by the 1960s was slowly moving towards oblivion. It failed to meet the challenges put up by the newly developed theories such as Marxist, Feminist, Structuralist criticism and could no further generate any influence.

Offering a challenge to the New Critics was another American movement of the midtwentieth century: the Chicago School of Neo-Aristotelians. The Neo-Aristotelians were centred, through the 1940s and 1950s, on R.S. Crane At the University of Chicago. R. S. Crane along with his group approached criticism with an open mind and recognized that there are mainly different approaches and methods of study, to a work of art. They began formulating their central ideas around the same time as the New Critics were voicing their manifestos. They produced the central manifesto of the Chicago School, *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern* (1952), which attacked some of the important tenets of the New Criticism. It also elaborated an alternative formalistic method of criticism derived in part from Aristotle's *Poetics*. This view openly challenges the New Critics emphasis on the textual analysis of a work of art. In other words, they were critical about the dogmatic assumptions of the New Critics. The Chicago School drew a number of characteristic critical concerns from Aristotle's *Poetics*, such as the emphasis

on literary texts as “artistic wholes”, the analytical importance of locating individual texts within given genres, and the need to identify textual and generic( as opposed to authorial) intention. Whereas the New Critics had focused attention on specifically poetic uses of language, irony, metaphor, tension, and balance, the Chicago School followed Aristotle in emphasizing plot, character and thought. In general, the Neo- Aristotelians or the Chicago School, offered an alternative formalist poetics which acknowledged the mimetic, didactic, and the affective functions of literature (Habib, 31-32).

Although New Criticism is no longer a dominant theoretical model in American universities, some of its methods (like close reading) are still fundamental tools of literary criticism, underpinning a number of subsequent theoretic approaches to literature including poststructuralism, deconstruction theory, and reader-response theory. In spite of its limitations New Criticism occupies an important place in the development of modern literary theory and English Studies. It might appear to be ‘ideologically problematic, theoretically unformulated, and unsystematic,’ but ‘it mounted the first serious challenge to reductionist and impressionistic approach to literature and with its emphasis on rigour and objectivity, it initiated the professionalization and formalization of literary criticism as a discipline” (Waugh, 175).



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What, according to the Chicago School, are the limitations of New Criticism?

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2. What is the strongest argument against New Criticism?

## **2.4 SUMMING UP**

Both New Criticism and Russian Formalism aim to explore what is specifically 'literary' in texts. Both reject the spirituality of the Romantic poetics in favour of a detailed and empirical approach to reading. However, Russian Formalists were much more interested in 'method' and were more concerned to establish a 'scientific' basis for the theory of literature. The New Critics combined attention to the specific verbal ordering of texts with an

emphasis on the non-conceptual nature of literary meaning: a poem's complexity embodied a subtle response to life, which could not be reduced to logical statements or paraphrases. Their approach, despite the emphasis on close reading of texts, remained fundamentally humanistic. The Formalists, on the other hand, avoided the New Critics' tendency to endow aesthetic form with moral and cultural significance. They aimed rather to outline models and hypotheses (in a scientific spirit) to explain how aesthetic effects are produced by literary devices, and how the 'literary' is distinguished from and related to the 'extra-literary'. While the New Critics regarded literature as a form of human understanding, the formalists thought of it as a special use of language.



## **2.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Examine the contributions of New critics in creating a trend of text based reading.
2. What are the concepts called Polyphony, Heteroglossia, Carnival and Dialogism?
3. Discuss the strength and limitations of New Criticism
4. Discuss the strength and limitations of Russian Formalism
5. Critically evaluate the similarity and differences of Russian Formalism and New Criticism.
6. Discuss the role of the Chicago critics in pin-pointing the limitations of New Criticism.
7. Discuss Bakhtin's theory of the novel.
8. What is "Heteroglossia" and "Dialogism"? How are they interrelated?
9. What do you understand by intentional fallacy and affective fallacy? How are they related to the understanding of a text?
10. How can New Critics simultaneously prize "organic unity" and paradox, irony, and ambiguity?



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### ***UNIT 3: THE TEXT AND THE LEGACY OF NEW CRITICISM***

#### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 New Criticism and the Text
- 3.3 The Legacy of New Criticism
- 3.4 Summing up
- 3.5 Assessment Questions
- 3.6 References and Recommended Reading

#### ***3.0 INTRODUCTION***

New Criticism as a literary movement was short-lived. However, the trends set by this movement have been tremendous. This unit will discuss how the movement left its legacy and how the results still reverberate decades after its end. The previous chapters have already dealt with how the movement evolved and the proponents of the movement. This unit will restrict itself to the discussion of the aftereffects or the legacy of by New Criticism.

#### ***3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

This unit will enable the reader to

- trace the legacy of New Criticism.
- discuss the contemporary relevance of New Criticism.
- analyse the importance of the text in the context of New Criticism.

#### ***3.2 NEW CRITICISM AND THE TEXT***

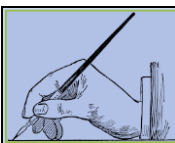
As New Criticism and Russian Formalism have already been discussed, along with the key figures of the movement, this unit would deal with their legacy



. As a formalist theory, New Criticism came to prominence in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States.

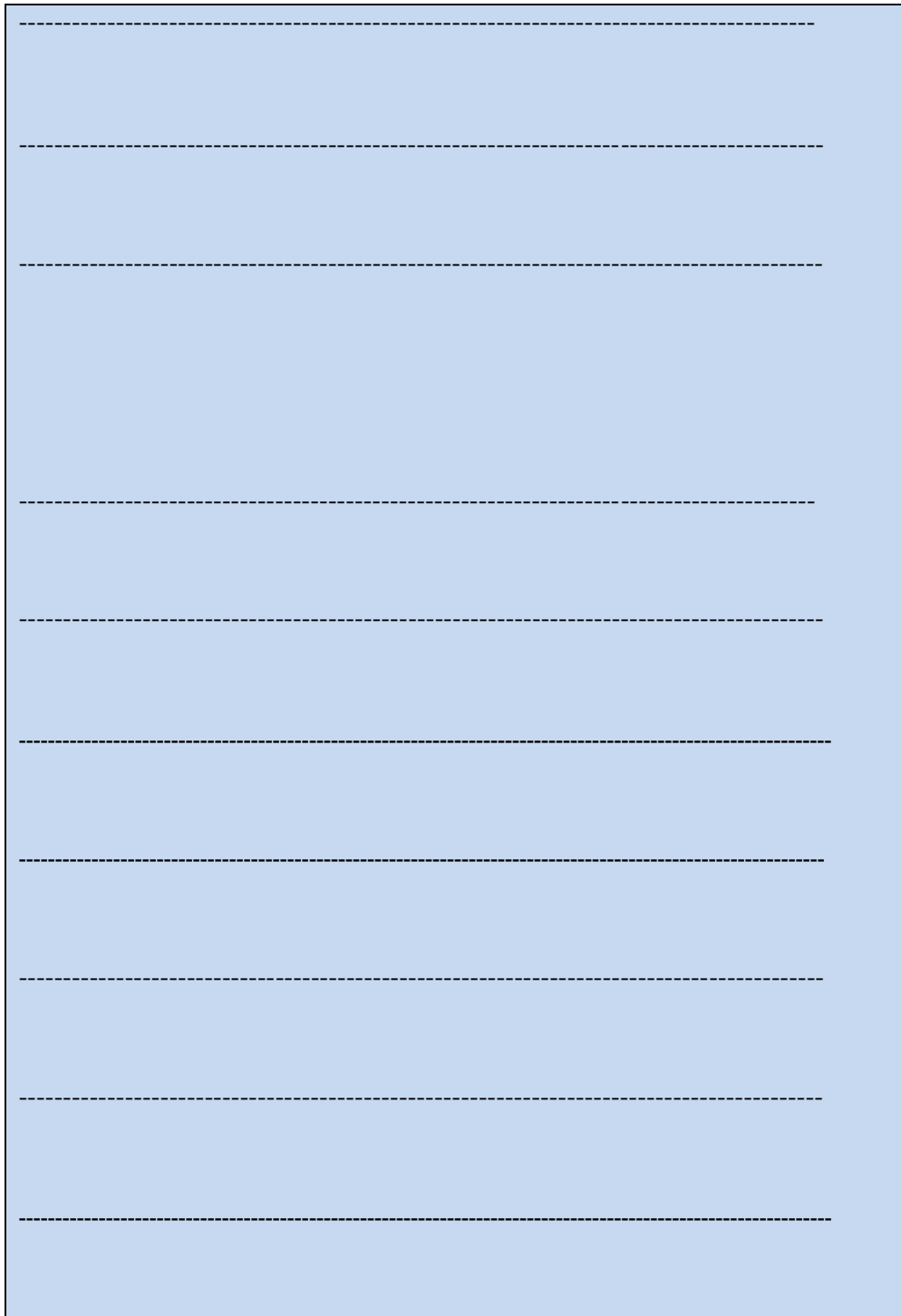
As an early twentieth-century movement, New Criticism emerged from a field of literary theory dominated by Marxism and Impressionism by rejecting them. The essence of New Criticism was strongly emphasised by J.E. Spingarn when he proposed the need for literary theory to return to literature as its basis and its particular context, rather than focus on non-literal and outside interests, for instance, the author's biography. As has already discussed, the basic tenet of New Criticism was the text and nothing else. Since the text is considered autonomous in itself, no other source requires any attention. It is only through close-reading of the text that one can actually decipher its essence, its meaning.

The concept of “return to the text itself” formed the basic tenet of New Criticism. If a critic analyses a work in relation to arbitrarily set rules of literature, he/she does no more than erect a wall between him/herself and the meaning of the work. Taking recourse to historical circumstances and political ideas is not the correct way to analyse a text, when the text is complete in itself. New Criticism primarily dominates University Campuses, fulfilling John Crowe Ransom's 1938 statement that “Rather than occasional criticism by amateurs, I should think the whole enterprise might be seriously taken in hand by professionals” (Ransom 1109). This has been possible due to the New Critical approach of looking at a text on its own. This has enabled students with any interest in literature, regardless of the presence or absence of a background in any other field of study, to become proficient in the New Critical method. Similarly, no professor of literary studies is required to detract from the study of literature in order to impart these backgrounds to the students (Clausen 56). New Criticism's place has therefore been solidified through its establishment in academic criticism. There has been a simultaneous shift of the forums of New Criticism from periodicals to more strictly academic areas.



#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What do you understand by the concept of “return to the text itself”?



### ***3.3 THE LEGACY OF NEW CRITICISM***

The effective downfall of New Criticism did not come about from the creation of new theories at the opposite end of the spectrum. Rather, New Criticism was

forced to the background through a combination of theories that took particular aspects of the former to extreme ends.

The legacy of New Criticism can be seen in the fact that even after its preeminence has receded, its chief analytical method, the act of close reading, is standard practice everywhere, used on nearly any work, for nearly any purpose. Any text can be read on its own, despite the fact that the author who created it might mean it otherwise.

For decades now, New Criticism has been both dead and alive. It is commonplace among scholars and teachers of literature to see this trend of New Criticism. As discussed in the previous units, New Criticism as a technique for reading developed from the 1920s through the early 1950s. The names behind it were I. A. Richards, William Empson, T.S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, F. R. Leavis, Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, and others. This unit is not going to discuss these writers in detail, since the previous units have briefly dealt with them already.

New Criticism continues to exercise enormous influence on teachers of literature not only in the United States, but also in India and other countries. It holds an important place in the practice of literary pedagogy. But as a set of principles pertaining to the ontology, structure, and function of the literary text and of the critical act, however, New Criticism has undoubtedly been long dead.

Both the flexibility of New Criticism's pedagogical method and the susceptibility of its theoretical premises seem to owe a good deal to its tendency to treat the text in certain respects as though it were a self-contained object. This approach helps in classroom discussion. This is because this method seems to demand little more than a working competence in the English language. If one looks through the lens of the early twenties, the birth years of New Criticism, then it would make it clear that it addresses the fact that college students in the post-Second World War United States could not and cannot, in Gerald Graff's words, "be depended on to bring to the university a common cultural background" (Graff 173).

The contributions of New Criticism in helping the readers look at the text as an independent work cannot be ignored. But New Criticism has also been

accused of treating the literary text as an autonomous aesthetic object, severing it irretrievably from both psychology and history. Terry Eagleton offered the most extreme formulation of this dismissal. In *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), Eagleton says that “if the poem was really to become an object in itself, New Criticism had to sever it from both author and reader,” that “rescuing the text from author and reader went hand in hand with disentangling it from any social or historical context” and that “what New Criticism did, in fact, was to convert the poem into a fetish” (Eagleton 47-49).

In an article published in *New Criterion* in 1991, Roger Kimball’s praise of the New Critics’ “concern with the integrity of the literary object as such” is inseparable from his condemnation of the contemporary academy’s turn to political and historical context. What unites modernism and the New Criticism, Kimball writes, “is an insistence on the irreducibility of the aesthetic object: an insistence that literature, for example, is literature, not a covert species of politics” (Kimball 21-23). New Criticism as a literary movement has been so ingrained in the academia that its legacy cannot be ignored.

Matthew Arnold, states in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Times” that criticism should be a “dissemination of ideas, an unprejudiced and impartial effort to study”, meaning that critics should be unbiased and should only critique the text presented. The purpose of criticism, as Spingarn says, is to determine whether a specific document is a work of art; and the proper means to determine this is a close analysis of its structure. This brings in the legacy of the New Critics. Analysing a text based on the poet’s life, work or environment is to treat the text as a “social statement, political treatise, historical document”, rather than reading the text as a *work of art* (Spingarn 22-23). This kind of analysis or investigation is a contribution to the study of politics or history, but not to literary criticism, opines Spingarn.

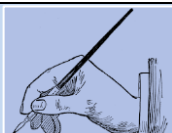
T.S. Eliot, in his analysis of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* uses a New Critical approach in establishing the concept of the “objective correlative”. This is that aspect of the work consisting of the plot elements that create the characters’ emotions; if a work has achieved its objective correlative, when the plot elements come together, the characters’ emotions are immediately and completely justified

(Eliot 14). Whether the work provides sufficient justification for the characters' emotions, is a fundamental element of the work itself. So, according to Eliot, *Hamlet* is a failure, because Hamlet's disgust and stymied state seems to be caused by his mother, while his mother as shown in the play is not sufficient cause for such a reaction.

New Criticism, as stated earlier, has laid the foundation for many other theories in the late twentieth century. These theories developed themselves by opposing the fundamental New Critical tenet of considering the work of art only in its own terms. Many of the theories that rose in the wake of New Criticism in the latter half of the twentieth century took it upon themselves to fill that void:

New Criticism was followed by a number of complicated theoretical doctrines: structuralism, deconstruction, and the latest, cultural studies, a still-evolving Neo-Marxist method for “decoding” literary and other cultural artefacts. Cumulatively, their greatest effect on literary study has been to overthrow the central tenet of New Criticism — the autonomy of art — and in its place to institutionalise the social and political attitudes of the New Left, turning the practice of criticism into a weapon of assault against such extramural targets as American foreign policy, capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy (Clausen 56).

The fundamental principle of New Criticism is that a work of art is independent in itself, a unified entity. It is this principle, which the theories that replaced New Criticism in mainstream criticism, specifically rebelled against in the effort to use literary criticism for purposes other than the study of literature, whether political or historical. New Criticism tries to move away from theory in a sense that for the New Critics, no other abstract ideas would be needed to analyse a work other than those ideas contained within the work.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the fundamental principle of New Criticism?

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2. Mention some other theoretical doctrines that derived inspiration from New Criticism.

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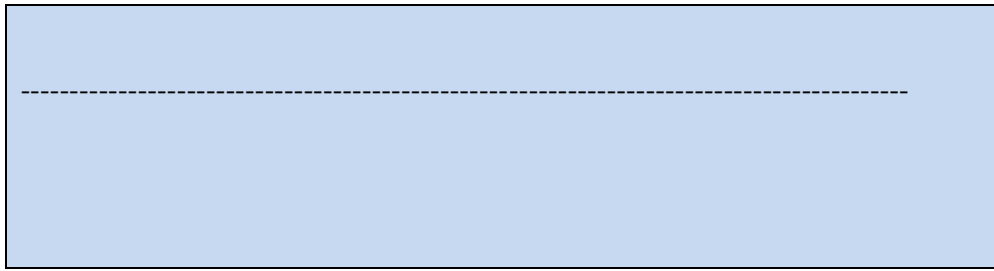
3. Who coined the term “Objective Correlative”? What does it mean?

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### **3.4 SUMMING UP**

New Criticism has become subtly ingrained in school curricula. Competitive exams are rooted in the New Critical approach to literature for the English section. The unseen passage comprehension section of any competitive exam can be said to have its basis in the methods or ideals of New Criticism. Particularly in the Indian context, this portion has become an indispensable syllabus for any kind of competitive tests, like civil services banking, or even National Eligibility Tests and so on. To cite a recent example, the UGC-NET in its December 2019 test gave a poem by Philip Larkin. But the author's name was not mentioned. The examinees had to answer a few questions asked based on their reading of the text, in this case, the poem.

Close textual analysis, or as the New Critics say, 'close reading', is now a ubiquitous method in any kind of teaching of literature. Cain has rightly said:

New Criticism survives and is prospering, and it seems to be powerless only because its power is so pervasive that we are ordinarily not even aware of it. So embedded in our work are New Critical attitudes, values, and emphases that we do not even perceive them as the legacy of a particular movement. On the contrary, we feel them as natural and definitive conditions for criticism in general. It is not simply that New Criticism has become institutionalised, but that it has gained acceptance as the institution itself. It has, in a word, been transformed into "criticism," the essence of what we do as teachers and critics, the ground upon which everything else is based (Cain 1001).

In essence, New Critical methods have become the only tool available for all jobs. This is a sententious thing to say, but one cannot deny the fact that the legacy of New Criticism is so much apparent that one tends to take it for granted.



## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Do you think that the New Critics' inclination to consider the text to the work of plastic art blocks historical inquiry? Discuss with reference to a text you like.

[illegible]





### 3.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the New Critics set a trend that coming generations found hard to give up? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Discuss the concept of “return to the text” with regards to New Criticism.
3. Do you agree with Gerald Graff that New Criticism changed the classroom context in the United States after the second World War?
4. “Their (literary theories that emerged after New Criticism) greatest effect on literary study has been to overthrow the central tenet of New Criticism — the autonomy of art — and in its place to institutionalise the social and political attitudes of the New Left, turning the practice of criticism into a weapon of assault against such extramural targets as American foreign policy, capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy.” Analyse this statement by Christopher Clausen.
5. Evaluate Terry Eagleton’s criticism on the New Critics. Do you agree with Eagleton? Give reasons.
6. Discuss the importance of literary critics.
7. Critically evaluate the relevance of New Criticism, if any, in the contemporary times.



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## MODULE II: PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

## ***UNIT 4: FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS (ASSUMPTIONS, METHODOLOGY, KEY TERMS)***

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Learning Objectives
- 4.2 Content
  - 4.2.1 Assumptions
  - 4.2.2 Methodology
  - 4.2.3 Key Terms
- 4.3 Summing Up
- 4.4 Assessment Questions
- 4.5 References and Recommended Readings

### ***4.0 INTRODUCTION***

Psychoanalysis has emerged as one of the most significant theories of the twentieth century. It has moved beyond the academic circles to become a significant cultural force influencing our everyday understanding of almost every sphere. Itself a form of therapy to treat mental illness, it has developed into a form of literary criticism using the techniques so employed in the reading of literature.

### ***4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

This unit will introduce students to Psychoanalysis all the while providing greater emphasis on Sigmund Freud, considered as the father of psychoanalysis. The objectives of the unit are mentioned below:

- to give a background of Psychoanalysis.
- to state the assumptions of Psychoanalysis.
- to explain the methodology employed in Psychoanalysis.
- to explain the key terms of Psychoanalysis.

## 4.2 CONTENT

### 4.2.1 Assumptions

Psychoanalysis, like other schools of theory, is based on certain assumptions. These assumptions can be summed as below:

1. Human behavior is determined by unconscious drives.
2. One's personality is shaped by the events of early childhood.
3. As the information passes from the unconscious to the conscious, a person experiences catharsis allowing him/her to deal with it.
4. People use defense mechanisms to deal with the unwanted or socially unacceptable emotions and memories contained in the unconscious.
5. Psychological issues such as depression are often results of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious mind.
6. These psychological issues can be brought into awareness by utilizing strategies such as dream analysis and free association.

### 4.2.2 Methodology

Psychoanalysis developed from the works of the Viennese neurologist, Sigmund Freud (6 May 1856 – 23 September 1939) in the late nineteenth century. His major works include *Studies on Hysteria* (1895, co-authored with Josef Breuer) *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904) and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Jacques Lacan (1901 –1981), Carl Gustav Jung (1875 –1961), Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937), Erich Fromm (1900 -1980), Karen Horney (1885 –1952) and Harry Stack Sullivan (1892 - 1949) are influential figures of this school.

Freudian theories were developed from the techniques he used for the treatment of hysteria and neurosis. It involved recalling the events of infantile sexuality to treat neurotic symptoms where the patient must reveal his past, even if traumatic and marred with unacceptable urges and repressed or

forgotten memories. So, the method involves getting the patient speak freely so that his/her repressed fears and desires responsible for the psychic problems are brought into the conscious mind and making him/her face them instead of keeping it buried in the unconscious mind. Thus, it is based on the hypothesis that the unconscious exercises influence on conscious life, even to the extent of determining its form and participating in it. From 1890s onwards, psychoanalysis has provided a theory to explain the role of the unconscious and a therapy to treat its pathological affects. However, today doubts have been raised on the therapeutic value of psychoanalysis. In fact, Freud's works are often claimed as flawed with methodological irregularities. Yet, he remains an influential figure for his contribution is not merely limited to academic circles but is felt in everyday culture as well.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



The readers are advised to read the case studies of Freud (e.g. Little Hans; “Wolf Man”) to have a better understanding of his therapeutic techniques.

Further, psychoanalysis is used to analyse literary texts. Called psychoanalytic criticism, it examines the role of the unconscious in works of literature and other artistic artefacts. In other words, it uses “techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature” (Barry 92). Freud himself claimed that his ideas and theories were anticipated by the works of many literary geniuses. He applied his theories to the analysis of characters and events in a number of literary works including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *King Lear*. He further analysed Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brother Karamazov* and Danish writer Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva*. Ernest Jones' book *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949) is often regarded as one of the most seminal works of psychoanalytic criticism. In his reading, Jones argues that Hamlet's initial hesitation to kill his uncle can be attributed to his *Oedipus complex* i.e. his unconscious desire to possess his mother and kill his powerful father who in reality possessed his mother. He further argues that Shakespeare himself experienced such a conflict and even

goes on to claim that the play's continued popularity among the audiences proves that it is shared by all men.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



The students can read the psychoanalytic analyses of major literary works mentioned in the unit or other related works.

Moreover, literary psychoanalysis is broadly classified under three heads: Freudian criticism, Jungian criticism and Lacanian criticism. In addition to these, there exist other strains of psychoanalysis such as psychoanalytic feminist criticism and Freudo-Marxism. Freudian criticism holds that writers translate their wishes, fears and imagination into characters and events in their works. Readers also engage in similar exercise where they relate their own desires and experiences with the characters and their actions. Hence, the author's biography is the most important source of understanding and interpretation of any work of literature and art. Jungian criticism has its roots in his concept of the "collective unconscious" as the common cultural reservoir. This form of criticism thus regards literature as an expression of the collective unconscious that invokes cultural archetypes. Lacanian criticism is primarily concerned with his view that the unconscious and an individual's perception of his self is shaped by the symbolic order of language.

The methodology and other aspects of psychoanalytic criticism have been dealt with greater details in Unit 6 titled "Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism".

#### 4.2.3 Key terms

Freud's major ideas can be broadly divided into four groups, namely those dealing with the unconscious, sexuality, psychic processes and dream work. Some of the important terms of psychoanalysis have been explained below for reference:

- i) *The Unconscious*: Freud's concept of the "unconscious" is central to his theory of psychoanalysis. He argues that repressed ideas continue to remain in the mind and influence our actions. Though not the first to develop this concept, he nevertheless was the first to assign such a decisive role to it. Freud developed his concept based on the theory of repression, which is the 'forgetting' or ignoring of socially unacceptable desires or painful memories and forcing it out of consciousness into the unconscious. The unconscious can be best explained with the example of an iceberg which can never be seen in its entirety.
- ii) *Psychosexual development*: Freud proposes that human beings possess sexual energy from birth and it develops in five distinct stages. Each of these stages is characterized by an erogenous zone which acts as the source of the sexual drive. These stages are the oral, the anal, the phallic, the latent, and the genital. In the first three stages, the erogenous zones are centered in mouth, bowel and bladder elimination and genitalia. In the last two stages the genitalia continue to be the erogenous zone, but are characterized by dormant sexual feelings and consensual sexuality respectively. Moreover, Freud argued that sexual frustration in these stages might result in anxiety in the child and neurosis in an adult. While, satisfaction in these psychosexual stages of development will result in a healthy personality. (Psychosexual development has been dealt with greater detail in the unit titled "Sexuality and Social Suppression")
- iii) *Id, Ego, Superego*: Freud gave these ideas in his "second topography" (the first being his division of psyche into preconscious-conscious and unconscious systems), published in his essay *Beyond the Principle* (1920). In his three-part model of psyche, he divides the psyche into the ego, the super-ego and the id which roughly correspond to the consciousness, the conscience and the unconscious.

The Id (Latin for "it", German: *Es*) is part of psyche solely driven by basic passions and desires, particularly sexual and aggressive drives.



Unlike the other two, it is present right from birth. Driven by the “pleasure principle”, it contains the libido i.e. the sex drive. (“Libido” has been discussed in detail in Unit 6) According to Freud, the id is unconscious by definition and strives to satisfy the instincts without any consideration of morality. It is regarded as the reservoir of libido, which is vital for experiencing pleasure. As the child grows, part of the id develops into the ego.

The ego (Latin for "I", German: *Ich*, therefore, roughly translates into the self) mediates between the two extremes of the psychic model, the id and the superego. It is driven by the reality principle and is formed by the external realities and helps to strike a balance between the untamed desires and strict moral codes. It therefore includes psychic functions such as judgment, tolerance, defense and processing of information and memory among others. It performs a defensive function by controlling the unrealistic demands of the id so as to avoid pain in the long term. Some of his defense mechanisms are sublimation, denial, displacement, replacement and sublimation.

The superego (German: *Über-Ich*) takes upon the role of “censor” and works to maintain conscience and discipline. While the id seeks self-gratification, the superego is driven by morality. It brings superego into confrontation with the id and in this conflict the ego seeks to and maintains a balance between the two. Therefore, it is the superego that helps individuals fit in into the society. It is never entirely unconscious and constitutes the organized part of the personality structure. An outcome of the internalization of morals and social values following the Oedipus complex, Freud has regarded it as the surrender and acceptance of the child of his more powerful father figure because of castration anxiety.

Freud in his paper titled *The Ego and the Id* discusses the psychological conditions resulting from the tensed relationship of the ego with the id and the superego. While the superego reduces the ego into an inferior

position, the repressed thoughts of the id constantly engage with the ego in a conflict.

- iv) *Sublimation*: Sublimation (German: *Sublimierung*) is another psychic defence mechanism that transforms socially unacceptable desires or instincts into acceptable actions or behaviours. Freudian theory contends that sexual urges are often repressed due to societal constraints and are allowed limited outlet. Hence, these urges require ways to express themselves so as keep the sanity of the individuals intact. These urges are transformed into “socially useful” achievements, mostly in artistic, intellectual and cultural pursuits.

Freud developed this concept from his reading of Heinrich Heine’s *The Harz Journey* which mentions a famous German surgeon who grows from a sadistic child in the habit of cutting off the tails of dogs to become a brilliant surgeon. Freud finally concluded that sublimation results from striking a balance between the need for satisfaction and the need for security.

- v) *Oedipus complex*: Freud introduced the concept of Oedipus complex in his influential work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). It refers to the unconscious sexual desire of a child for the parent of the opposite sex and hatred for the other. He added later that this desire is common to both boys and girls. However, it is experienced differently by both the sexes. While boys experience what Freud calls “castration anxiety”, for girls he terms it as “Penis envy”.

The name is derived from the mythical Greek character Oedipus who unknowingly kills his biological father Laius and marries his mother Jocasta. Freud had proposed that this sexual desire is innate to all humans and in fact, has been inherited from the apes and carried through generations. He substantiates his claims by citing the numerous successes of modern adaptations of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. He further claims that it occurs during the phallic stage of psychosexual development i.e. in between ages 3-6 and coincides with the development of libido and ego. The boy’s libido directs his desire

towards his mother. He experiences rivalry with his father, since it is his father who sleeps with his mother. His id wants him to kill his father so as to possess his mother; however, the ego forbids him doing so, knowing well that he would lose at the hands of his powerful father. As a result, the boy child experiences a fear for his father; Freud calls it “castration anxiety”. It is worth mentioning here that this concept has attracted much attention and criticism in psychological and literary circles ever since Freud put it forward in his work.

- vi) *Melancholia*: Freud’s essay “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) differentiated between “mourning” and “melancholia”. Though both are responses to loss, for Freud “mourning” is grief for a particular object of affection and takes place in the conscious mind; while, in “melancholia” the grief is for an unspecified, unidentified object and occurs in the unconscious. Extreme cases of melancholia might even lead to suicide.
- vii) *Life and Death drives*: Freud revised his earlier thesis on psychic life *In Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) by combining the opposing forces of pleasure and self- preservation under Life Instinct and Death Instinct. While Freud himself coined the term Eros for Life Instinct, it was Paul Federn who came up with the term Thanatos for the latter. Life Instinct is necessary for survival and preservation of life. It includes sexual instincts necessary for pleasure and reproduction as well as instincts such as thirst and hunger required for survival. It further includes individual and social emotions of love and affection, care and cooperation required for the harmonious existence of a species. The energy so created by the life instinct is called libido.

Freud proposed that all human beings have an instinct towards death. This death instinct when directed towards others finds expression in the form of violence and aggression. However, when turned inwards it results in self harm or suicide. Freud based his theory on experiences of people, including soldiers of World War I, who re-enacted their traumatic experiences.

### Psychic processes:

- viii) *Transference*: Transference is defined as the phenomenon when the patient redirects his recalled emotions to others. Most often, transference is seen in the behavioural attitudes of individuals based on their resemblance to people they love or hate. In psychoanalysis, the resentment or antagonism so expressed by the patient towards the therapist is seen as a reactivation of their hostility towards a parental figure. Freud in *The Ego and the Id* has claimed that male homosexuality is an effect of transference wherein “[psychically] non-economic” hostility is unconsciously redirected as love and sexual attraction.
- ix) *Projection*: Projection is the psychic process whereby an individual redirects his/her unconscious impulses and aspects to others. It mostly involves disowning of the individual’s own negative traits and attributing it to others. For example, criticizing others of being arrogant while being arrogant oneself. It involves shifting of blame, blaming the victim, projection of guilt, etc.  

Freud coined the term “projection” (German *Projektion*) in his letters to Wilhelm Fliess and the concept was developed by Karl Abraham and Anna Freud. Freud considered projection as attribution of emotions, impulses and wants that cannot be accepted as one’s own to others. However, he added later that such attribution did not take place arbitrarily but was attached to a person with such attributes, though on a small scale.
- x) *Freudian Slip*: Also called parapraxis, Freudian slip is defined as slips in speech, memory and actions resulting from unexpressed or repressed desires or thoughts in the unconscious. Slips of tongue, misreading, mishearings, etc. can be cited as examples. “Freudian slip” is a later coinage as Freud himself called these slips *Fehlleistungen* (meaning "faulty functions", "faulty actions" or "misperformances" in German) and analyzed such slippages in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901).

### **Dream work:**

- xi) *Displacement*: Freud defined displacement (German: *Verschiebung*) as a defense mechanism of the unconscious mind which replaces a harmful, painful or socially unacceptable thought, emotion or desire with a harmless or socially acceptable substitute. It is often seen in the case of aggressive and sexual drives. He initially considered displacement as a means of dream-distortion. For example, a boxing match can be an outlet of anger to make anger appear harmless and acceptable, making it an instance of displacement.
- xii) *Condensation*: In Freudian psychoanalysis, condensation (German: *Verdichtung*) refers to the unconscious processes where a single idea symbolizes a chain of associations. Freud came up with the idea of condensation in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. It occurs with the fusion of two or multiple displacements into one unified symbol. It can be either an image, memory, thought or a dream object. For example, a fictional character may resemble in his appearance to the author's father and behave like his friend, still one can infer that the character is actually based on the author himself. In this case, multiple individual characters merge into a single fictional character. For Freud, this mechanism is seen in phantasies, neurotic symptoms, jokes and parapraxis.

### **4.3 SUMMING UP**

To conclude, it can be said that psychoanalysis uses the tools of psychology to understand literature and provide a unique understanding of not only the text but of the author as well. This unit has provided the background of psychoanalysis and its related basic concepts that will help the student to form a foundation for his/her further reading of psychoanalysis.



### **4.4 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

Select the correct answer from the options given for each of the following question:

1. Who is considered as the father of Psychoanalysis?
  - (a) Jacques Lacan
  - (b) Sigmund Freud
  - (c) Carl Jung
  - (d) Anna Freud
2. When was Freud's influential work *Interpretation of Dreams* published?
  - (a) 1897
  - (b) 1895
  - (c) 1899
  - (d) 1890
3. Who wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*?
  - (a) Anna Freud
  - (b) Sigmund Freud
  - (c) Jacques Lacan
  - (d) Carl Jung
4. Which of the following terms is defined as "the life force" in Freudian psychoanalysis?
  - (a) Eros
  - (b) Thanatos
  - (c) Sublimierung
  - (d) Ich
5. Which of the following is not a defense mechanism in psychoanalysis?
  - (a) Condensation
  - (b) Sublimation
  - (c) Projection
  - (d) Melancholia

Answer the following questions in not more than 200 words:

- i) Give a brief idea on the methodology of Psychoanalysis.
- ii) What are the assumptions of psychoanalysis?
- iii) What are the psychic processes proposed by Freud? Explain.
- iv) Discuss Freud's three-part model of psyche.

- v) Write short notes on the following:
- a) Condensation
  - b) Sublimation
  - c) Oedipus Complex
  - d) Projection



#### **4.5 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

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## **UNIT 5: SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL SUPPRESSION**

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Freud's *Three Essays on Theory of Sexuality*
- 5.3 Homosexuality
- 5.4 Sexuality and Childhood
- 5.5 Foucault on Sexuality
- 5.6 Summing up
- 5.7 Assessment Questions
- 5.8 References and Recommended Readings

### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

According to Freud, every human being has to undergo a certain kind of repression. This repression is the 'pleasure principle', which is dominated for a certain time by the 'reality principle'. Humans as social beings have certain obligations towards society, and in order to meet them, they have to suppress certain feelings. But sometimes this repression becomes excessive and turns pathological in nature. Certain kinds of gratification can be given up, but this builds up after some time and takes a different form. As Terry Eagleton says, "we are prepared to put up with repression as long as we see that there is something in it for us; if too much is demanded of us, however, we are likely to fall sick" (Eagleton 132). He calls this form of sickness as neurosis.

### **5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This unit will introduce students to the concept of sexuality and how society acts as an agent in the suppression of sexuality. The objectives of the unit are:

- To analyse Freud's idea of sexual repression.



- To give an overview of Michel Foucault's concept of sexuality.
- To explain the various stages of Freud's theory of psychosexual development.

## 5.2 FREUD'S THREE ESSAYS ON THEORY OF SEXUALITY

In Freud's time, sexuality was believed to begin and develop only during puberty. As Freud countered this idea, he created new theories on perversion, sexual phases of development and the cause of neurosis.

In his *Three Essays on Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud breaks down the subject first into perversions or aberrations, infantile sexuality and puberty.

To keep in mind how the different sexualities can manifest Freud tries to simplify the subject-object relations. He defined that a sexual object is the source of attraction and the sexual aim is the sexual act the instinct intends. What Freud means by instinct is different from biology. Instincts for Freud are connected to libido. Libido is the sexual energy of the instinct and the instinct takes the energy and emotionally invests it with the aim or action that leads to discharge and has an object that provides gratification. The instinct "lies on the frontier between the mental and the physical". Understanding this allows for individuals studied to have different sexual objects and sexual aims and helps explain the large variations we see.

The first aberration Freud outlines, which he said includes no small number people, is what he called inversion or homosexuality. Freud divides the term 'Inversion' (Homosexuality) into the following categories:

- **Absolute Inverts:** The first category comprises those who enjoy exclusively their own sex.
- **Amphigenic Inverts:** The second type are people who are essentially bisexuals.
- **Contingent Inverts:** The third type are the ones that resort to homosexuality when there is inaccessibility to other heterosexual objects.

These simple categories, in this early time in psychology, break down into different opinions of homosexuals and how they identify with their orientation. Freud says:

...inverts vary in their views as to the peculiarity of their sexual instinct. Some of them accept their inversion as something in the natural course of things and insist energetically that inversion is as legitimate as the normal attitude; others rebel against their inversion and feel it as a pathological compulsion... It is safe to assume that the most extreme form of inversion will have been present from a very early age and that the person concerned will feel at one with his peculiarity (Freud 45).

Inversion as a 'degeneracy' was a typical attitude in Europe during the early part of the twentieth century. But Freud argues that this feature of inversion existed in civilization from antiquity and was also widespread in primitive cultures. He opines that inversions became prominent and distinct due to the increasing number of prohibitions the society entailed on it. According to Freud, when people have psychological problems, they may encounter sexual problems, but this does not mean that sexual problems lead to psychological problems. Many people have sexual problems and differences in attitude, but it does not affect their capability to be proficient in other areas of life. Homosexuality is too complex to be argued as a simple degeneracy.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



#### What is 'Inverted'?

To determine the aspects of masculinity and femininity, Freud uses the simple classification of active versus passive. Wilhelm Fliess's Theory of Psychological Bisexuality also allows the fluidity in people to move between active and passive sexual attitudes. Freud refers to antiquity to explain the phenomenon of the presence of active and passive energy in human beings. This energy includes sexuality too. For instance, in ancient Greece, Inverts were the most masculine of men. But, it was not the masculine character that excited a man's love for another man, it was the so-called feminine qualities of a boy or his physical resemblance to a woman that excited a man. In due course of time, as the boy becomes a man, he ceased to be a

‘sexual object’ for men, and he himself yearned for feminine qualities in other boys. In this instance, therefore, as in many others, the “sexual object is not someone of the same sex but someone who combines the characters of both sexes; there is, as it were, a compromise between an impulse that seeks for a man and one that seeks for a woman, while it remains a paramount condition that the object’s body (i.e. genitals) shall be masculine. Thus, the sexual object is a kind of reflection on the subject’s own bisexual nature” (Freud 20)

### **5.3 HOMOSEXUALITY**

Is homosexuality ‘innate’ or ‘acquired’? This question remains a mystery, according to Freud. For Freud, this choice does not include all the issues related to inversion. Neither is this choice an exclusive one. Thus, the choice remains ambiguous. The reason for this is that, in case of the so-called normative sexuality, the sexual aim varied throughout life, but in case of the homosexuals, it never did. One may think of examples when many of the heterosexuals did not remain homosexuals throughout their lives, in spite of the same sex attraction they experienced during their childhood. Yet others acted inverted only in extreme situations, like in war, prison, if they had a trauma related to sex with the opposite sex, or if they had trouble performing. For Freud, sexual instinct is attached to a particular object.

According to Freud, both environment and the upbringing of a particular individual affects his/her sexual orientation. Freud expounded these theories in the early twentieth century, long before the understandings of the effect of DNA and hormones on sexuality. So, one may consider how Freud’s theories were always limited to the male domain. It has been assumed that the normative sexual object always aims at the opposite sex for procreation. But naturally, it does not always work in that direction.

The stigma of homosexuality also enters into self-stigma. This can lead to protesting homosexuality as a form of projection, where the person who is concerned about homosexuality in society is actually concerned about their latent homosexuality. The constant fear of bullying and social exclusion can lead to repression and self-hatred.

## LET US STOP AND THINK



Students are asked to read Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and the essay, also by Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" (1910)

### 5.4 SEXUALITY AND CHILDHOOD

When it comes to the determination of adult personality, childhood imprints form an important characteristic to determine aspects of sexuality. This is one important criterion in the field of psychoanalysis. According to Freud, childhood and child sexuality strongly determine an individual's sexual orientation. In his essay "On the Sexual Theories of Children" (1908), Freud talks about childhood and sexuality.

One of Freud's major contributions towards the understanding of child psychology is the theory of psychosexual development in an individual. There should be a smooth transition from one stage of psychosexual development to the other, failure of which may lead to various fixations in the adult and can create certain psychological anomalies as well. The five stages of psychosexual development are as follows:

- a. **Oral Stage:** This phase extends from birth to one year. Here, the libido is centered around a baby's mouth, such as sucking, biting, and breastfeeding. Oral stimulation could lead to various oral fixities in the adult, resulting in smokers, nail-biters, finger-chewers and so on.
- b. **Anal Stage:** This phase extends from 1 to 3 years of age. The libido is centered around the anus. During this phase, the child becomes fully aware of its independence. The ego develops during this phase and the wishes of the child collide with that of the outside world. Freud believed that this type of conflict tends to come to a head in toilet training, in which adults impose restrictions on when and where the child can defecate. The child's relationship with all forms of authority is determined through this phase.

- c. **Phallic Stage:** This phase extends from 3 to 6 years of age. The genitals are now the source of pleasure and sensitivity. The anatomical differences between male and female are now distinct to the child. This is a phase where the child undergoes Oedipus (for boys) and Electra (for girls) complex, which will be discussed later in this section.
- d. **Latency Stage:** This stage extends from 6 years to puberty. The libido is in its dormant phase. According to Freud, there is no further psychosexual development in this stage. This is the stage where sexual impulses are repressed and this sexual energy is channeled towards school work, hobbies, and friendships.
- e. **Genital Stage:** This period extends from puberty to adulthood. This is a time of adolescent sexual experiment. Sexual instinct is directed to heterosexual pleasure. Fixation and conflict may thwart heterosexual intercourse with the effect that sexual perversions may develop in this stage.

As the child grows, other erotogenic zones come into play. The stages obviously overlap. But this process is a gradual organisation of the libidinal drives. This is still centered on the child's own body. In the discussion of the sexual stages, one should keep in mind another term that Freud employs, that is, the Oedipus complex. Students are suggested to read about the Oedipus complex in detail.

### ***5.5 FOUCAULT ON SEXUALITY***

Sex is often seen as a taboo; we cannot openly talk about it even in the present times. Our knowledge about sexuality is based on the “repressive hypothesis”, which claims that the history of sexuality over the past three hundred years has been a history of repression. And the only way we can liberate ourselves from the idea of sex as taboo is to talk more openly about it. But Foucault disagrees with this claim and goes on to say that far from being repressed and silenced, the discourse about sex has only grown throughout the years, especially since the eighteenth century. However, Foucault's ideas are limited to the Western society. He talks about how discourse on sexuality was prominent in the form of confessions. Foucault goes on to explore the role of sex

in Greek and Roman antiquity. He argues that discourse on sexuality was mainly limited to the reproductive role of married couple, or the conventional form. This was before the eighteenth century. But in the later centuries like the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, society was more interested in the so-called unconventional sexualities, for instance, the homosexuals. According to Foucault, sexuality was never really repressed.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



Students are asked to read Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* to get an idea about the emergence of "sexuality" as a discursive object.

### 5.6 SUMMING UP

In the course of development, some components of sexuality are submitted to the process of repression, if they are excessively strong in disposition. Repression of sexual desires does not mean they are abolished. Instead, these excitations continue to be generated as before. The display of sexual behaviour is prevented and sexual desires are diverted into numerous other channels till they find their way to expression as particular symptoms. The effect of this may not hinder the individual from normal sexual life, but there may be a kind of psychoneurotic illness, according to Freud, if there is a restriction in the outlet of physical desires. This may lead to perversion. In the case of such thwarted desires, one's sexual life may start as a pervert, with a considerable part of their childhood spent in pervert sexual activities, and this may even extend to maturity. Neurosis takes the place of perversion if there is a reversal due to repression. This repression may be due to internal as well as external factors. The ambiguity of Freudian psychoanalysis is due to the fact that little was known of the biological processes constituting the essence of sexuality to be able to construct from our fragmentary information a theory for the understanding alike of normal and of pathological conditions.



### 5.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the theme of Oedipus complex in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913).
2. Discuss the stages of psychosexual development in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).
3. Critically analyze Freud's Theories of psychosexual development. Do you agree with his theories? Give reasons to support your answer.



### 5.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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## ***UNIT 6: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LITERARY CRITICISM***

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Learning Objectives
- 6.2 Background of Psychoanalytic Criticism
- 6.3 Freudian Criticism
- 6.4 Lacanian Criticism
- 6.5 Jungian Criticism
- 6.6 Psychoanalytical criticism in other theoretical schools
- 6.7 Summing Up
- 6.8 Assessment Questions
- 6.9 Reference and Recommended Reading

### ***6.0 INTRODUCTION***

Psychoanalysis has influenced the fields of anthropology, culture, history, literature, arts and related fields of humanities. The influence is quite evident in literary criticism in which critics belonging to different critical schools have interpreted texts using a psychoanalytic framework or have adopted and adapted it to propose and substantiate their claims.

### ***6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

The objective of this unit is

- to give an idea on the background of psychoanalytic literary criticism.
- to introduce the main ideas of Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian criticism.
- to briefly discuss the influence of psychoanalysis in other theoretical schools, particularly in feminist criticism.



## 6.2 BACKGROUND OF PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

Psychoanalytic criticism emerged in the 1920s with Freud's theories and techniques as its premise. It was preceded by what is generally called the psychological criticism. It is based on the idea that any literary work is an indirect and fictional expression of the author's mind and personality. Psychological criticism emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century in response to Romanticism which emphasized on the relationship between author's mental and emotional traits with their works. Both William Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and S.T Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) emphasized on the role of the human mind in literary works. And such a view was advocated by the later Romantics as well.

### LET US STOP AND THINK



- a) Reference to the author's personality in order to explain and interpret a literary work.
  - b) Reference to literary works in order to establish, biographically, the personality of the author.
  - c) The mode of reading a literary work specifically in order to experience the distinctive subjectivity, or consciousness, of its author.
- (Source: A Glossary of Literary Terms)

*The students are advised to read the works of the Romantic critics.*

Thus, it is quite apparent that psychoanalytic criticism owes a lot to the Romantic Movement. An important figure whose works anticipated Freud was John Keble. In a series of lectures titled *On the Healing Power of Poetry* and published in 1844, Keble offered a proto-Freudian literary theory. He too had defined poetry as an indirect expression of repressed emotions as the poets feared "reticence" and "shame" to openly admit their emotions. This indirect expression serves as "a safety valve, preserving men from madness" (Abrams, 248). In the 21st century, literary critics continue to make similar use of the author's psychology in their critical studies except for the proponents of Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstruction.

## LET US STOP AND THINK



*The students are advised to read and analyse the fundamental difference between psychoanalytic criticism and other literary theories.*

Psychoanalytic literary criticism emerged from what can be termed as ‘applied’ psychoanalysis. It can be defined as a form of criticism that explores literary works as expressions of the inner workings of the author’s mind and personality. It emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century with Sigmund Freud and his associates— Otto Rank, Theodor Reik, Wilhelm Stekel and Ernest Jones— who applied psychoanalysis in the fields of anthropology, sociology and religion along with literature.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism emerged from Freud’s proposition that literary works are the products of unconscious psychic processes and reading of these works reveal the inner workings of the author’s mind. Early studies of this school include ‘Baudelaire’s incestuous love’, ‘Poetry and Neurosis’, ‘Psycho-sexual Portrait of the Artist’, to name a few. The approach involves analysing the psychical health of the author, the artist or the characters as an expression of sexual frustrations and repressions. It further looks into the repertoire of symbols and themes, relating either to the individual author or the mythological, religious, folk and literary traditions of particular nations. This aspect of psychoanalytic literary is primarily attributed to the contributions of Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung. He has argued that cultures draw their archetypes from the “collective unconscious” and writers too employ these archetypes in their writings. On the other hand, Jacques Lacan argues that the unconscious and an individual’s perception of the self is influenced by the “symbolic order of language”.

Thus, this unit will primarily deal with the three major schools of psychoanalysis: Freudian Criticism, Jungian Criticism and Lacanian Criticism.

### 6.3 FREUDIAN CRITICISM

Psychoanalytic literary criticism is primarily based on Freud's theories. His theories were developed from the therapeutic techniques he used to cure his patients of hysteria and neurosis. His views are found in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Jokes and their Relations to the Unconscious* (1905) which form the basic tenets of this literary school.

Reading texts in this vein consists of examining the psyche of the author, the artist or the character as substitutes for their pathological ideas or affects. In doing so, one comes across symbols and themes that belong not only to the individual but to the mythological, religious, folk and literary traditions of particular nations. For instance, Freud's "The Uncanny" and Otto Rank "Narcissism and the Double" examine the use of double motifs in legends.

Freud regarded dreams as safety-valves to vent repressed, unacceptable desires and painful memories into the conscious mind. Since these are socially unacceptable and censored, these enter the dream in disguised forms. In doing so, the dreamer resorts to various defense mechanisms. For instance, a child who constantly lives in fear of his authoritarian father might dream of a Roman soldier (associated with ruthlessness and dominance). This symbolic representation is an example of substitution. It is in this sense that Freud drew a parallel between literature and dreams as the writer's resort to such defense mechanisms to express what they feel to be unacceptable socially through images, symbols and metaphors. It makes Freudian psychoanalysis interesting to literary critics and they adopt this framework in the interpretation of literary history and works.

Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* points out how Freudian psychoanalytic critics work. These are summed up in the following points:

a) In literary readings, Freudian critics are chiefly concerned with the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind. For them, the covert content is associated with the latter, making the work 'really' about it. They attempt to discern the aims and desires of either the author or that of the characters in the work.

- b) They explore possible presence of psychoanalytic signs, conditions or phases in literature.
- c) They read literary history using a psychoanalytic framework.
- d) They uncover the underlying 'psychic' context of text which is of greater importance to them than its socio-historical context.

A well-known example of Freudian criticism is M.W. Rowe's reading of Harold Pinter's *Homecoming* (1964) in 'Pinter's Freudian Homecoming'. In the essay, Rowe argues that the all-male family in the play suffers from "mother-fixation". The husband in the play agrees to allow his wife into prostitution because it degrades his wife, otherwise she would have resembled his idealized mother and thus, would have been unavailable as a sexual partner in his mind (since incest is socially unacceptable). Resemblance of his wife to his mother attracts and repels him simultaneously, hence degradation is required. In fact, his promptness to the offer shows how he had fantasized his about his wife to develop physical intimacy with her.

Literary critics have used Freud in their studies of language and rhetoric. For instance, Lionel Trilling in "Freud and Literature" (1947) writes how Freud made "poetry indigenous to the very constitution of the mind" by unearthing "in the very organization of the mind those mechanisms by which art makes its effects, such as the condensation of meanings and displacements" (Waugh 207). While, Hayden White's 'Freud's Topology of Dreaming' (1999) examines Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1897) to show how it complements nineteenth century traditional theories of tropes. Additionally, Harold Bloom uses Freud's defense mechanisms to explain the "poetic will" of writers whereas Kenneth Burke's 'The Philosophy of Literary Form' (1967) explains how Freud helps us in understanding poetry and the divergences between neurosis and poetry.

Freud has come under intense criticism in recent years, mainly for his negative views on women. His views on women's sexuality and the innateness of their inferiority complex called 'penis envy' have invited criticism from scholars and critics for their male bias. Yet, there is no denying the fact that

Freud's insights continue to provide significant and interesting insights into literary works.

#### **6.4 LACANIAN CRITICISM**

Jacques Lacan, often regarded as the "French Freud", is an influential figure of psychoanalytic criticism. He brought Freudian ideas into the fields of linguistics and philosophy. This is most notably seen in two of his major texts, *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* (1953) and *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious* (1957).

Peter Barry points out that amongst all of Lacan's works, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious" (1957) is most important for students of literature. It draws attention to the dominance of language studies, thereby making the word central to the understanding and interpretation of a text because in interpreting the unconscious, an analyst uses and examines language in effect. Lacan further argues that the unconscious and language are similar in structure. He reworks Ferdinand Saussure to replace Freudian biological terminology. Malcolm Bowie in *Lacan* (1991) writes how Lacan prepared the ground for reworking of Freud's theories of the mind by redesigning Saussure's conception of the sign. Citing Saussure, he demonstrates that the meaning is conveyed on the basis of differences between words, not on their relationship with the object. Consequently, meaning is independent of external reality.

Lacan also uses Freud to substantiate his claims on the structural similarity of the unconscious and language. He insists that condensation and displacement, defense mechanisms identified by Freud, correspond to Roman Jakobson's concepts of *metaphor* and *metonymy*. For him, just like in metonymy one object stands for another, in displacement an element might actually stand for another. While, in condensation things are compressed into one single symbol much like a metaphor which compresses multiples into one. Thus, he claims structural similarities in both.

## LET US STOP AND THINK



Roman Jakobson, in his essay "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" (1956), draws a distinction between the two i.e. metaphoric (vertical) and metonymic (horizontal) relations in analysing figurative language.

This distinction was widely used by critics and theorists, including French structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. In his essay, Jakobson further claims that metaphor and metonymy form the basis for poetry (mostly in literary Romanticism and Symbolism) and Realism in literature respectively.

In the essay, Lacan discusses the linguistic aspects of Freud's psychoanalysis. He asserts that the unconscious is manifested in written works with the use of puns, allusions and other kinds of word play. Lacan further challenges the idea of the "self", questioning the conscious mind as the essence of our being. David Lodge has written how Lacan challenges the view encapsulated in Descartes's quote 'I think therefore I am' by reversing it into 'I am where I think not' (Lodge, p.97), thereby making the unconscious the true self. He deconstructs the self not as a unique entity but as a mere linguistic effect.

Such positions of Lacan on the nature of language and the self are of immense importance in literary criticism. By rejecting the uniqueness of the self, Lacan effectively rejects conventional characterizations in literature. Similarly, detachment of language from any referent results in rejection of literary realism since it considers the text as rooted in the real world. As such, Lacanian criticism acknowledges the modernist or postmodernist view of text as "experimental, fragmented, allusive" (Barry 109).

Literary studies have widely used Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. He proposes that in the Imaginary stage, a child makes no distinction between the Self and Other. It is only when he sees his own reflection in the mirror that the child learns of itself as a separate being from the rest of the world (Lacan calls it the Mirror stage). At this stage, the child enters into the language system and begins socialization. The child then enters into what Lacan calls the Symbolic stage. The critics place the realist

and anti-realist texts in the Symbolic and Imaginary realms respectively. The Imaginary is a world beyond logic and grammar, while the former, in contrast, is one of patriarchal logic and order. In practice both must coexist and constant interruption of the Imaginary into the Symbolic is preferred, as can be seen in metafiction and magic realism which question and challenges its own realism.

Lacan by drawing a parallel between language and unconscious processes shows that the basic characteristic of human subjects is language and therefore, any theory on it is a theory of language. This parallel has enabled critics to question the comparisons between literature and unconscious processes that underlie psychoanalytic criticism.

Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory* points out how Lacanian critics analyse and interpret literary texts. These are as follows:

- a) Lacanian critics explore the text to uncover contradictions that lie under the “conscious” text. In this sense, they are unlike the Freudian critics who are more concerned with the workings of the author’s unconscious. In a way, Lacanian critics deconstruct the text.
- b) They attempt to find evidence of Lacanian psychoanalytic symptoms or phases in literary works.
- c) For them, the text is a “series of broader Lacanian orientations” (Barry 110), including concepts of lack and desire.
- d) They regard the literary text as a portrayal of Lacanian ideas of the unconscious and centrality of language. This in turn favours anti-realist texts that reject conventional literary representation.

## **6.5 JUNGIAN CRITICISM**

Jungian criticism is one of the most significant schools of post-Freudian criticism. Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung’s strain of psychoanalysis differs substantially from Freud. Considered the founder of ‘analytical psychology’, Jung is an influential figure in the diverse fields of psychiatry, anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and religious studies. He initially even collaborated with Freud, the latter considering Jung the heir to his ‘new science’ of psychoanalysis but differences

soon cropped up between the two, particularly on the nature of libido and their conceptualization of the unconscious. Jung felt that the development of personality was influenced by a host of other factors unrelated to sexuality. He stressed more on the “collective unconscious”, which for him contained inherited memories and ideas.

The main differences between Jungian criticism and Freudian criticism can be summed up in three points. First, Freudian psychoanalysis is a ‘self-psychology’, meaning it considers the self as the “ultimate source and centre of the psyche” (Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism, 767); while, Jung’s theories are concerned in some ways with the question of rebirth of existing things. Second, rejecting Freud’s theory of libido, Jung considered libido as the totality of psychic energy. This libido expresses itself through certain primordial symbols he calls ‘archetypes’. These symbols, however, lack any definite form and are manifested as “fantasy-images”. Third, for Jung, Freud’s conception of the unconscious was incomplete as it merely contained repressed emotions and desires. Jung called it the ‘personal unconscious’ and proposed a second form of the unconscious which is beyond the personal and common to all cultures. He proposed its existence and called it the ‘collective unconscious’ in his essay “The Structure of the Unconscious” (1916).

### LET US STOP AND THINK



*The readers are expected to read further on Jung’s conception of ‘libido’ and ‘the collective unconscious’.*

Jung developed his theories based on his experience of working with schizophrenic patients in the clinics. His analytical psychology attributes mental issues to an imbalance in the individual psyche. He wrote how the structure and dynamics of the psyche helped him to understand images, myths and symbols of the past cultures. These ‘archetypes’ get expressed in dreams and artistic works to compensate for individual and societal psychic impoverishments. These creations originate in the unconscious as an



‘autonomous complex’ (Jung 1972). Thus, Jung rejects any interpretation of work using the personal psychology of either the artist or the readers or the method of ‘free association’, as the personal unconscious of neither are actually at stake. His method of reading involves what he calls ‘amplification’, a method that involves extending of images of the personal unconscious to the collective unconscious.

Robert Donington in *Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols* (1974) had made a Jungian reading where the hero, beleaguered by unconscious incest for his mother, projects his desires onto other women. Similarly, Maud Bodkin interprets English poetry using Jung’s method of amplification in her study *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934).

## **6.6 PSYCHOANALYTICAL CRITICISM IN OTHER THEORETICAL SCHOOLS**

With the emergence of structuralism and poststructuralism, there has been a revival of interest in psychoanalysis. Theorists and writers have assimilated ideas of Freud to their readings and methods. They may belong to different schools, whether Marxist, Foucauldian, or Derridean in their commitments, but nevertheless have adopted Freud to substantiate or propose their ideas. The most well-known amongst them is Harold Bloom’s theory of *anxiety of influence* in which he uses Freud’s concepts of Oedipus complex and defense mechanisms to propose that poets constantly suffer from anxiety due to the poetic achievements of their predecessors.

Moreover, in spite of severe criticism from many quarters of feminism, many feminist critics have adapted Freudian concepts and defense mechanisms in their readings of literary texts. The main issue underlying Feminist psychoanalytic criticism is “how to give woman access to discourse” because language has always been inherently patriarchal. Consequently, it leaves her with the choice of either submitting to this existing language or inventing a language of her own. The existing discourse not only merely produces definitions but determines the ‘nature’ of the body and the mind. Feminist

critics have clearly pointed past instances of it; ‘hysterization’ and reducing of women’s bodies into wombs are a few to mention in this regard. Further, feminist critics analyse the relation between psychoanalysis and feminism to challenge certain basic tenets of psychoanalysis and/or of traditional literary texts. They are chiefly concerned with the “interaction of literature, culture and sexual identity, emphasizing the way that configurations of gender are located in history” (Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism, 774). It is often regarded as the most radical form of psychoanalytic literary criticism for it is concerned with the construction of the self.

### **6.7 SUMMING UP**

To conclude, it can be said that psychoanalytic literary criticism offers new insights into literature by drawing attention to numerous aspects of the human psyche. It continues to be of relevance today with its assimilation into other critical schools of thought.



### **6.8 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

Select the correct answer from the options given for each of the following question:

i) Who wrote “The Structure of the Unconscious”?

- (a) Carl Jung
- (b) Harry Sullivan
- (c) Edward Glover
- (d) Robert Donington

ii) Which of the following psychoanalyst used Roman Jakobson’s distinction between metaphor and metonymy in his criticism?

- (a) Sigmund Freud
- (b) Carl Jung
- (c) Jacques Lacan
- (d) Alfred Adler

iii) When was *Hamlet* and *Oedipus* published?

- (a) 1949
- (b) 1955
- (c) 1940
- (d) 1957

iv) Who is often regarded as the “French Freud”?

- (a) Jacques Lacan
- (b) Carl Jung
- (c) Karen Horney
- (d) Erich Fromm

v) Who wrote *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*?

- (a) Maud Bodkin
- (b) Harold Bloom
- (c) Carl Jung
- (d) James Frazer

Answer the following questions in not more than 200 words:

- i) Discuss the issues of Feminist Psychoanalytic Criticism.
- ii) Examine the differences between Freudian and Jungian criticisms.
- iii) How do Lacanian critics study texts?
- iv) Discuss the grounds on which Freud is criticised
- v) Give a brief background of psychoanalytic criticism.



## 6.9 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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## JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

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**JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS**

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