

Paper XII Literary Criticism

Module V : William Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction

- William Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction emphasizes the use of simple, natural language in poetry.
- Wordsworth believed that poetry should be written in a language that is accessible to all people, and it should avoid overly complex or artificial language.
- He believed that the language of poetry should be close to the language of conversation, and that it should be able to convey emotions and experiences in a way that is immediate and powerful.
- Wordsworth believed that poetry should be written in a language that is close to the spoken language of the common people, but also that the poet must use language that is appropriate for the subject matter.
- He rejected the elaborate language and ornate diction used in epic poetry like John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he believed was too artificial and too removed from the everyday experiences of people.
- Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction is based on his belief that poetry should be accessible to all people and should reflect the experiences and emotions of everyday life.
- Another key aspect of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction was his belief in the importance of using concrete, sensory details in poetry.
- He believed that poetry should describe the world as it is experienced through the senses, rather than through abstract or general concepts.
- By using concrete details, Wordsworth believed that poets could create vivid and powerful images that would resonate with readers.
- Wordsworth believed that poetry should express the beauty of the natural world, and that by using concrete, sensory details, poets could capture that beauty in their work.

- His emphasis on sensory detail and the natural world is evident in his poetry, which often focuses on rural life and the beauty of nature.
- Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction emphasizes the importance of simplicity, naturalness, and sensory detail in poetry.
- His ideas on poetic diction had a profound influence on the development of Romantic poetry in the 19th century.
- His emphasis on the importance of the natural world and the use of sensory detail helped to shift the focus of poetry away from the epic and towards the everyday experiences of people.
- Wordsworth's ideas on poetic diction continue to be studied and debated by literary scholars today, as they offer valuable insights into the craft of poetry and the ways in which language can be used to convey emotion and experience.

Module VI : Matthew Arnold's Touchstone Method

- Matthew Arnold's Touchstone Method is a critical method used to evaluate works of literature.
- The method involves selecting a few key passages from a work of literature to determine its overall quality and value.
- Arnold believed that by examining a few select passages, readers could gain insight into a work's central ideas and themes.
- The Touchstone Method involves the following steps:
 - Selection of passages that are representative of the work's themes and ideas.
 - Examination of the passages, analyzing the language, imagery, and other literary devices used.
 - Evaluation of the work based on the analysis of the selected passages, considering how well the work achieves its goals and conveys its central ideas.
- Arnold believed that the Touchstone Method was a valuable tool for evaluating works of literature, as it helps readers to appreciate the beauty and artistry of a work while also understanding its intellectual and philosophical content.
- The Touchstone Method is especially useful for analyzing complex works that may have multiple themes or ideas, as it allows critics to focus on the most important aspects of the work.
- The method can also be used to evaluate works from different genres, as the focus is on the central ideas and themes rather than specific literary devices or techniques.
- The Touchstone Method has been widely used by literary critics and scholars since its development in the 19th century.
- Critics often use the method to analyze works of literature that are considered classics or have significant cultural or historical importance.

- The Touchstone Method is a valuable approach for readers and critics who want to gain a deeper understanding of works of literature and appreciate their artistic and intellectual value.

Module VII : T S Eliot's *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919)

T.S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) is one of the most important and influential essays in literary criticism. It presents Eliot's views on the nature of poetry and the role of the poet in the literary tradition.

Here is an explanation of Eliot's ideas in bullet form:

- Eliot argues that the literary tradition is not a static and unchanging thing, but rather a dynamic and evolving one. He believes that each new generation of writers adds something to the tradition, while also being influenced by the works of those who came before them.
- According to Eliot, the best poets are those who are able to transform the literary tradition through their own individual talents. He argues that great poets are not simply imitators of their predecessors, but rather innovators who bring something new to the tradition.
- Eliot emphasizes the importance of the poet's historical and cultural context in shaping their work. He argues that the poet must be aware of the literary tradition and cultural heritage that they are working within, and that this awareness should inform their writing.
- Eliot also argues that the poet's individuality is not something that is separate from the tradition, but rather something that arises from it. He believes that the poet's individual talent is shaped by the tradition, and that the tradition is enriched by the contributions of individual poets.
- Eliot suggests that the role of the critic is to evaluate works of literature based on their relationship to the tradition. He believes that the critic should be aware of the historical and cultural context of the work, and should evaluate it based on its ability to transform and enrich the tradition.

- Eliot emphasizes the importance of objectivity in literary criticism. He argues that the critic should be able to detach themselves from their personal preferences and biases in order to evaluate a work of literature objectively.
- Eliot also suggests that the best criticism is written in a style that is clear, concise, and free of unnecessary embellishments. He believes that the language of literary criticism should be as precise and direct as possible.
- Overall, Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" argues that great poetry arises from the tension between tradition and individual talent. He believes that the best poets are those who are able to transform the tradition through their own unique contributions, while also being aware of and influenced by the works of those who came before them. Eliot's ideas continue to influence literary criticism and the study of poetry today.

Module VIII Practical Criticism: Poetry

Practical criticism is a method of literary criticism that involves close reading of a text without any prior knowledge of its author, historical context, or critical interpretation. The goal of practical criticism is to evaluate a text based solely on its literary merits, and to analyze its language, imagery, structure, and themes. Here are some examples of how practical criticism can be applied to English poetry:

- "Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare: A practical criticism of "Sonnet 18" might begin with an analysis of its structure and form, including its use of iambic pentameter and its rhyming scheme. The critic might also examine the poem's language and imagery, such as its comparison of the speaker's beloved to a summer's day. Through this analysis, the critic might conclude that the poem is a celebration of the power of art to immortalize beauty and love.
- "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot: A practical criticism of "The Waste Land" might focus on its complex structure and use of allusions to literary and cultural texts. The critic might also examine the poem's language and imagery, such as its depiction of a desolate and fragmented world. Through this analysis, the critic might conclude that the poem is a commentary on the disillusionment and fragmentation of modern life.
- "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas: A practical criticism of "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" might begin with an analysis of its use of repetition and metaphor. The critic might also examine the poem's language and imagery, such as its depiction of the struggle against death. Through this analysis, the critic might conclude that the poem is a plea to resist death and to live life to the fullest.

In each of these examples, practical criticism involves a close reading of the text in order to evaluate its literary merits and to draw conclusions about its themes and meanings. The focus is on the language, imagery, and structure of the poem, rather than on external factors such as the author's biography or historical context.

Practical criticism can be a valuable tool for understanding and appreciating works of literature, as it encourages readers to engage with the text on its own terms and to develop their own interpretations based on close analysis of the language and imagery used.