MAENG-505
Literary Criticism and Theory-II

MA ENGLISH
4th Semester

Rajiv Gandhi University

Literary Criticism and Theory II

MAENG505
IV SEMESTER

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh,INDIA - 791 112

About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post- graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University.   Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad.   Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations.   Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counselling Coordinators are engaged from the Departments of the University, The Counselling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counselling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Syllabi

UNIT I: Aristotle to Coleridge
A Brief History of English Criticism from Aristotle to Coleridge

UNIT II: Aristotle
Poetics

UNIT III: John Dryden
An Essay on Dramatic Poesy

UNIT IV: S. T. Coleridge
Biographia Literaria

UNIT V: William Wordsworth
Preface to Lyrical Ballads

INTRODUCTION

Literary Criticism and Theory is a book which has been designed for students who are pursuing their postgraduate degree in English Literature. This book covers the breadth of criticism from Aristotle to Derrida. In a strict sense, literary criticism and theory is the systematic study of the nature of literature, its analytical methods and repercussions. Of late, this spectrum has been expanded to include history, moral philosophy, social prophecy and other interdisciplinary themes which are and continue to remain relevant to the ways in which meaning is generated. This is a practice that goes as far back to ancient Greece. Gaining new perspectives through the eighteenth century, theory and criticism of literature are closely tied to the history of literature. The modern sense of literary theory, however, dates only to approximately the 1950s, when Structuralist Linguistics developed by Ferdinand de Saussure began strongly influencing the English language. The New Critics and various European-influenced formalists had described some of their more abstract efforts as 'theoretical' as well. But it was not until the broad impact of structuralism that began to be felt in the English-speaking academic world, that literary theory was thought of as a unified domain.

The book has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with an Introduction followed by the Unit Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary, Key Terms and Activity further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units:

Unit 1: prepares an outline of literary criticism from Aristotle to Derrida

Unit 2: explains the important aspects of Aristotle's *Poetics*

Unit 3: summarizes the key areas of Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*

Unit 4: identifies chief features of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and T.S. Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

Unit 5: critically examines structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction

1.2.12 Shelley, Lamb and Hazlitt

Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822) critical text *Defence of Poetry* (1821) displays the romantic values in the virtues of poetic creation; he speaks against the neo-classical trend in this treatise which was written in reply to Sir Thomas Peacock's *Four Ages of Poetry* (1820). Peacock said that poetry was on its decline. Shelley defended by saying 'I dispatch... I have taken a more general view of what is poetry than, and will perhaps agree with several of my positions, without considering your own touched.' He says that poetry is 'the expression of the imagination' which is always linked with the gratification of pleasure: 'a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. He discourages the idea of any similarity between metrical and prose compositions. Shelley sees poetry in relation with society and drama as a mirror of social life. To him, poets are 'the inventors of the arts of life' whereas poetry is 'at once the centre and circumference of knowledge.' Poetry represents the finest art of human civilization and 'poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts on the present, the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'

Charles Lamb's (1775-1830) *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808) takes us back to the appraisal of Shakespearian drama and uplifts the image of poetry by justifying its beauty and essence. He gave his estimates of both tragedy and comedy, besides paying attention to his contemporary. William Hazlitt (1778-1830) is considered to be a great critic of impressionism, interested in human psyche, 'moral theory and its relationship with human psychology and society.'. He developed the term 'gusto' and said that the goal of art is to contain 'a heightened and perceptive grasp of objective

reality.' In his work *Thoughts on Taste,* he states that' Genius is the power of producing excellence; taste is the power of perceiving the excellence thus produced in its several sorts and degrees, with all their force, refinement, distinctions, and connections... ..impulses of imagination, not antipathy, not indifference to them.' He believed that poetry 'is strictly the language of imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power.' He asserts that the emotional life of the artist has a great say. His major contributions in the field of criticism were *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *The English Poets* (1818), *The English Comic Writers* (1819), *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1*820), *Table-Talk* (1821-22), *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) and *The Plain Speaker* (1826).

1.2.13 Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) dominated the Victorian age as the most influential mind in theorizing different aspects of literature after Dr Johnson. Arnold was clear-sighted and strong in his opinion when it comes to literary criticism. He laid emphasis on deriving goodness from the classical theorists of literature of ancient Greece and Rome. *Preface* (1853) was Arnold's first attempt in literary prose writing and it is considered a little immature. George Watson described *the preface,* written by the thirty-one-year-old Arnold, as 'oddly stiff and graceless when we think of the elegance of his later prose.' Arnold was a great critic, as observed on the basis of his future works in prose. Stefan Collini in 1988 stated, 'for reasons to do with our own cultural preoccupations as much as with the merits of his writing, the best of his prose has a claim on us today that cannot be matched by his poetry.' George Saintsbury divided Arnold's prose in three periods and puts his *Preface* as 'early literary criticism that begins with his preface to the 1853 edition of his poems and ends with the first series of *Essays in Criticism* (1865).' However, Arnold has been regarded as the first modern critic of substance. Furthermore, S. N. Radhika Laksmi observes 'Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), the Victorian poet and critic, was the first modern critic, and could be called the critic's critic, being a champion not only of great poetry, but of literary criticism itself. The purpose of literary criticism, in his view, was 'to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas,' he has influenced a whole school of critics including new critics such as T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Allen Tate. He was the founder of the sociological school of criticism, and through his touchstone method, introduced scientific objectivity to critical evaluation by providing comparison and analysis as two primary tools of criticism. His chief critical texts are *On Translating Homer* (1861), *Essays in Criticism* (1865), *Culture andAnarchy* (1869), *The Function of Criticism* (1865) and *The Study of Poetry* (1880). To him, culture comprises sweetness and light and disinterestedness.

For Arnold, culture was a reflection of a single-minded love for perfection, its desire to reason and manifest God's will. Even while culture insists that it is a machinery of sorts it tries to maintain its distance from getting overpowered by it.

He segregates the people of England into three categories—Barbarians, Philistines and the Populace. Like all great critics, Arnold too feels that poetry 'is the highest and

best fruit of human culture. Poetry is superior to everything; it is superior to science, philosophy and history.' Poetry is greater than religion as well. Arnold's poetry is the 'criticism of life' and that is the end of 'all literature' .According to him the purpose of a poet is to illuminate and inspire. As a realist he has faith in 'truth and high-seriousness.' He appears to be 'practical and descriptive' especially in his later works like *TheFunction of Criticism* and *Study of Poetry.* He lays stress on following classical literature and theories because they comprise the grand style. The grand style appears in poetry when a noble nature poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject. He suggests the touchstone method for the evaluation of great works of art. It is done by comparing a piece of art of some value with others having good value. He looks back to the past for his support and feels that his age requires more learning and spirit to produce better literature. Above all, he advocates absolute sincerity to his fellow poets.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

15. What was the primary concern of She *lley's Defence of Poetry?*
16. What was Matthew Arnold's focus while creating his ideas of poetry?

1.2.14 Walter Pater

Walter Pater (1839-1894) was the leader of the group who believed in 'art for art's sake.' He was a renowned literary critic, novelist and artist of the nineteenth century— the age which carried deep values for humanity, democracy, intellectualism and the rapid advance of science all of which influenced art and literature. They were worshippers of beauty in a manner articulated by Baudelaire which said 'whether thou comest from Satan or from God, what does it matter?' In this regard art for art's sake was more than a saying - it was a

philosophy according to which art was separated from any moral, utilitarian or didactic function.

The group consisted of French masters like Gustave Flaubert, Theophile Gautier, Edmund and Jules de Goncourt, Baudelaire, and Swinburne. Their English propagators were Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and James Whistler. Pater's *Appreciations* (1889) contains *Essay on Style, Imaginary Portraits* (1887), *Plato and Platonism* (1893), *Greek Studies* (1895), *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895). His focus was on 'the innate qualities of works of art, in contrast to the prevailing tendency to evaluate them on the basis of their moral and educational value.' Wilde expressed that 'the only beautiful things are the things that do not concern us. As long as a thing is useful or necessary to us, or affects us in any way, either for pain or for pleasure it is outside the proper sphere of art. To art's subject-matter we should be more or less indifferent.' Pater believed that 'Art should be fresh, new, spontaneous, decorous but not hampered by decorum; gaining sobriety and richness from recognized methods and due authority; but in the truest sense a development, neither a new departure nor a servile imitation.'

1.2.15 Marxist Criticism

The followers of Karl Marx (1818-1883) believed in the historical past in order to shape the present. The disciples of Marx and Frederick Engels, the radical economists,

ere called Marxists 'who sought to prove that the mode of production of material life determined the social, political and intellectual processes of life.' Marxist philosophy came to be a pervasive wave on every aspect of art and life by the turn of the century and ushered a new era. Marxism accepts that society and human behaviour are controlled by the economic forces operating at a certain moment of social development i.e. by the modes of production. The principal texts influencing such ideologies were *Critique of Political Economy, Communist Manifesto* to name only two of the most influential books. It is often said that the Marxists were propagandists and to them a writer is a 'prey of abstract economic forces.' In this philosophy, man becomes central figure whose emancipation is the most important task. They portray man as a whole with possible perspectives of his life. The chief exponents of Marxist as well as sociological critics were George Lukacs, Christopher Caudwell, Ralph Fox, V. F. Calverton, Vernon Parrington, Michael Gold and Grandville Hicks. The Marxist philosophy aimed to show the relation between common people and a work of art. They emphasized the value, significance and richness of content. They did not believe in mere ideologies and formalistic art.

I. A. Richards

Ivor Armstrong Richards (1893-1979) was the pioneer of psychological criticism in English literature which was scientific in nature. He speaks of analyzing poetry scientifically and speculating over the precise meaning of language, words, images and metaphor. His major critical contributions are *The Foundations of Aesthetics* (1921, with Ogden and Wood), *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923, with Ogden), *Principles of Criticism* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1925), *Practical Criticism* (1929) and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936). The modern critics explored the creative process and the psychological journey that a reader undergoes when he goes through a work of art. Man creates literature; and in literature, men voice their experiences. Richards interprets literature with the help of psychology and science. He speaks of two uses of language— scientific and emotive, where the former is used for *reference* and the latter, for emotional expressions: 'A statement may be used for the sake of the *reference,* true or false, which it causes. This is the scientific use of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude ... This is known as the *emotive* use of language.' To him, words are significant which create pictures when we read a poem. According to him, a misunderstanding and underestimation of poetry is mainly due to the overestimation of thought. By the same logic, he reflects on the poet's specific choice of words. To quote him, 'we can see still more clearly why does the poet use these words and no others? Not because they stand for a series of thoughts which in themselves are what he is concerned to communicate. He uses these words because the interests which the situation calls into play combine to bring them, just in this form, into his consciousness *as a means of ordering, controlling* and *consolidating* the whole experience, a similar situation leading to the same response.' Therefore, the reason is unknown as to why a poet uses a certain set of words at a certain moment. He says 'genuine poetry will give to the reader who approaches it in the proper manner a response which is as passionate, noble and serene as the experience of the poet, the master of speech because he is the master of experience itself.'

Richards looked for what is valuable in poetry. Moral authorities are not as well backed by beliefs as they were.

17. What was Walter Pater's concept of art?
18. What was the underlying principle of Marxist criticism?
19. What was unique about I.A. Richard's concept of analysing poetry?

1.2.16 Thomas Stearns Eliot (T.S. Eliot)

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) is the most important man of letters of the modern age. He is an equally celebrated critic as I.A. Richards in the history of English literature. He is known to be the liberator of modern literature, celebrated as the international cultural hero and eulogized as the greatest poet and critic of the twentieth century. 'T.S. Eliot and I. A. Richards' ideas

influenced many schools of poetry as well as criticism among which New Criticism is of foremost importance. Eliot's texts under the name of criticism are of three types: the first is *Theoretical Criticism* which is about the principles of literature, poetry, drama and criticism, the second *is Descriptive and Practical Criticism* dealing with the works of individual writers and evaluating their achievements and the third is *Theological Essays.* The important works in the first group are *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919), *Rhetoric and Dramatic Poetry* (1919), *The Function of Criticism* (1923), *Education and the Classics* (1932), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *After Strange Gods* (1934), *Religion and Literature* (1935), *The Music of Poetry* (1942), *The Classics and the Man of Letters* (1942), *What is Minor Poetry?* (1944), *What is a Classic!* (1944), *The Social Function of Poetry* (1945), *Poetry and Drama* (1951), *The Three Voices of Poetry* (1953) and *The Frontiers of Criticism* (1956). Eliot gave the theories on tradition, objectivity in poetry and impersonality in art. In the second category, he evaluates many poets and schools of poetry amongst which his essays on *The Metaphysical Poets, Andrew Marvell, Homage to John Dryden, Dante, Yeats, Kipling* and *Ezra Pound are* very important. In the third category, his main essays are *Lancelot Andrews* (1926), *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) *aadNotes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1949).

Eliot reminds us of the historical past and says 'tradition is not solely, or primarily the maintenance of certain dogmatic beliefs; these beliefs have come to take their living form in the course of the formation of a tradition. What I mean by tradition involves all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rites or our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood kinship of the same people living in the same place.' To him, 'tradition is a matter of a wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour.' It is that makes a writer conscious of his place in contemporary history. It is in this manner that Eliot asserts his historical sense and awareness. Like all classicists, Eliot pleads for disciplining the self. According to him, the progress of an artist is a continuous process involving self-sacrifice to a feeling or thought which is more valuable. He does not allow the creator to vent to his own emotions. Art is an impersonal activity. He believes that 'It is part of the business of the critic to preserve tradition, to see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with

the same eyes.' It is the sense of tradition or the historical past which will enable the individual to be a perfect critic, as a great critic is 'armed with a powerful glass.' A critic must see literature as a whole and his job is to bring the past back to life.

Eliot kept revising his own ideas and what he said in the early decades of the twentieth century. He stressed on the need of education and a critic should have 'a very highly

developed sense of fact.' He asserts that impressionistic criticism may be valuable, but 'Ifpoetry is a form of communication, yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself, and only incidentally the experience and the thought which have gone into it.' He believes that anyone who aspires to be a poet must be able to experience both beauty and ugliness. In other words, this individual should be able to see beyond beauty, comfort and luxury; to know boredom and encounter the mundane. Eliot believed in the virtues of reality but ascribed to art - the ultimate function of imposing order and credibility.

He believed in reality, but it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation; and then leave us as Virgil left Dante, 'to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no further.'

1.2.17 Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) was a French philosopher and was chiefly known for his contributions as a literary theorist who gave the analysis called Deconstruction. He was a post-structuralist associated with the theory of post-modernism. His ideas influenced various subjects such as ontology, epistemology (especially concerning social sciences), ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics and the philosophy of language. He influenced American critics such as Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, Barbara Johnson and Harold Bloom. Derrida however denies 'that deconstruction is not a theory unified by any set of consistent rules or procedures, it has been variously regarded as a way of reading, a mode of writing, and, above all, a way of challenging interpretations of texts based upon conventional notions of the stability of the human self, the external world, and of language and meaning.'

The subject of his first three books was the science of writing. The titles were:

(i) *La Voixet lephenomene* (Speech and Phenomena) dealt with Edmund Husserl's theory of signs

(ii) *De la grammatologie* (Of Grammatology) dealt with the science of writing

(Hi) *L 'Ecriture et la difference* (Writing and Difference), comprised essays on Hegel, Freud, and Michel Foucault.

Later on, he wrote *La Dissemination* (Dissemination) (1972) and *Marges de la philosophie (Margins* of Philosophy) (1982). While the former also comprised a long piece on Plato's opinions about writing and sophistry, the latter contained essays on Hegel's semiology and the use of metaphor in philosophy.

His work titled *Positions* (1972), consisted of three interviews with Derrida, which revealed his stand on Marxism, Hegel, and other topics. In 1991, he wrote *Circumfessions,* which was an autobiography highlighting Augustine's Confessions. In 1994, he came up with yet another work called *Spectres de Marx* (Specters of

Marx) (1994), where he discusses Marxian legacies. *Deconstruction* is about the functioning of 'logocentrism' in a text wherein the term 'logo' is word that conveys a meaning. According to him, the term in Hebrew, which corresponds to 'logos', means 'to speak'. The Hebrew term he said was used to refer to God's self-revelation.

In addition, as per Hebrew culture, once the word was uttered, it was believed to have a real and meaningful existence. The term 'logos' and concept thereof may have partly originated from the Greek thinker Heraclitus and the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria. Simply put, it could stand for a statement, science, saying or discourse.

LOGOS

Language Reality

Signifier 1 -*a*- Signified 1   — Object 1

Object 2

Object 3

Object 4

-- *b*-

Signifier 2 - Signified 2 --------------

Signifier 3 - Signified 3 --------------

Signifier 4 - Signified 4 — ---------

Ad Infinitum

Disturbance of any kind in this arrangement or system may result in it being disorganized. In case the order does disintegrate, the process will take several centuries. According to Derrida, when one signifier is substituted for another, it is called 'metaphor'. Therefore, Derrida believed that language has metaphorical power. The corresponding equivalent in modern Western society may be concepts like freedom and democracy. According to Derrida, these terms or concepts have complete authority, and can therefore not be questioned or examined. Deconstruction attempts to show how logocentrism operates, in all its forms. It tries to retrieve them within the arena of language and text, within the area where they can relate to other concepts.

Therefore, the main function of deconstruction is to restore language within the links of the different terms, which have traditionally ruled Western thought, that is, the links between thought and reality, self and world, subject and object. In part, this thought is affected by

Ferdinand de Saussure, critic from Switzerland. According to Derrida, 'il n'y a pas de horstexte,' or 'there is nothing outside the text,' means that the characteristics of language mentioned aboye, which form 'textuality' are all encompassing. Textuality determines all interpretative operations.'

Derrida's assertion is that resistance between say sense and intellect, or body and soul, or master and slave, male and female, inside and outside, centre and margin, 'oppositions, such as those between intellect and sense, soul and body, master and slave, male and female, inside and outside, or even centre and margin are in no way representative of a state of equivalence between the concerned two terms. In fact, such resistance is a 'violent hierarchy' where one term has been traditionally thought to be lower or inferior, in gestures encompassing a host of religious, social, and political valencies.

As per Derrida's practice, if a text is read deconstructively, it will be termed a many-sided and complex project. Generally speaking, it would try to show logocentric

operations in the text by concentrating on a detailed and close reading of the language of the text; the employment of presuppositions or transcendental signifies; whether the text relies on binary oppositions; whether it contradicts itself; bottlenecks, if any; the manner in which it offers resistance to free play and brings about closure. In this way, deconstruction, as its name (derived from the term 'Destruktion' by Heidegger) suggests, examines the characteristics that play a significant role in the construction of the text and analyse them to their roots or very bases.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

20. Name the three works of criticism developed by T.S. Eliot.
21. What is the significance of the metaphor as per Derrida?

ACTIVITY

Browse the internet and conduct a detailed search on the main aspect of literary criticism as given by each of the mentioned critics.

DID YOU KNOW?

Literary critic has often overlooked contributions from womenauthors. Feminist literary criticism challenges language itself and re-evaluates the ways in which literature is read. Prominent feminist literary critics include Isobel Armstrong, Nancy Armstrong, Barbara Bowen, Jennifer DeVere Brody, Laura Brown, Margaret Anne Doody, Eva Figes, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Anotgnette Kolodny, Anne McClintock, Anne K.

Mellor, Nancy K. Miller, Toril Moi, Felicity Nussbaum, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Hortense Spillers, Gayatri Spivak, Irene Tayler and Marina Warner.

1.3   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Literary criticism is a vast panorama of debates and discussions.
- In England, the genre of literary criticism was revived during the Renaissance when the writers and poets looked back to the revival of old classics and came to imbibe their style and emancipated the world by their learning and translations of the Greek and Roman classics.
- Every age and century paved way for improvisations and gave birth to new ideas.
- Aristotle remained a sole controller of the golden age which still continues to impress the modern theorists.
- There is a long trail of great voices till we reach the post-modernist literary theorists where we mark that criticism is more of a science than literature.
- Aristotle was an eminent ancient Greek philosopher and rhetorician having a wide range of knowledge of subjects like physics, poetry, logic, music, drama, metaphysics, politics, governance, biology, zoology, linguistics, ethics and many more.
- Aristotle was a disciple of Plato and the teacher of Alexander the Great.
- Aristotle's contribution to the realm of philosophy has been enormous, like his teacher Plato, thereby creating a platform for subjects like politics, literature, aesthetics, science, ethics and logic to flourish.
- Aristotle was a major pillar in the field of Western philosophy whose learned and accurate ideas shaped most of the critical theories of art and aesthetics which enlightened forthcoming generations of critics.
- Aristotle had a rather quiet political milieu compared to that of his master Plato which helped him in analyzing and finding out solutions to the questions that his master had raised.
- Aristotle's analysis of literature was sincere and scientific. He speaks against those who lay down precepts in writing.
- Aristotle was considered a great master in the days of Greek and Roman civilization. It was during the Renaissance that his true genius as a literary critic and a law-giver in the realm of poetry was explored by the modern thinkers.
- Cassius Longinus (213-273 AD) is chiefly known for his philosophical treatise *On the Sublime.*
- *On the Sublime* is a valuable literary piece of rhetorical criticism which is highly important because of its ideas of art.

- *On the Sublime* is an important source as it imparts great information about the Greek and the Roman rhetoricians to the modern age.
- *On the Sublime* is often viewed as a beautiful combination of classicism and romanticism where the word sublime embodies the authenticity of unfathomable depth: 'it is well to keep it (sublime) with a very careful preliminary explanation that the Longinian sublime is not sublimity in its narrower sense, but all that deserves the highest critical encomium (standard) either in prose or poetry.'
- *On the Sublime* not only incorporates a fresh and wide-ranging approach to literature but also propounds novel mediums of appreciation.
- The period of Longinus. was a phase of decadence in Greece. It was in this period that learning passed on from Greece to Rome when the text of the great Aristotle moved from Athens to Rome through General Marius in 85 BC.
- . Quintus Horatius Flacus (65-8 BC), educated in Rome and Athens, came to be known as an acclaimed poet and critic.

- Horatius'important text *Ars Poetica* or the *Epistle to Pisos* deals with subject-matter that is Poesis; technical aspects of poetry that is Poema; and in the last part, he speaks how a poet should be educated as well as what are his responsibilities including discussions on creed and spiritual inclinations.
- Dante Alighieri (1265-1321 AD) was a known Florentine poet and law-giver in literature whose chief contributions to literature are *VitaNuova* (autobiography), *Convivio, De Vulgari Eloquentia,* and *Commedia* among other works.
- The period between Longinus and Dante is called the Dark Age: the age of Christian ascendancy when the art of poetry was looked down upon. Therefore this age also lags behind in the advancement of literary criticism.

- The chief critics of the Dark Age were Horace and Quintilian who believed that literature was meant for the educated class; thus, segregating the common people from the educated elites.
- Dante serves an irrefutable link between the Dark Age and the Renaissance combining 'the pastness of past and the presentness of present.'
- Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558) is a major figure in the Renaissance literary criticism and a promoter of the neo-classical critical trend.
- Scaliger's work *Poetics* (1561) was published three years after his demise to establish him permanently as one of the greatest scholars and pioneer critics of all times. The text reflects on' language its origin, uses, end and cultivation.'
- Scaliger studied the importance of human speech. Speech services 'the arts are cultivated and the claims of wisdom intercede with men for men.'
- Accordingto Scaliger's views, the foundation of poetry is imitation, but 'the end is the giving of instruction in pleasurable form, for poetry teaches, and does not simply amuse.'

- Scaliger distinguished tragedy as a form different from comedy 'in the rank of characters, in the nature of the action, and in the outcome.'
- Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), an eminent critic of the Renaissance, was a great friend of Edmund Spenser to whom he dedicated his *Shepherd's Calendar.*
- A known humanitarian, Sidney had a very short but active life. Owing to his goodness of character, he had the popularity of receiving over two hundred elegies after his sad and abrupt demise.
- Sidney wrote *Apology for Poetry* in defence of Stephan Gosson's anti-Renaissance proclamation *The Abuse of Poetry.*
- Ben Jonson (1573-1637) was one of the most prolific playwrights and critics of the Elizabethan age of English letters. Three different critical trends emerged at that time: amongst them, the idealistic trend being the first was represented by Sir Philip Sidney, the second trend evaluating poetry technically encompassed critics like Webbe, Puttenham and Daniel, and the third type of critics were those who capacitated the Renaissance element of humanism. They were realists and classicists with an open mind. Jonson belonged to this group.
- William Wordsworth was the leading voice among the elder Romantics and a literary theorist of excellence.
- As a critic Wordsworth laid stress on imagination, poetic diction and the origin of poetry.
- Wordsworth's book *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800 onwards) bears the impacts ofRomantic criticism which is sharply distinguished from earlier dominant neo-classical traits.
- *Lyrical Ballads* raised a wall between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it dated a new era as it served to make forever intelligible the dividing line between two regions in criticism that might otherwise have seemed to flow into one another.
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) is considered to be one of the most eminent poets and literary theorists of the Romantic Age.

- Coleridge is held to be as high as Aristotle or Longinus in his significance.
- Coleridge has been seen as the forerunner of the modern science of semantics.
- In *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge theorizes poetry and imagination as significant and complex processes. The first part of the book deals with his metaphysical and philosophical concepts.
- Coleridge gives his views about beauty and in the second part, i.e. the thirteenth and the fourteenth chapters are his major theoretical outpourings.
- While the thirteenth chapter deals with his ideas on imagination and fancy; the fourteenth chapter comprises his views on poetry.
- Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822) critical text *Defence of Poetry* (1821) displays the romantic values in the virtues of poetic creation; he speaks against the neo-classical trend in this treatise which was written in reply to Sir Thomas Peacock's *Four Ages of Poetry* (1820).

- Peacock said that poetry was on its decline.
- Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) dominated the Victorian age as the most influential mind in theorizing different aspects of literature after Dr Johnson.
- Arnold was clear-sighted and strong in his opinion when it comes to literary criticism.
- Arnold laid emphasis on deriving goodness from the classical theorists of literature of ancient Greece and Rome.
- Pre/ace(1853)wasAjnold'sfirstattemptinliteraryprose.
- Walter Pater (1839-1894) was the leader of the group who believed in 'art for art's sake.'
- Pater was a renowned literary critic, novelist and artist of the nineteenth century— the age which carried deep values for humanity, democracy, intellectualism and the rapid advance of science all of which influenced art and literature.
- The followers of Karl Marx (1818-1883) believed in the historical past in order to shape the present.
- The disciples of Marx and Frederick Engels, the radical economists, were called Marxists 'who sought to prove that the mode of production of material life determined the social, political and intellectual processes of life.'
- Marxist philosophy came to be a pervasive wave on every aspect of art and life by the turn of the century and ushered a new era.
- Marxism accepts that society and human behaviour are controlled by the economic forces operating at a certain moment of social development i.e. by the modes of production.
- I. A. Richards (1893-1979) was the pioneer of psychological criticism in English literature which was scientific in nature.
- Richards speaks of analyzing poetry scientifically and speculating over the precise meaning of language, words, images and metaphor.
- T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) is the most important man of letters in the modern age.
- Eliot is an equally celebrated critic as LA. Richards in the history of English literature.

- Eliot is known to be the liberator of modern literature, celebrated as the international cultural hero and eulogized as the greatest poet and critic of the twentieth century who himself is 'the unity of his work.'
- T.S. Eliot and I. A. Richards' ideas influenced many schools of poetry as well as criticism among which New Criticism is of foremost importance.
- Jacques Derrida (193 0-2004) was a French philosopher and was chiefly known for his contributions as a literary theorist who gave the analysis called Deconstruction.
- Derrida was a post-structuralist associated with the theory of post-modernism.

- Derrida's ideas influenced various subjects such as ontology, epistemology (especially concerning social sciences), ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics and the philosophy of language.
- Derrida influenced American critics such as Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, Barbara Johnson and Harold Bloom. Derrida however denies 'that deconstruction is not a theory unified by any set of consistent rules or procedures, it has been variously regarded as a way of reading, a mode of writing, and, above all, a way of challenging interpretations of texts based upon conventional notions of the stability of the human self, the external world, and of language and meaning.'

4 KEY TERMS

- **Criticism:** Analysis of a work of art
- **Emancipate:** Free from social, political, or legal restraints
- **Imitation:** Copy of an original; imitating
- **Imbue:** Fill or inspire with (ideals or principles)
- **Imbibe:** Absorb
- **Contemporaneous**: Happening at the same time
- **Ludicrous:** Ridiculous
- **Mimesis:** To imitate
- **Incapacitate:** To injure
- **Sublime:** Uplifting/awe-inspiring
- **Repertoire:** Range

5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In his *Poetics,* Aristotle discusses his views on poetry and drama, based on the concepts of Greek art; wherein he analyses subjects such as 'the spirit of literature, poetic truth, difference between art and morality, and the study of the end of art.'
2. In Aristotle's view, comedy is lighter in its treatment of the subject as it traces human follies and weakness.
3. *On the Sublime* is a valuable literary piece of rhetorical criticism which is highly important because of its ideas of art. The work is often viewed as a beautiful

combination of classicism and romanticism where the word sublime embodies the authenticity of unfathomable depth: 'it is well to keep it (sublime) with a very careful preliminary explanation that the Longinian sublime is not sublimity in its narrower sense, but all that deserves the highest critical encomium (standard) either in prose or poetry.'

4. The absence of Aristotle came to witness a great depression in the field of criticism where after his death, mostly, critics were concerned with technicality, grammar and rhetoric. It was a phase of decadence in Greece. It was in this period that learning passed on from Greece to Rome when the text of the great Aristotle moved from Athens to Rome through General Marius in 85 BC. He believed that poetry is meant to instruct and delight and stressed on common sense.

5. The period between Longinus and Dante is called the Dark Age: the age of Christian ascendancy when the art of poetry was looked down upon.

6. Julius Caesar Scaliger's primary concern in the sphere of literary criticism was the importance of human speech.

7. Sidney wrote *Apology for Poetry* in defence of Stephan Gosson's anti-Renaissance proclamation *The Abuse of Poetry.* His *Defence of Poesy* (1595) is the most characteristic representative of Renaissance critical writing.

8. Ben Jonson believed poetry is the finest of all arts: 'the pen is more noble than the pencil. Like Aristotle, he follows the theory of imitation, but also blends the beauty of imagination into it which together makes poetry the most beautiful of all art forms.

9. John Dryden (1631 -1700) established the neo-classical trend of English criticism and remained a pioneer critic, translator, playwright, poet and satirist for the entire restoration period.

10. For Pope, nature represented humanity and said that one must submit to the forces of nature.

11. Addison inspires us to study imagination, mind and memories in the following ways:

   • Greatness or sublimity, 'Which frees the mind from the restraint and lifts it to a state of transport.'
   • The new or uncommon,' in which surprise or novelty increases interest.'

12 . Dr Samuel Johnson was strictly against the excesses of romantic exuberance. His approach is natural; his prose logical and lucid. He would castigate those whom he would think fit to deserve censure. Johnson believed that literature should depict 'general nature': a poet should essentially 'divest himself of the prejudices of his agent country.'

13. The three areas which were important for William Wordsworth as a critic were imagination, poetic diction and the origin of poetry.

14. The problems of poetry became for Coleridge, sometimes, interesting as problems with a structure of their own. They ceased to be mere voids waiting to be filled. The interest shifted from the answers to the questions and with that a new era of criticism began.

15. PercyByssheShelley's(17924822)criticaltextZ)e/enceq/Poei^·(1821)displays   the

romantic values in the virtues of poetic creation; he speaks against the neoclassical trend in mis treatise which was written in reply to Sir Thomas Peacock's *Four Ages of Poetry* (1820).

16. In his poetry, Matthew Arnold laid emphasis on deriving goodness from the classical theorists of literature of ancient Greece and Rome.

17. Walter Pater believed in 'art for art's sake'. This according to him was the appreciation of'the innate qualities of works of art, in contrast to the prevailing

   tendency to evaluate them on the basis of their moral and educational value.'

18. The underlying principle of Marxist criticism was that the mode of production of material life determined the social, political and intellectual processes of life.

19. LA. Richards (1893-1979) was the pioneer of psychological criticism in English literature which was scientific in nature. He speaks of analyzing poetry scientifically and speculating over the precise meaning of language, words, images and metaphor.

20. T.S. Eliot's three works of eroticism were *Theoretical Criticism Descriptive and Practical Criticism* and *Theological Essays.*

21. As per Derrida, the substitution of one signifier for the other is called a 'metaphor'. According to him, language possesses metaphorical capacities.

1.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Which figure served as the link between the Dark Age and the Renaissance?
2. Comment on Dante's trend of using the native vernacular as the language of poetry and criticism.
3. Identify the style in which the *Apology of Poetry* was written.
4. Write a short note on the contribution of Coleridge to the discussion of poetry.
5. Comment on Arnold as the first modern critic of substance.
6. Explain'art for art's sake'.
7. Recapitulate the essence of Marxist philosophy.
8. Give a brief argument on the relevance of history in T.S. Eliot's concept of poetry.
9. Explain the theory of deconstruction.
10. Explain the importance of the metaphor in Derrida's conceptualization of language.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the importance of rhetoric in Aristotle critical views.
2. Comment on the intervention of Horace post the Aristotelian era.

3. Write a short note on John Dryden as a literary critic.

4. What is the essence of Pope's theory of literary criticism?
5. Discuss Eliot as the most important critic of the modernist trends during the modern age.

1.7 FURTHER READING

Blanares,H., A History of Literary Criticism, MacmiUan, London, 1991.

Hall, Vermon, *A Short History of Literary Criticism,* The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1963.

UNIT 4 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
AND T.S. ELIOT

Structure

4.0

4.14 T.S. ELIOT: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

T.S. Eliot was a well-known playwright and literary critic. He was one of the most important English poets of the twentieth century. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on 26 September 1888. He moved to England while he was only twenty five years of age. He became a British citizen at the age of thirty nine, in 1927. He achieved fame with the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.* This was published in Chicago in 1915. It is regarded as a masterpiece of the modernist movement which reflected the far-reaching changes and attitudes which were coming over western society in the early stages of the twentieth century. The other works which have gained equal fame include *Gerontion* published in 1920, *The Waste Land* published in 1922, *The Hollow Men* published in 1925 *sad Ash Wednesday* published in 1930. Besides writing such well known poems, he has seven plays to his credit, of which *Murder in the Cathedral* published in 1935 is the most famous. T.S. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize in

in 1948 and was also declared a member of the OM or The Order of Merit the same year.

Eliot was born into a very wealthy family. The family was originally from New England. This could explain the future shift to England. The family had moved to St. Louis, a major town and port on the banks of the Mississippi river in the state of Missouri in America. His father, Henry Ware Eliot, was a successful businessman. He was the president and treasurer of the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company in St. Louis. Eliot gives credit to the broad Mississippi river for seeding his literary vision:

> It is self-evident that St. Louis affected me more deeply than any other environment has ever done. I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those people who have not. I consider myself fortunate to have been born here, rather than in Boston, or New York, or London.

His mother, Charlotte Champe Stearns, also influenced Eliot, as she was a poet. She also influenced Eliot towards the modernist movement by being a practising social worker. Social work, as a profession, was just appearing at that time. Eliot was the last of six surviving children. Eliot's family was large. He was called Tom. Eliot studied at the local Smith Academy till 1905, where he studied Latin, Ancient Greek, French, and German. Eliot was influenced by the work

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and the translation by Edward Fitzgerald. He started writing poetry at the age of fourteen. He did not like what he wrote initially and destroyed his early works. The first poem published by him in 1905 appeared in the school magazine and was titled *A Fable for Feasters.* This was also published in the Harvard Student Magazine, a University he was to study, in later. The other short stories published that year included *The Man Who Was King.*

After spending a year at Milton Academy, Eliot joined Harvard in 1906, where he studied philosophy and received his degree. At Harvard, he was introduced to various literary works which had a profound influence on him in the coming years. Some of these works included Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* and Tristan Corbiere's *Les amours Jaunes.* At Harvard, a number of his poems were published and he slowly developed a circle of novelists and writers who were to become his lifelong friends.

After graduating, from Harvard, Eliot briefly worked as an assistant in the period 1909-1910, but moved to Paris, where he continued his studies at the famous French University, The Sorbonne, where he studied for a year. His acquaintances increased at Sorbonne. In 1911, he returned to Harvard for three years, where he studied Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit. From there, he moved to Merton College, Oxford, on a scholarship. Eliot moved from Merton after a year, having grown tired of University towns, writing to a friend:

> I hate university towns and university people, who are the same everywhere, with pregnant wives, sprawling children, many books and hideous pictures on the walls ... Oxford is very pretty, but I don't like to be dead.

In 1915, Eliot married Vivienne Haigh-Wood. She was a Cambridge governess. Eliot took up a couple of teaching jobs in London. His marriage was not a happy one as he has written in a private paper:

> I came to persuade myself that I was in love with Vivienne simply because I wanted to burn my boats and commit myself to staying in England. And she persuaded herself (also under the influence of [Ezra] Pound) that she would save the poet by keeping him in England. To her, the marriage brought no happiness. To me, it brought the state of mind out of which came *The Waste Land.*

While working on various teaching assignments, he also wrote reviews on books and lectured in evening classes. He then worked in the Lloyds bank for a couple of years, during which he frequently travelled outside England. Finally in 1925, Eliot quit his job at the Lloyds bank and joined the publishing firm of Faber and Gwyer. Two years later, he converted to the Anglican faith and finally became a British citizen. Since his marriage was not a happy one, he was on the lookout for opportunities to leave. This was presented in 1932, when an opportunity

to work for a year at Harvard arose. He left his wife behind and then filed for a divorce. She was ultimately admitted to a mental hospital. She remained in England till her death in 1947.

Eliot returned to London within a year of filing for separation from his wife. Eliot moved around a bit and shared a flat with a friend of his called John Davy Hayward. Hayword retained a lot of Eliot's papers when they separated, which he later donated to Cambridge.

In 1957, Eliot married Esme Valerie Fletcher. She was his secretary at Faber and Gwyer. He had known her since August 1949. Their marriage was a secret and there were no children. After Eliot's death in 1965, she dedicated her life to preserving his works.

Eliot's major works (Collection of poems, plays and non-fiction) are as follows: **Poetry**

- *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917)
- *Poems* (1920)
- *The Waste Land* (1922)
- *The Hollow Men* (1925)
- *Ariel Poems* (1927-1954)
- *Ash Wednesday* (1930)
- *Coriolan* (1931)
- *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939)
- *The Marching Song of the Pollicle Dogs and Billy M'Caw: The Remarkable Parrot* (1939) *in The Queen's Book of the Red Cross*
- *Four Quartets* (1945) **Plays**
- *Sweeney Agonistes* (published in 1926, first performed in 1934)
- *TheRock(\934)*
- *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935)

- *The Family Reunion* (1939)
- *The Cocktail Party* (1949)
- *The Confidential Clerk* (1953)
- *The Elder Statesman (fhstpertormQd'm* 1958, published in 1959)

Non-fiction

- *The Second-Order Mind* (1920)
- *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1920)
- *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1921)

- *Hamlet and His Problems* (1919)
- *Homage to John Dry den* (1924)
- *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca* (1928)
- *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928)
- *Dante (1929)*
- *Selected Essays,* 1917-1932(1932)
- *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933)
- *After Strange Gods* (1934)
- *Elizabethan Essays* (1934)
- *Essays Ancient and Modern* (1936)
- *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939)
- *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948)
- *Poetry and Drama* (1951)
- *The Three Voices of Poetry* (1954)
- *The Frontiers of Criticism* (1956)
- *On Poetry andPoets* (1957)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

38. When and where was T.S. Eliot born?

39 . Name the movement that came to define and represent Eliot's poetry.

4.15 *TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT:* A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Tradition and Individual Talent was an essay written in 1919. Originally, it was published in two parts *The Egoist,* in 1919 and later on it was published in Eliot's first books of criticism, *The Sacred Wood,* in 1920 - a pattern similar to that of his publication of poems.

Though Eliot's fame lies in his works of poetry, he contributed extensively to the field of literary theory. *Tradition and Individual Talent* is one of the most well-

known works that Eliot produced in his critic capacity. In this work, Eliot has formulated his thought on the relationship between the poet and the literary tradition which precedes him. He presents the conception of tradition and the definition of the poet and poetry in relation to it and says:

> In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence.

> He further proceeds to the position that,

> English tradition generally upholds the belief that art progresses through change - a separation from tradition, literary advancements are instead recognized only when they conform to the tradition.

Eliot believed that tradition in its actual usage represented a historical timelessness. It meant the fusion of the past and present. He felt that a poet did not acquire greatness by departing with the past, rather traditional works had an awareness of the past and their relationships. However, this respect for tradition in no way was to interfere with the requirements for novelty in writing. Eliot had a dynamic and progressive understanding of the poetic process. He felt that novelty was possible by realizing the importance of tradition.

The importance of tradition was also important as creativity did not happen in a 'vacuum'. It happened in an ideal order based on past traditions. Eliot felt that new work did not alter the order but only caused a re-adjustment of the older order. In his words,

> What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art that preceded it.

Eliot has compared a poet to a catalyst in a chemical reaction, 'in which the reactants are feelings and emotions that are synthesized to create an artistic image that captures and relays these same feelings and emotions.' He reflects that though the mind of the poet is necessary for the production, it is not affected by the process of creation of his work. The artist stores feelings and emotions and properly unites them into a specific combination, which is the artistic product. Hence, what imparts greatness to a work of art is not the feelings and emotions themselves, but the nature of the artistic process by which they are synthesized. In his view, the artist is responsible for creating 'the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place'. Further, it is Eliot's view that it is the intensity of fusion that renders art great.

Great works do not express the personal emotion of the poet. The poet does not reveal his own unique and novel emotions, but rather, by drawing on ordinary ones and channelling them through the intensity of poetry, he expresses feelings that surpass altogether experienced emotion. This is what Eliot intends when he discusses poetry as an "escape from emotion". Since successful poetry is impersonal and, therefore, exists independent of its poet, it outlives the poet and can incorporate into the timeless 'ideal order' of the 'living' literary tradition.

Eliot asserts that it is absolutely necessary for the poet to study, to have an understanding of the poets before him, and to be well versed enough that he can understand and incorporate the 'mind of Europe' into his poetry. But the poet's study is unique - it is knowledge

which' does not encroach', and which does not 'deaden or pervert poetic sensibility'. It is, to put it most simply, a poetic knowledge - knowledge observed

through a poetic lens. This ideal implies that knowledge gleaned by a poet is not the knowledge of facts, but knowledge which leads to a greater understanding of the 'mind of Europe'. As Eliot explains, 'Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum.'

It is ironic that Eliot inspired the movement of New Criticism, when he was to later on criticize it for the detailed analysis of texts. The similarity with the critics is on the same focus as on the aesthetic and stylistic qualities of poetry, away from the ideological content. The new critics resemble Eliot in their close analysis of particular passages and poems.

There has been much criticism of Eliot's theory of literary for his limited definition of what constitutes the canon of that tradition. An example of the criticism is by Harold Bloom, who disagrees with Eliot's condescension of Romantic poetry by criticizing its'dissociation of sensibility'.

Also, many criticize him for being Euro-centric by his detailing of literary tradition as the 'mind of Europe'. This is contradictory as Eliot was influenced by eastern thought and Indian philosophy, including the use of Sanskrit.

The other arguments criticize him on account of the divergence with feminist, post-colonial and minority theories. Kenyan author, James Ngugi wa Thiong'o, attacked him on the basis of his lack of commitment to native works and relating to one's own culture, while talking of literary excellence. Therefore, he singles out Eliot's subjective criterion for attack in the manner of choosing an elite body of literary works. Post-colonial critic, Chinua Achebe, is another critic of Eliot. He argues against deferring to those writers, who are deemed great, while they only represent a specific cultural perspective.

The other point of view is reflected by critic William Empson who said, 'I do not know for certain how much of my own mind [Eliot] invented, let alone how much of it is a reaction against him or indeed a consequence of misreading him. He is a very penetrating influence, perhaps not unlike the east wind.'

Another important construct was the linking of the words of the text and events along with the state of mind of the poet and his experiences. Eliot's essays played a major role in reviving the interest of the works of the metaphysical poets. Eliot praised the metaphysical

poets' ability to show experience as both psychological and sensual, while at the same time infusing this portrayal with—in Eliot's view—wit and uniqueness. Eliot's essay *The Metaphysical Poets,* gave significance and attention to metaphysical poetry. It also played a role in introducing the concept of a unified sensibility. This is considered by some, to mean the same thing as the term metaphysical.

Many have viewed his poem *The Waste Land* from the prism of his work as a critic. This work is a critique reflective of his personal despair about World War I.

Unsuspectingly, Eliot encouraged the New Criticism movement. This is ironic as he in his later life criticized it over detailed analysis of texts. Eliot did share with the New Critics the same emphasis on the aesthetic and stylistic qualities of poetry. This was more important than the ideological content of the work. The New Critics are similar to Eliot in their resemblance of the study of particular passages and poems.

40. When was the essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* written?
41. According to Eliot, in the absence of creativity what is the next important point of reference?
42. What has Eliot compared a poet to?

4.16 *FUNCTION OF CRITICISM:* A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Function of Criticism, an essay written in 1923, was born from a conflict. Eliot's essay *'Tradition and the Individual Talent'* was published about four years earlier, in 1919. Middleton Murry deals with the Eliot's views in his essay, *Romanticism and the Tradition.* The present essay is how Eliot replied to Murry. Part one briefly presents Eliot's views as expressed in the essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent.* The second part provides fee views of Middleton Murry. Part three sees Murry's views being temporarily dismissed. In the final part, which is part four, the poet takes a look at the various facets of criticism, including its nature and function.

Eliot's essay begins with a reference to constructive views, which he had talked about in his earlier work, *Tradition and the Individual Talent,* as he believes they have great significance in the current essay. In the earlier work, he had drawn attention to the close connection that exists between the past and the present, when it comes to literature.

In *Tradition and Individual Talent,* he had said that the existing monuments together comprise a perfect order, which is altered when a new or modern work of art is introduced.

Even before the arrival of the new work, the existing order is actually complete. However, if it is to survive after the introduction of something novel, the existing order has to undergo some alteration. This leads to a readjustment of the relations, proportions and values of each work of art in the context of the whole. This is what is known as conformity between the past and the present or the old and the new. Those who agree to this concept of order of form in literature, European or English, will also not oppose the idea of altering or modifying the present. They will also agree that the present is surely directed by the past. The poet who has knowledge of this will also be aware of how difficult the task is and the degree of responsibility it entails.

European literature, from time of Homer to the present day is part of a single literary tradition, from which different individual writers and individual works of art are implied. Clearly this is because, the past does not die but continues to live on in the present. A transformation of the past takes place by the present in the same way that the past directs the present. The past literary works figure a perfect or idyllic order. However, i if this ideal order is ever disturbed to a certain degree, this disturbance leads to the emergence of a new work of art. Values get readjusted, traditional values emerge somewhere in the middle of the old and the new. Literary tradition keeps undergoing change and keeps growing different from age to age. The artist of the present must be committed to external ability or the literary or legendary tradition. He has to keep

surrendering and sacrificing himself to gain meaning and significance. True artists, irrespective of the time they belong to, are part of an idyllic community, and the artist of the present should attain a sense of his community. He should be aware a common inheritance or common grounds unite all artists, irrespective of the time they belong to. If an artist considers his individuality as an assets, just because his is different, then he is a second rate artist because true artists do not take pride in being different; they try to stick to tradition. True artists believe in collaborating, exchanging and contributing.

Part two of Eliot's essay diverges into thinking about Middleton Murry's perspective of Classicism and Romanticism. Some critics believe that Classicism and Romanticism are one and the same. However, Murry clearly distinguishes the two saying nobody can be a classic and a romantic simultaneously. In doing so, Murry wins Eliot's admiration. But Eliot does not really agree with him when he choses to make the issue a national one or a racial question. He disapproves when Murry states that the French are true followers of Classicism while the English are Romantics. Murry goes on to relate Catholicism with Classicism in literature, as he was of the opinion that both Catholics and followers of Classicism believed in adhering to traditions. They were disciplinarians and submitted to an objective authority beyond the individual. On the other hand, fee Romantics and Protestants, and the social liberalists were linked together, as they had full faith in their' inner voice'; they believed in the individual, and did not follow the instructions of any external power or influence. They

did not follow any regulations and traditions. Eliot, however, differed. According to him, the difference between the Classicists and Romanticists translated into the dissimilarity between the whole and the incomplete. It was reflective of the difference between the adult and the immature, the organized and the disorganized. He felt that by listening to the inner voice, one is actually doing what one likes, which is actually a form of indiscipline, vanity, fear and lust. He does not agree that the English, in general, are romantics, humorous or non-conformists. He does not agree that the French are 'naturally' classical either.   .

The third section of Eliot's essay, dismisses Murry's views. Here, Eliotseems to be mocking the 'inner voice' because he feels that those who follow the' inner voice' do not value criticism aimed at making art perfect by discovering certain common principles. Those who trust the' inner voice' have no desire for principles as they do not bother to achieve perfection in art. Perfection can only come from obeying the laws of art and tradition, which are actual representatives of the amassed wisdom and experience of ages.

Eliot's opinions on criticism are derived from his perspective of art and tradition. According to him, criticism is an account or exhibition of works of art using the written words. He feels that criticism is always about something. Art, according to critics, such as Matthew Arnold, may have • other goals, like moral, religious, cultural. But it is not necessary for art to be conscious or have knowledge of these ends. In fact, the performance of art is much better when it is unaware of these ends and indifferent to' them. However, criticism will always have one certain end—, explaining and illuminating works of art and correcting taste. He goes on to say that criticism is aimed at promoting an understanding of literature so that it can be enjoyed.

As criticism has a well-defined and clear end, it is easy to assess whether a critic has done his j ob properly or not. However, matters become complex only when critics

express their views strongly and in their individual capacity instead of consulting with fellow critics and attempting to arrive at a common and true judgement. They choose to express their personal intolerances and whims independently. This is mainly because their livelihood comes depends on their individuality and dissimilarity.

The outcome is that, criticism has ended up being a competition amongst orators to gather as many spectators as possible. Such a breed of critics do not have any value or importance. But Eliot also talks of another breed of significant critics on the bases of whose works, Eliot himself comes up with various objectives and methods of criticism to be adopted by all.

In the last part, Eliot discusses the problem of criticism and all its facets. At the outset, he comments on the terms 'critical' and 'creative'. He makes fun of the rather simple and uncomplicated way in which Matthew Arnold has made a distinction between the two terms. He fails to realize that criticism is extremely important when it comes to conception.

Eliot goes on to say that a writer's criticism of his own work is essential and is the best criticism of all. Eliot refers to this criticism as 'workshop criticism', as it does not last for long.

According to him, any work of art or any creation is autotelic. Since criticism is not about itself, there is no way creation and criticism can be joined or connected. When any critical activity unites with creation on the efforts by the artist, the activity attains true fulfillment.

The value and worth of workshop criticism cannot be deprived. A poet who is aware of how mysterious the process of imagination is, will be able to write about it in a better way than those who have no idea or have had no such personal experiences. Eliot proceeds to say that certain creative writers are far better than the others merely because they possess the power to criticize. He makes fun of those who whine about the critical work of the artist and feel that the artist who is unaware is the better or superior artist. According to him, such concepts are 'wiggery' and people who follow them are being ridiculous. He felt that those who adhered to traditions instead of following their 'inner voice' will end up creating work that is as perfect as possible.

Subsequently, Eliot goes ahead to take into account the level to which an opponent is qualified. The main quality of a perfect critic is that he should possess a very highly developed sense of fact, which is an extraordinary quality. Not only is it not very commonly seen, it is not easy to develop it quickly either.

When a person criticizes his own work, or 'workshop criticism' as it is referred to by Eliot, is valuable as it pertains to fact which he is familiar, and therefore, he can make us understand them too. Eliot's own criticism is also of the same type, that is, workshop criticism. Eliot admires such critics and approves of their criticism. A major share of criticism is aimed at interpreting the work of an author. However, most of this is not really an explanation. It is more of fiction. The critic expresses his opinions and views of the work. He talks of the way the work has made an impression on him. These views tend to be false and mislead. He does not approve of such unclear criticism as it does not provide us any insight into the work being studied.

His belief is that true explanation is not really an explanation. It only puts the reader in charge of the facts, which he could have otherwise overlooked or missed out on.

The true critic on his own is aware of the facts regarding a work of art, its conditions, its settings, and its origins. A true critic presents these facts to the readers in an uncomplicated way. Therefore, clearly, Eliot refers to the different scientific facets of a work of art as ' facts'.

A critic compares and analyses. He uses his comparisons and analyses cautiously and intelligently. He cannot compare or analyse without having any idea about the works that should be analysed and compared. He should be aware of the facts regarding the work of art, for

example, the technical features including structure, content and theme. He should not unnecessarily waste time trying to look for trivial facts. But, conventionally, the technique used to compare and analyse, even when it is done in ah irrational manner, is preferred over 'interpretation'.

Warning against Fact-hunting

Eliot is of the opinion that even facts of the lowest order, are not capable of diluting or corrupting taste, whereas criticism capable of making an impression, such as that of Coleridge and Goethe, always tends to mislead. The objective of criticism is to educate taste or, to promote the appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of literature. Not matter how insignificant facts are, they cannot influence taste. Facts are only capable of satisfying taste. Critics, such as Goethe or Coleridge, are the actual corruptors as they provide opinions. Finally, Eliot warns us from becoming subservient to facts. He cautions us against insignificant things like the laundry bills of Shakespeare. Looking for such facts does not qualify as criticism. In the same way, he cautions us against the horrible preference for reading about works of art rather than the works themselves.

'Lemon-squeezer' and Impressionistic Criticism: Eliot's Condemnation

Eliot emphasizes facts making it clear that his critical stand is with the New Critics, such' as F.R. Leavis and LA. Richards. While he favours written criticism, he goes against the 'lemon-squeezer' school of critics. The name is derived from the fact that they attempt to squeeze every single drop of meaning out of words. A critic must focus on the text, comparing and analyzing it, instead of giving in insignificant or empty hair-splitting. The aim of an ideal critic is to base his judgment on facts. Tradition provides him the necessary guidance, along with the wisdom and knowledge he has gathered over the years. It is not his 'inner voice' that guides him. He does not merely express his opinion or fancy. Eliot disapproves of impressionistic criticism, but he does not state any rules or principles nor does he elaborate on any theories or their values.

It is not possible to predict impressionistic criticism. But then, a critic's freedom is curtailed if he sticks to rigid theories.

Eliot's Originality: Objective, Scientific Attitude

Eliot's aim was to guide critics by facts alone. According to Eliot, a critic should carry forward a work of art with a free mind, which is devoid of rigid notions or theories. Otherwise, it will not be possible for him to be completely objective and impersonal. In this aspect, criticism can be called a science. It becomes a co-operative activity, where the critic of one era seeks truth in cooperation with the critics of the previous ages. Truths of this type are not permanent as truths of one era tend to get modified or adapted and rectified by truths disclosed by future ages. This unique and innovative objective-

scientific attitude sets Eliot apart from all English critics of the past. He resembled a scientist with an open mind working in co-operation with others, for the awareness and knowledge of truth, the certainty of which only he is aware of.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

43. What views are expressed in the beginning of Eliot's essay, *Function oj Criticism!*
44. Define external ability.
45. With reference to contemplation of Middleton Murry's outlook, identify the area that gains precedence for Eliot.
46. What are the views with which Eliot disagrees?
47. What are the chief tools of a critic?
48. What does Eliot caution us against?
49. Name the school with which Eliot disagrees.
50. What according to Eliot should be the critics exclusive guide ?

4.17 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The critical canon of Wordsworth comprises many Prefaces and essays.
- He wishes to create an atmosphere conducive to the healthy growth of the poetry of a higher kind.
- The 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' is to be earnestly checked and censured so that the poet can recollect ideas in 'tranquility'.
- Poetry originating out of ideas recollected in tranquility provides pleasure by stimulating the imagination.
- The language of poetry should be the language of the common man.
- The process of selecting a language allows the poet to free it from absurdity.
- Coleridge has appreciated Wordsworth as a poet but criticized him as a critic.
- There is a cultural dimension to Coleridge's theory of poetry.
- Romanticism was a movement that emerged in the 1790's in Germany and Britain.
- Wordsworth (1770-1850) contributed to the Romantic movement through his *Lyrical Ballads.*
- During the neo-classical age, the basic questions concerning the nature of poetic creation, nature of poetry and nature of the pleasure derived were secondary.
- Discussions about the rules and principles of composition were of prime

importance.

- The Romantics showed interest in the mind of the man and his consciousness.

- According to Wordsworth, a good poet is naturally endowed with the capability of blending thought and feeling. The role of language in poetry is to sensitize the readers.
- As per Wordsworth, the relevance of poetry has increased in the modern industrial and mechanical age.
- We see the prominent literary features in the expansion of literary criticism.
- One is able to understand the socio cultural, political and literary factors which laid the precedents for this development and the improvement of the modernist movement.
- We critically appreciated the works of T.S. Eliot, a prominent poet, writer and playwright.
- Literary criticism has become more urbanized through the fundamentals laid by this great writer and his contribution to English Literature.
- T.S. Eliot was an American writer of great talent and an important contributor to the field of literary criticism.
- In *The Function of Criticism,* Eliot looks at the scope and limitations of literary criticism.
- The value of a practitioner's criticism—say that of a poet on his own art, 'workshop criticism' as Eliot elsewhere calls it—lies in the fact that he is dealing with facts which he understands, and so can also help us to understand them.
- Eliot's objective is that critic should be guided by facts and facts alone.
- The past is transformed by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.
- Literature in the past figures in an ideal order, but this ideal order is disturbed if ever so, to some extent, when a really new work of art appears.
- *Tradition and Individual Talent* significantly expresses T.S. Eliot's views and concepts about poetry in general.
- *Tradition and Individual Talent* emphasizes the importance of tradition in poetry and in the creative process, in particular.
- Eliot's poetry, critical writing and poetic drama, in some ways, present the essential dilemmas of the modern day existence.
- His early essay, *Tradition and Individual Talent* emphasizes two aspects that he thinks are very important for poetic creation.
- The importance of tradition in poetry and the Theory of Impersonality are the two aspects that are of utmost importance to Eliot.

4.18 KEY TERMS

- **Augustan Age:** The age of Augustus (31 BC-AD 14), during which art and literature flourished
- **Advocacy:** The act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support

- **Assimilate:** To incorporate and absorb into the mind; to make similar; cause to resemble
- **Didacticism:** The practice of valuing literature, etc., primarily for its instructional content
- **Metaphor:** One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol
- **Allegory:** A symbolic representation
- **Mooring:** Elements providing stability or security
- **Anthropology:** The scientific study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans
- **Epistemology:** The branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, and its extent and validity
- **Metre:** The rhythmic arrangement of syllables in verse, usually according to the number and kind of feet in a line.
- **Satire:** A literary work in which human vice or folly is attacked through irony, derision, or wit.
- **Elegy:** A poem or song composed especially as a lament for a deceased person.
- **Kindred:** A group of related persons, as a clan or tribe
- Efficacy: The quality of being successful in producing an intended result; effectiveness.
- **Cleave:** To adhere, cling, or stick fast.
- **Abinoam:** The father of *Barak* who defeated *Jabin's* army, led by *Sisera,* from *Kedesh-naphtali*
- **Magnanimity:** Liberality in bestowing gifts; extremely liberal and generous of spirit
- **Pedantry:** The habit or an instance of being a pedant, esp. in the display of useless knowledge or minute observance of petty rules or details
- **Ubiquity:** Existence or apparent existence everywhere at the same time; omnipresence
- **Anthropomorphism:** Attribution of human motivation, characteristics, or behavior to inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena
- **Frigid:** Here, without warmth or feeling
- **Metaphysical:** Here, concerned with abstract thought or subjects, as existence, causality, or truth.

1. The first publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, was written in collaboration with S.T. Coleridge, a contemporary poet in Wordsworth's period, who helped set the stage for Romanticism in England.

2. Wordsworth was influenced by his father as it was he who introduced the great poets like Milton, Shakespeare and Spencer to young William.

3. Dorothy Wordsworth was William Wordsworth's younger sister, younger to him by only a year.

4. Kant classified the arts into three classes:

    (a) Speech: which includes poetry and rhetoric
    (b) Shaping: which includes architecture, sculpture and painting and
    (c) The sensory form: which includes music and colour design.

5. According to William Blake, vision is the basis of any artistic creation.

6. The play impulse is the capacity of human beings to have a natural ability to synthesize opposed impulses.

7. Dr Johnson is all praises for Shakespeare and pays a tribute to him in his book Preface to Shakespeare. In his book, Dr Johnson calls Shakespeare 'the Poet of Nature'. He also places him above all modern writers.

8. Pope and Wordsworth are different in their treatment of 'man' in their works. When Pope talks about 'man', he talks about the species 'man'. But when Wordsworth deals with the same subject, he gives it his 'Romantic' touch. Wordsworth's treatment is evident in his autobiographical poem *The Prelude.*

9. The basic ideas of Romanticism are:
    (a) Imagination
    (b) Inspiration
    (c) Organicism
    (d) Emotion.

    Imagination is the creative faculty of artistic creation while inspiration is the central concept for the same. A work of art achieves form and unity because of the element of

organicism. Emotion is something which Shelley relates to as 'natural growth of a child in the womb' whereas Coleridge refers to the 'growth of a plant' for this purpose.

10. The eighteenth century was called the age of prose and satire because in this period, writers had a pragmatic and mechanical outlook.

11. The accepted forms of lyric poetry are:
    (a) Ode
    (b) Sonnet
    (c) Song
    (d) Elegy

12. Lyric Poetry was the poetic norm of the eighteenth century as it was accepted to be the purest expression of the feelings of the author.

13- William Wordsworth met Coleridge in 1795 and the two became good friends. Two years later, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to the 'Alfoxton House'near Coleridge's house. There, they produced *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 with fruitful insights from Dorothy.

14. During the initial phase of *Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth and Coleridge had detailed discussions on the 'power of exciting the sympathy of the readers by faithful adherence to the truth of nature' and on the nature of imagination. They also

faced the problem of synthesizing the first two problems. While the first two problems were sorted out, the third problem was left unresolved.

15. Wordsworth wrote *The Daffodils* as he was mesmerized by the beauty of the Daffodils growing by the river. The poem was composed late after he had recollected the memories of his visit and synthesized his thoughts.

16. The qualities of a poet as listed by Wordsworth are:
    (a) Power of observation and description
    (b) Sensibility
    (c) Reflection
    (d) Imagination and fancy
    (e) Invention
    (f) Judgment

17. According to Wordsworth, a poet is different from the common man because of his ability to observe things differently. The poet's observation should be true and accurate and he should use it with honesty in the composition of the poem.

18. As per the Wordsworthian perspective, a poet's work must also be mechanical.

19. The medium used by Wordsworth is language and he intended to use it creatively by

subjecting it to manipulation.

20. According to Wordsworth, the role of language is to influence its readers. The language of the poem should be such that it should touch the hearts of its readers.

21. In his *Theory of Language* Wordsworth reccommends a natural use of language. Wordsworth advocates a simplicity of language which he feels has a universal appeal.

22. The shortcomings attributed to Wordsworth's theory of poetry are as follows:
    (a) Driven by democratic impulse.
    (b) Inconsiderate. Does not take into account the fact that the language is to be used for artistic creation.
    (c) Contradictory to its own statements. Wordsworth talks about' selecting' the language, which contradicts the very meaning of being natural.

23. According to Wordsworth, there are two kinds of poetry, objective and subjective.

24. Imagination, as Wordsworth defined it, becomes the name for the mental power that transforms the literal to the figurative. It has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but it is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and process, of creation or of compositions, by certain fixed laws.

25. Wordsworth's views on imagination and fancy are fully set forth in the *Preface To Poems,* 1815. He makes a distinction between fancy and imagination as per which Imagination operates upon the raw material of sensation to illustrate the evidence of eternal truth. While Fancy merely relates to temporal or worldly enjoyments.

26. Wordsworth's views on the intellect are as follows: (i) An intellectuahst approach to truth is rejected by Wordsworth. He recognizes intellect as a false secondary power; (ii) Intellect is the main guiding principle of science and artistic creation, hence Wordsworth rej ects it.

27. Pleasure, in Wordsworth's poetry, lies in stimulating imagination to perceive beauty and newness in day to day commonplace activities.

28. *The Thorn* is the most criticized poem of Wordsworth.

29. According to Wordsworth, the issues that are faced by culture are: a mechanized mode of existence as well as the loss on inner values.

30. Wordsworth's writings address the cause of culture by using the phrase 'the people' in contradiction to 'the public' in the essay *Supplementary to the Preface* (1815).

31. Wordsworth sees the relevance of poetry in the modern world of fever and fret. It has provided solace in the ancient times and can safeguard and promote cultural values in the era of science and technology. Poetry, from this angle, becomes the most refined form of man and nature.

32. Eliot first published his poems individually in magazines or periodicals.

33. 1917 was the year in which his first collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations* ws first published.

34. Eliot was twenty-two when his first major was published.

35. Ezra Pound was the American expatriate poet and critic who helped to discover and shape the work of T.S. Eliot.

36. *The Waste Land-WS&* first published in 1922.

37. *The Four Quartets* is considered to be Eliot's masterpeice.

38. T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri on September 26,1888.

39. The Modernist Movement came to define and represent Eliot's poetry.

40. 1919 was the year when *Tradition and Individual Talent* was first written.

41. Tradition is the next important point of reference in the absence of creativity.

42. Eliot has compared a poet to a catalyst in a chemical reaction.

43. Constructive views are expressed in the beginning of Eliot's essay *The Function of Criticism.*

44. External ability is the artist's commitment to the present.

45. With refernce to Middleton Murray's outlook, Classicism and Romanticism, for Eliot are areas that gain precedence.

46. Eliot disagrees with the view that the English as a nation is romantic and so 'humorous' and 'non-conformists', while the French are 'naturally' classical.

47. The chief tools of a critic are comparison and analysis.

48. Eliot cautions us against not becoming slaves to facts and bother about insignificant details.

49. Eliot disagrees with the Lemon squeezer school of thought.

50. As per Eliot a critic's exclusive guide should be facts and facts alone. A critic should advance the work of art with a free mind, unbiased by any theories or fixed notions.

4.20 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer questions

1. How was Romanticism different from the neoclassicism of the preceding age?
2. Discuss Wordsworth's theory of poetry.
3. Who wrote the preface to the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads'?* Who was supposed to write it according to the initial plans?
4. What was Eliot's style of writing poetry?
5. What was Eliot's word of caution regarding facts?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Was Coleridge critical of Wordsworth or was he in support of his theories. Give reasons for your answer.
2. Who did Coleridge write letters to during the scripting of *Lyrical Ballads* and what did he write in them?
3. What relationship does Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent* influence?
4. What are Eliot's view regarding Middleton Murry's outlook on Classicism and Romanticism?
5. What are Eliot's views on criticism?

4.21 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M.H.; *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition,* New York, Oxford University Press, 1953.

Eliot, T.S.; *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* London, Faber and Faber, 1933.

Endnote

[1] Critics and criticism, A.G. George, Asia Publishing House, 1971

UNIT 5 STRUCTURALISM,

POST-STRUCTURALISM AND DECONSTRUCTION

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The word structure has been used in different contexts in various disciplines of ccience and humanities. It is used in physics (the structure of an atom) or in chemistry (the structure of a compound). All the social sciences resort to it abundantly. It is widely used in anthropology and linguistics. We can speak of the structure of a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a book, and so forth. The formal structure of a play consists of its acts and scenes and their interdependent balance. The non-formal structure comprises the events and actions which take place. One may think that the structure of a poem is its central statement or arguments (its logical structure) while everything else (the words, their sounds, rhyme and imagery) is texture. This is the common notion of structure but this is not what has now been called structuralism in literature. The word structure is used in literature in its specialized sense. In fact, literary criticism has borrowed the specialized sense of structure from linguistics.

In the 1960s, structuralism, which had dominated the French intellectual life since the mid-1950s, began to be replaced by another more antinomian movement that first came to be known as post-structuralism and then post-modernism. If structuralism emphasizes order, structure and rules, post-structuralism argues that language is subject to contingency, indeterminacy, and the generation of multiple meanings. Rather than being an instrument of understanding, the meanings render themselves open to reasoning. In other words, these are instruments of mastery, discipline and social control. All the values, ideals, and norms of western philosophy and western social life — from truth conceived as a clear idea to the conscious mind to the individual conceived as a free agent who determines his or her own destiny—deny the materiality and contingency of existence, which is characterized by movement, change, and multiplicity, rather than logic, regularity and identity.

The most influential of all post-modern and post-structural theories is the theory of deconstruction given by Jacques Derrida. He is the most influential intellectual author in current philosophy and Angk> American literary theory.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain structuralism
- Discuss the causes that led to post-structuralism
- Paraphrase the important aspects of deconstruction

5.2 STRUCTURALISM

To begin with, structure implies a system. A system is a whole, a totality. A structure has elements. Elements can be arranged or rearranged. Arrangements or rearrangements will modify the structure, but will not change the structure. Dorothy Baisch Seiz writes: 'Structure is a set of terms in relationship constantly defined, whatever the transformations.' Piaget has defined it as a 'system of transformation.' Roland Barthes has offered an entirely different definition of structure:' Structure is, therefore, actually a simulacrum of the object.' In the words of Richard Harland, 'The structuralists in general are concerned to know the (human) world—to uncover it through detailed observational analysis and to map it under extended explicatory grids. Their stance is still the traditional stance of objectivity, their goal the traditional goal of truth.'

Lacan, a French psychologist while defining the human consciousness, has given us a significant structuralist notation that has influenced the structuralist activity of our time. The human unconscious is structured like a language and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure conceived of language as a sign system that communicates in relationships or interdependence. A sign gives meaning only in relation to the totality of other signs. A sign consists of a signifier (sound image) and signified. According to Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. For an understanding of structuralism, an understanding of its linguistic foundation is essential because structuralism in other disciplines is nothing but a metaphor or a model taken from linguistic foundation. Structuralism is based on the idea of the sign as a union of signifier and the signified and the starting point of this system is found in Saussure's course in General Linguistics (1915), as Saussure writes: 'The linguistic sign writes not a thing and a name but a concept and a sound image.' The theory of structuralism is the result of a product of a system of code or signification. The signification is rendered by the way the elements of the code are related. Codes are random, and in their absence reality cannot be caught. When it comes to literature and literary criticism, structuralism questions the belief that any literary work or text is a reflection of reality, and a literary text comprises other conventions and texts.

Structuralism opposes mimetic criticism, that is, the view that literature mainly imitates. It does not favour expressive criticism (the view that literature primarily expresses the feeling or temperament or creative imagination of its author). It is also opposed to any form of the

view that literature is a means of communication between the author and the readers. In general, it tries to develop a science of literature, and in doing so, structuralism deviates from the traditional concepts humanistic criticism that rule. Let us look at some examples:

(i) As per the 'structuralist view', what was once known as a 'literary work' comes to be a simple 'text', that is, a means of writing by playing with the elements as per particular literary conventions, rules and codes. These factors may lead to an illusion of reality but may be far from the truth. They may not have any reference to a reality that exists beyond the literary system itself.

(ii) Each author, as an individual (subject) does not have the permission to be referred to as the 'origin' or the producer of a work in terms of its design, initiation or expressions. Rather, the conscious' self is declared as a construct, which itself is the outcome of the linguistic system's working. The author's mind is called an assigned space wherein the 'impersonal' and existing systems of literary language, codes, conventions and rules are accelerated to take the form of a specific text. In the words of Roland Barthes, the declaration that the author is dead, is the subversion of the humanistic view.

(iii) The author is replaced by the reader in structuralism. The reader becomes the main agency in criticism. However, the traditional reader, as an aware individual with a purpose, ends up as an impersonal reader. Therefore, the text read is not a text full of with meanings. Structuralist criticism concentrates on the impersonal process of reading, which renders literary sense to the words, their sequence, the phrases and the sentences that comprise the text. This is done by using the relevant rules, codes, conventions, and expectations.

The 'term' structuralism pertains to the theories of French authors, Claude Levi- Strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and their counterparts in other parts of the world. The most prominent name in the study of structuralism, however, is Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, whose Cours de Linguistique led a structuralist enterprise in different disciplines including literature. The concept of the 'signifier' and 'signified' is based on the way Saussure described language, its elements as well as the terminology employed to describe language.

As per his analysis, 'sign' was divided into two components parts:

(i) A sound or acoustic component (signifier)

(ii) A mental or conceptual component (signified)

He introduced two pairs of terms, which were contrasting, and essential to the understanding of structuralism. He also made a distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' or'language'and'speech'while studying language.

Language refers to the theoretical system or structure of a language, the corpus of linguistic rules which speakers of that language must obey if they are to communicate; speech is the actual day-to-day use made of that system by individual speakers. Saussure brings out a distinction between the synchronic and the diachronic axes of investigation. Saussure himself advocated the synchronic study of language under structuralism as a whole is necessarily synchronic. It is pertains to the study and examination of a specific system or structure under artificial and historical conditions, which ignore the systems or structures from which they have been derived in the hope that their existing functioning can be explained.

Saussure outlines another distinction: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. According to him, words establish relations on the basis of the linear nature of language, in

discourse. This is due to the fact that they are linked together. All the elements occur in a sequence as part of a chain when spoken. Combination with the support of linearity forms a syntagm. In a syntagm, a term gets its value merely because it opposes everything preceding or following it or both.

When it comes to a chain or sequence of words, signs suggest or express meaning mainly due to the place they occupy in the sentence.

There were many significant original contributions made by Saussure:

(a) Language as a system of signs or a structure with individualparts understandable only in relation to each other and to the system, as a whole instead of as an external 'reality'.

(b) Langue vs parole: While langue represents a language as a whole, such as French, English and German, parole represents utterance, or a specific use of individual units of langue

(c) Diachronic vs synchronic: 'Diachronic' indicates the historical study of the development of^ language (growth through philology) while 'synchronic' denotes the study of a language as a system at a given moment of its life (Saussure emphasizes synchronic study)

(d) Disturbance between the signifier and the signified.

Claude Levi-Strauss came up with a structural theory, which considered myth, ritual and kinship, in his *work-Antrvpologie Structurale* (1958), and *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949). He considered social structure as a type of model and attempted to show that the behavioural patterns of kinship and the existence of institutions relied on communication techniques characteristic of the manner in which the human mind works. He examined the

methods of thought as well as action, instead of how they originated or what caused them. His theories related to myths considerably impacted the development of the theory of narratology, another aspect of structuralism. The structuralist theories of Roland Barthes (1915~80), stated in *Mythologies* (1957) and *Systemede* la mode (1967), disclose a general interpretation of the term 'language' as a social practice. Barthes, initially, was a follower of Marxism and held a very different view of myth and kinship, which was like middle-class ideology.

His attempt was to find a type of 'grammar' and 'syntax' of such means of communication. His interpretation of social practices involved food and clothes as a system of signs, functioning on the same model as language. He explained the idea of a 'garment system', which functioned like a language. Generally speaking, 'garments' refers to the system which Saussure ultimately referred to as 'langue' and Chomsky called 'competence'. A specific set of garments corresponds to a 'sentence'(which Saussure called 'parole' and Chomsky called 'performance').

The same difference exists in food. Food stuff genereally comprises a system just like a specific menu comprising a meal represents a 'sentence.' After 1968, following his famous discourses in S /Z (1970) and *The Death of the Author* (1968), Barthes was linked with post-structuralism. Noam Chomsky contributed yet again to structuralist theory, which is significant to linguistics and deserved mention here. He distinguished between 'surface structures' and 'deep structures.' The former comprises the collection of words and sounds articulated and heard in a sentence while the latter

refers to the abstract and underlying structure of language. A single sentence may have several different surface forms and features and yet mean the same. The underlying/ deep structure is responsible for regulating the meaning. These are the focal theoretical distinctions made in generative grammar. David Crystal summarizes the primary current theory by saying that grammar functions by creating a seet of abstract deep structures within its phrase-structure rules, ultimately transforming these underlying representations into surface structures. This conversion is effected by the application of a certain transformational rules. David Crystal draws attention to the fact that this two-level conception of grammatical structure has been challenged. Jonathan Culler develops a theory of structuralist poeticsin his work *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study ofLiterature* (1975). He further builds on the idea that the real object of poetics 'is not the work itself but its intelligibility'. He focused on the important of trying to elaborate on how works can be understood. He said that it was important to understand the unspoken or implied knowledge, and the conventions that allow readers to make sense of them should be formulated. Jonathan Culler concentrates on the reader instead of the text, which implies that while the rules governing the interpretation of text can be determined, it is impossible to establish the rules governing the composition of texts. Therefore, the structure dwells within the system underlying the reader's interpretation or 'literary competence' instead of in the text. The concept of'literary competence' can be challenged. However, Culler does not try to identify a predictable rules of reading them; It is internalized in the form of an articulation of a theory of codes and conventions. The work of Roman

Jakobson (1896-1982), especially his two essays *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960) and *Two Aspects of Language* (1956), give other forms of structuralist theory. His theory was built on the concept of binary opposition in the language structure. He was especially bothered about the metaphor or metonymy opposition and what it implied-when it came to analyzing realism and symbolism. In *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977) David Lodge applies the theory to modern literature and in his comic novel, *Nice Work*{\1988) he plays with the concept making use of wit.

Since the structuralist's intention is to define the conditions that permit the very creation of a poem, a novel, or a play, he is concerned with the system of beliefs and notions that makes the possibility of these literary productions. Just as a grammarian's concern is the grammatical system that enables the production of meaningful sentences, a structuralist's concern is the literary system. The structuralist operates upon a piece of literature to discover the principle that allowed the arrangement of words and phrases into a piece of literature. His assumption is that literature can make meaning, like the kicking of a ball can make meaning, because of a system of beliefs and notions called conventions. The desire for a system in a structuralist's pursuit is a desire to look behind the literary productions so that what enables that production can be understood. In this connection Jonathan Culler observes, 'Structuralism is thus based in the first instance, on the realization that if human actions and productions have a meaning there must be an underlying system of distinctions and conventions which makes meaning possible.'At the heart of structuralism lies the idea of a system. Every Jiterary unit from individual sentence to the order ofwords can be seen in relation to the concept of a system.

The desire to discover a system is not without implications in literary criticism. First and foremost, this desire reflects the hope to introduce a kind of scientific rationality

in criticism. The scientific urge to go beyond natural phenomena in order to discover how these phenomena take shape is active, in the structuralist pursuit in literature. There is something mystic and undefinable in literature. That something has to be discovered. This urge is scientific. By discovering that tantalizing mystic element in literature, structuralist criticism entertains aspiration to make literary criticism a scientific discipline. Leo Bersani in his article *Is There a Science of Literature?* states: 'The ideal of a literary science is at the heart of the structuralist adventure.' Robert Scholes also says, 'Structuralism has tried—and is trying—to establish for literary studies a basic that is as scientific as possible.' The structuralist hopes that literary criticism will become an objective and scientific discipline if the literary structures are discovered and the literary system shaped.

The mode of operation in structuralist criticism will not be an analysis of a particular work with an intention to discover its meaning. On the contrary, the structuralist will dissect a work to discover the structure. Unlike grammatical analysis where a sentence can be related to a particular structure in the grammatical system, structuralist criticism cannot relate a work to a structure in the literary system because there is no structure or system which is clearly defined. What exactly is the structure of literature has not been discovered or understood.

This can be called the structuralist dilemma. That is why structuralist criticism has a duel function to perform: i) it analyzes a work of art, and ii) it discovers or defines the underlying structure. So the criticism begins as a confrontation with a particular work and progresses by isolating the deep structures and ends with defining the principles that make the structures. These principles are to be applicable to at least a few more works in literature. We may call this process 'dissection and articulation.'

This process can be very mechanical and monotonous and indeed it has been quite mechanical and monotonous in the hands of critics who believed that by applying the linguistic model, the model described by Saussure, literary criticism could be made into a coherent and scientific discipline. In fact, the very beginning of the structuralist enterprise in literature is deeply indebted to structural linguistics. Leo Bersani rightly observes,' The structuralist approach—not only to literature, but also to primitive myths, to mass media, to the world of fashion—is easily recognizable by the highly technical instruments of analysis it borrows from linguistics.' The relation between linguistics and structural literary criticism is deep-rooted that any meaningful discussion of literary structuralism has to take notice of its linguistic foundation.

The structuralist examines a work to discover how meaning is shaped or how meaning is made possible and thereby discovers the basic structures of literature. Its value as a mode of thought that reorients the mind of the critic and urges him to understand the very possibility of understanding is unquestionable. Structuralism gives valuable insight into the basic process of understanding.

A direct application of the linguistic model on any piece of literature will make structuralist hterary criticism a very mechanical process. If the linguistic model is directly applied to a piece of literature, that application would resemble a working out of a problem in Mathematics or Physics. In that event, structuralist literary criticism would be monotonous. In fact, the intention of structuralist criticism is not to apply the linguistic mode on any literary work and discover its meaning. The structuralist examines a work

meaning is shaped or how meaning is made possible and thereby discovers the basic structures of literature. The discovery of the structures of literature will lead to the structuring of the human mind. What are those human hopes and fears that made man attribute meaning to events? How is it that the withering of a flower is the fading of beauty, a fall into the oblivion of

death, or losing of youth in literature? Man has imposed meaning on natural events and has concealed meaning in cultural events; and, thus, he has woven a complex system called literature. The system is as complex as the human mind itself. Psychology is exploring and exposing the complexities of the human mind whereas philosophy has been concealing that complexity. Is the linguistic model closer to psychology or philosophy? Or, is the linguistic model a pure model as the linguists claim? A post-structuralist theory, investigates the structuralists' claim to the purity or the scientific basis of the linguistic model.

The structure of language that Saussure has described encourages the literary critic to make a revolutionary innovation in the study of literature. But, innovation is not imitation. The literary structuralist has a challenging task to perform. Linguistics can be of use only be a centre of inspiration. Linguistics has demonstrated that language, which appears to be natural, is in fact, not natural. Familiarity often makes us simplistic and naive. A critical examination needs a distance between the examiner and the examined. A model can often serve as a de-familiarizing device. But, what model is useful for that purpose in literature? As there is no such model other than the traditional models of philosophy or morality structuralists in literature build models. Every model becomes insufficient in explaining the literary system and a structuralist is in eternal discontent. However, its value as a mode of thought that reorients the mind of the critic and that urges him to understand the very possibility of understanding is unquestionable. Structuralism gives tremendous insight into the basis and process of understanding. However, in confronting literature, it fails to provide convincing answers. Confronting literature is confronting the complex human mind and the failure is understandable.

Structuralism as the word suggests, is concerned with structures, and particularly with examining the laws by which they work. Structuralism also tends to reduce individual phenomena to mere illustration of such laws. Nevertheless, it constitutes a distinctive doctrine which is not to be found in Northrope Frye.

It has to be borne in mind in this regard that structuralism, in its course, has encompassed important areas of linguistics such as semiotics or semiology, modern communication theory, narratology and many others. The doctrine of structuralism is grounded in the belief that the individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relationships with one another. But, you can examine a poem as a structure while still treating each of the items in a more or less meaningful manner. Yet, a real authoritative structuralist is one who claims that the meaning of each image is wholly a matter of its relation to the other. The images do not have a 'substantial' meaning but, only a 'relational' one. Suppose a poem contains one image about the sun and another about the moon. And you are interested in seeing how these two images fit together to form a structure. As said just before, a real structuralist will not think that way. For him, the images will not have a 'substantial' meaning but only a 'relational' one. Accordingly, hard-core structuralism insists on the meaning in the poem being inseparably related to each other.

takes an example: He analyses a story in which a boy leaves home after quarrelling with his father, the son sets out on a walk through the forest in the heat of the day and falls down in a deep pit. The father comes out in search of his son, peers down the pit but is unable to see him because of the darkness. At that moment the sun has risen to a point directly over his head and illuminates the depths of the pit with its rays and helps the father to rescue his child. After a joyous reconciliation they return together As per Eagleton, this story can be interpreted in many different ways but the structuralist will 'schematise' the story in a diagramatic form. The first unit of signification will be the boy's quarrel with the father. This might be re-written as - low rebels against high. The boy walking through the forest is a movement along a horizontal axis in contrast to vertical axis - high and low ~ and could be indexed as middle. The fall into the pit may signify low again. Sunlight, at this point, can be interpreted as shining below its surface, i.e., in a sense it has stooped low thereby inverting the narrative where 'low' is 'struck' against 'high'. Moreover, the reconciliation between the father and the son restores equilibrium between father and son; between high and low, and they walk back together. The point of returning together may signify the middle which marks this achievement of a suitable intermediate state. In this way, the structuralist can re-arrange the narrative.

. Structuralism ignores the cultural value of the content and apparently makes no distinction between a great poem and a mediocre one. Moreover, it refuses the obvious meaning and seeks to discover underlaying in deep significance. It examines various relations that exist within and creates its own structure of sense.

This literary structuralism flourished during the 1960s and received a great deal from the efforts of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* which appeared in 1916. Giving rise to modem Structural Linguistics which attributes importance to the signs, that is the black marks: c-a-t rather than the obj ect called Cat.

Structuralism in general is an attempt to apply this linguistic theory to objects and activities other than language itself. A Structuralist will busy himself with isolating the underlying sets of laws by which these signs are combined into meanings. He will largely ignore what the sign actually says and concentrate instead on their internal relations to each other.

Russian Formalism, although not identical with structuralism, was yet sought to be connected with it by the linguist, Roman Jakobson, who was the leader of the Mascow Linguistic Circle, founded in 1915. Jakobson maintained poetics to be a part of the field of linguistics and believed that language was placed in a kind of self-conscious relationship to itself. The poetic functioning of language, according to him, promotes the 'palpability of signs' (making them denote the objects clearly) In other words, it encourages us to recognize their 'material qualities'. Eagleton remarks that in structuralism, the Poetics dislocates (detaches) the sign from its object, disturbing the usual relation between the sign and the referent (the object of reference or discussion), which invests the sign with 'a certain independence as an object of value in itself.'

According to Jakobson, all communications include six elements: an addresser, an addressee, a message passed between them, a shared code which makes the message

intelligible (code system of words, letters, which represent sentences to ensure economy in transmission of the message), contact or physical medium of communication and a

context to which the message refers. Any one of these elements, Jakobson states, may dominate in a particular communicative act. Language, seen from the addresser's viewpoint, is emotive or expressive of a state of mind: from the addressee's standpoint it is conative or trying for an effect; if the communication concerns the context, it is referential and if it is oriented to the code itself, it is metalinguistic (as when two individuals discuss whether they are understanding each other): and communication, angled towards the contact itself, is phatic - for example -Well here we are chatting away at last. Phatic is the using speech for social reasons to communicate feelings rather than ideas.

The poetic function is dominant when the communication focuses on the message itself rather than what is said by whom and for what purpose in what situation.

Jakobson also makes much of a distinction, implicit in Saussure: between the metaphorical and the metonymic. In metaphor, one sign (word) is substituted for another because it is somehow similar to it and so passion becomes flame, love and so on. In a metaphor we select sign from a possible range of equivalences. In metonymy one sign is associated with another: for example, wing is associated with aircraft because it is a part of it. In poetry, we pay attention to equivalences in the process of combining words together as well as in selecting them. Jakobson states in a famous definition, that 'The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination'. Another way of saying it is that in poetry, 'similarity is super-induced upon contiguity:' words are not just strung together for the sake of the thoughts they convey as in ordinary speech, but with an eye to the patterns of similarity, opposition, parallelism and so on, created by their sound, meaning, rhythm and connotations. Some literary form for example, realist prose tend to be metonymic, linking signs (words) by their associations with each other; other forms like romantic or symbolist poetry are highly metaphorical.

The Prague School of linguistics comprising Jakobson, Felix Vodica and others represents a kind of transition from formalism to modern structuralism. They elaborated the ideas of formalism and systematized them within the framework of Saussurean linguistics. Poems were to be viewed as 'functional structures' in which 'signifiers' and the 'signified' are governed by a single complex set of relations. These signs (words) must be studied in their own right, not as reflections of an external reality. Nonetheless, the literary work was related still (in Formalism) to the world by the concept of defamiliarization: as art estranges and undermines the conventional sign-system and compels our attention to the material process of language itself and renews our perceptions.

Structuralism has been applied to linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, folklore, mythology and Biblical studies. In fact, this has been applied to all social and cultural phenomena. Its attractions are considerable: structuralism is, at least seemingly, scientific and objective. It identifies structures, systems of relationships, which endow signs (e.g., words) or items (e.g., clothes, cars, table manners, rituals) with identities and meanings, and directs us to the ways in which we think

But, we note at the outset that the extent to which structuralism and its derivatives ran function as an approach to interpreting a literary work is limited. It has even been said that post-structuralism cannot be applied to literary texts.

Structuralism claims intellectual linkage to the prestigious line of French rationalists stretching from Voltaire to Jean-Paul Sartre. Structuralists emphasize that the description of any phenomenon or artifact without placement in the broader systems which generate it is misleading if not impossible. Accordingly, they have developed analytical, systematic approaches to literary texts that avoid traditional categories like plot, character, setting, theme and tone. Even more significantly, however, structuralists tend to deny the text any inherent privilege, meaning, or authority; to them the text is only a system that poses the question of how such a construct of language can contain meaning for us.

Such a view denies any claim of privilege for any author, any school, any period, and any correct explication. The structuralists have encouraged us to reread, rethink, and restudy all literary works and to equate them with all other cultural and social phenomena.

Structuralism emerged from the structural linguistics: developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, mainly in his lectures at the University, of Geneva between 1906 and 1911. Not available in English until 1959, Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* in French (1916) attracted thinkers far beyond Switzerland, linguistics, and universities. It became the model for Russian formalism, semiology or semiotics, French structuralism, and deconstruction, each of which we will treat briefly below. Saussure's model is acceptable as an analogy for the study of many systems other than language.

Saussure's theory of language systems distinguishes between langue (language, the system possessed and used by all members of a particular language community -English, French, Urdu and such like) and parole (word; by extension, speech-event or any specific application of langue in speech or writing). Parole is impossible without the support, the structural validity and generation of meaning-conferred on it by langue, the source of grammar, phonetics, morphology syntax and semantics. As Saussure explained, paroles appear as phonetic and semantic signs (phonemes and semes). A linguistic sign joins a signifier (a conventional sound construction) to a signification (semantic value, meaning). Such a sign does not join a thing and its name, but an allowable concept to a 'sound image'. The sign has meaning only within its system - a langue or some other context - only within its originating system. Further, Saussure

stressed the importance of considering each item in relationship to all other items within the system.

The approach to analyzing sentences is syntagmatic; word by word in the horizontal sequence of the parts or syntagms or the sentence. Saussure's structural linguistics furnishes a functional explanation of language according to its structural hierarchy, that is, structures within structures. He suggested that his system for studying language had profound implications for other disciplines. In the study of a literary work, Saussure's syntagmatic approach explains our usual, instinctive approach. We read a poem from its start to its finish, we see the narrative work in terms of the sequence of events or the scenes of the play and we understand the details from the first to the last. This approach emphasizes the surface structures of the work, as it does for the sentence in Saussure's scheme, as opposed to the deep structures, those not on the surface - the understood but unexpressed signs. Saussurean linguistics applies, moreover, to synchronic features (i.e., language as it exists at a particular time) rather than to diachronic features (details of language considered in their historical process of development).

What is known as structuralism and structuralist literary theory is an intellectual movement that embraces a number of different approaches that have some basic ideas in common. The fundamental insights of structuralism are derived from or influenced by several streams of thought.

The linguistic circles of Prague (among whose leaders were N. S. Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson) and Copenhagen (where the outstanding figure was Louis Hjelmslev, the originator of a linguistic theory known as 'glossematics'), Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal ideas on structural linguistics, the French cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' study of systems that underlie different cultures, the American school which derived originally from the ideas of Leonard Bloomfield and later from Noam Chomsky, the Firthian and neo-Firthian schools in England, other concepts of sign and system, the assumption that poetics is the 'science of literature'—all such ideas contributed to the growth and development of structuralism.

Although structuralism started as a mode of approach in linguistic and anthropological studies, it has influenced other areas such as sociology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, history, economic theory, political theory, semiotics, myth studies and literary criticism.

Saussure (1857-1913) began by defining the scope and limits of his study; he proposed a number of distinctions such as:

(a) Lalangueandlaparaole
(b) Synchronic and diachronic analyses
(c) Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships

(d) Signifier and signified

La Langue is the system, the institution called language which is a set of impersonal rules and conventions: langue is trans individual and abstract. Parole is the actual manifestation of language in speaking, which is taken as primary; parole is individual / concrete. If the study deals with the description of a language at a given point of time, it is called synchronic and if it deals with changes that occur in the course of time, it is called diachronic (i.e. the history and development over a period of time). Though Saussure did not rej ect the value of the diachronic studies, he asserted that the diachronic perspective deals with phenomena that are unrelated to systems although they do condition them.

Syntagmatic is the linear arrangement of units as in a chain; the units maybe sounds, letters, words, sentences etc. 'Paradigmatic' is the vertical arrangement of units as in a ladder; the units may be sounds, letters, words, sentences, etc. Some scholars feel that all behavioural patterns show these two types of relationships. For example, a menu card in a five-star hotel shows different kinds of soup, which gives a paradigmatic choice. The way we eat-first the soup, then the first course, then the second courseshows the linear syntagmatic choice.

It is also maintained that all linguistic relationships (maybe all relationships and discriminations) are binary (i.e. always in twos).

Language, Saussure said, is a system of signs and the linguistic sign is a two-sided psychological entity composed of a concept and a sound-image, 'I propose to retain the word sign to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified and signifier'. The relationship between the signifier and the signified was arbitrary with respect to nature/object but not with respect to culture. For example, the word tree' in English refers to an object which is identified and accepted by English speaking people. But it is arbitrary since there is no inherent connection between sounds and their referents.

Not just the form but the sound image, but the connection between the signified and the signifier, is arbitrary.

Language, according to Saussure, is a system of interrelated units and the value of the units is determined by their places in the system at a given time and in a given state. The stress laid on the synchronic study and analysis of language as systematic structures in terms ofbinary contrasts of signifiers laid the foundations of modem structural linguistics.

One can find similar sets of assumptions in the structuralist poetics of Roman Jakobson, in the cultural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, in the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, in the sociology ofDurkheim, in Bloomfieldian and Chomskyan linguistics, in New Criticism and Practical Criticism, in Firthian and Neo-Firthian functional linguistics-all of which are essentially structural.

As Jonathan Culler points out in the preface to his *Structuralism Poetics* (1975), three characteristics of structuralism and literary theory clearly stands out. First, it is not primarily interpretive; it does not offer a method which, when applied literary works, produces meanings. Secondly, structuralism does not focus on individual works, but attempts to understand the conventions which make literature possible. The langue of literature, in the words of Jakobson, are the universal underlying structure in Chomsky. Thirdly, it would 'attempt to specify how we go about making sense of texts, warfare the interpretative operations on which literature is based. This, in a way, is similar to the 'close reading' of the text in practical/new criticism. In other words, structuralism tries to describe 'the system of conventions which enable poems to have the meaning or the range of meanings they do'.

Structuralism constructed an elaborate metasystem or a way of thinking on the basis that literature is like language, or language becomes 'literature's being'. Tzvetan Todorov's *Introduction to Poetics* (1981) speaks of the grammar of literature. In structuralism, any individual work (like parole) can only reveal a part of a system (like langue); in other words, it is the interest in the system or the grammar of literature rather than the meaning of the individual work that became the forte of structuralism,

and, paradoxically, the. source of its decline. Todorov declared: 'The particular text will only be an instance that allows us to describe the properties of literature (in general)'.

The basic or 'bottom-line' proposition in structuralism, that no unit can be understood in isolation and that units are to be understood only in the context of larger networks or structures, had its widespread influence upto the 1980s. As Peter Barry says in his *Beginning Theory* (1995), 'The arrival of structuralism in Britain and the USA in the 1970s caused a great deal of controversy, precisely because literary studies in these countries had very little interest in large abstract issues of the kind that structuralisms wanted to raise. The so-called 'Cambridge revolution in English studies in the 1920s had promulgated the opposite to all of this; it enjoined close study of the text in isolation from all wider structure it was relentlessly text based' and tended to exclude wider questions, abstract issues and ideas. Structuralism in that sense turned English studies on its head, and devalued all that it had held dear for around half-a-century, asking long-repressed question such as? 'What do we mean by 'literary'? How do narratives work? What is a poetic structure. This in a way provides the line of

continuity between the preoccupation of Russian formalism and its concern with literariness and the concepts in structuralism, especially in its early phase.

Some of the best contributions of structuralism critics are in the area of prose narratives, pointing out a network of inter-textual connections or an underlying universal narrative structure. Todorov's study of Boccaccio's *Decameron* concentrates on the grammar of the narrative. In *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969) he analyzes the narrative syntax whose basic unit is the clause (on the analogy of syntactic patterns in linguistics), which consists of a subject and a predicate.

Roland Barthes in his Introduction *to the Structural Analysis of Narratives'* (1966) emphasizes the need for a hierarchical typology of units and proposes three levels of narrative structure.

   (a) Functions (as in Prop)
   (b) Actions (by which he refers to characters)
   (c) Narration (equivalent to discourse)

Barthes in his *S/Z* (1970,1974 in English) through a study of Balzac's *Sarassine* presents the codes underlying both the production of texts and their reading and proposes certain codes for analyzing all stories. Silverman exemplifies the model of Barthes in a lucid manner in her the subject of semiotics (1983).

> The Semic code: functions to define persons, objects and places; it is useful for grouping a number of signifiers around a proper name or another signifier (as though it is a proper name) and the signifiers, grouped functions like a collective signified to the proper name or its surrogate. For example in Hardy's *Tess* of D'Urbervilles, there is a character called Durbeyfield who is described 'On an evening in the later part of May, a middle-aged man was walking homeward from Shaston to the village of Marlott, in the adjoining Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor. The pair of legs that carried him were rickety, and there was a bias in his gait which inclined him somewhat to the left of the straight line. He occasionally gave a smart nod, as if in confirmation of some opinion, though he was not thinking of anything in particular. An empty egg-basket was slung upon his arm, the nap of his hat was ruffled, a patch being quite worn away at its brim where his thumb came in taking it off. Before the proper name is supplied, middle-aged, empty egg-basket, rickety-legs, shabby hat, bias in his gait are given to create a collective signified.

> The hermeneutic code: This is entrusted with the responsibility of articulating and resolving the enigma (something that is mysterious and difficult to understand) formulation of the enigma, request, for an answer, snare, equivocation, jamming, suspended answer, partial answer and disclosure. These elements can be combined in assorted ways.

For example, in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* we have the following description of Mr Utterson (who has something to utter/tell):

'Mr Utterson, the lawyer, was a man of rugged countenance that was never . lighted by a smile: cold, scanty, and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and somehow loveable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something which indeed never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself, drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years.'

The theme for the enigma is created in the description of Mr Utterson; the conflict self-indulgence and self-denial is created; later Mr Utterson says, 'If he is Mr Hyde, I'll be Mr Seek.'

Similarly, in the description of Mr Hyde's house, we find the enigma. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighborhood, like a tire in a forest... showed no windows, nothing but a door on the lower story; and a blind forehead of discolored wall on the upper _____ '

The mystery is exaggerated. A trap (snare) is created when Utterson asks Poole, the servant about Hyde: 'O, dear no, Sir. He never dines here... Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory.'

Equivocation contains a snare and a truth. When the body of Hyde is discovered, Utterson remarks: 'Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master.' Utterson is already in the presence of that body and has no need to search for it. Jamming can take place in the form of, for instance, the death of a key witness or something missing. A suspended answer or a partial answer may be given. Disclosure is the closure and end of signification.

The Proairetic code: This is the code of actions, the sequence of events within a story; it is the 'glue' which binds the events together.

The symbolic code: This represents polarities and antitheses that cannot be reconciled, for example, the sexual difference that goes beyond the biological difference.

The cultural code: This may be represented in the form of good and evil, humanity and bestiality, day and night, body and soul. These are fragments of ideology whose effect is felt in all the other codes. In Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde, we have: 'Man is not truly one, but two', which shows that man is a house divided against itself; it may represent the Christian fall. Jekyll was slowly losing hold of his original and better self and becoming slowly incorporated with his second and worse. The cultural codes provide the means whereby information contained in the authoritative text like the Bible or the Gita finds its way into the novels and poems, which perpetuate that order.

1. The word structure has been used in different contexts in various disciplines. Name any two.
2. Saussure made a number of contributions to the field of linguistics, name any two.
3. Define language as defined by Saussure.
4. Define structuralism.

5.3 POST-STRUCTURALISM

The ramifications of intellectual change during the period of structuralism were profound. The structuralists wanted to describe the invariant structures of literature that gave way to the post-structuralist emphasis on those dimensions of language, psychology and social life which undermine precisely those stable orders of meaning, identity, and truth that structuralism seeks to establish. Post-structuralist critics would be more concerned with the contingencies of identity, the lack of fixity of meaning and the indeterminacy of the world.

Inseparable from the radical politics of 1968, the year students and workers rose in protest against the French state and almost overthrew the government; post-structuralism itself represents a radical dismantling of some of the most important assumptions underlying western culture and philosophy. Paramount among those assumptions is the belief that reason provides access to a realm of pure ideation which transcends matter and language. In this way reasoning proceeds without assistance from signification, which is derived and secondary in relation to thought. Such a model of ideation provides an authoritative standard for truth conceived as the presence of the idea or concept in the mind, a standard that sustains and is sustained by traditional western value oppositions as the soul and the body, culture and nature and spirit and matter. Truth and ideation thus conceived allow reason and rationality to be categorically opposed from madness, nonsense, falseness, representation, metaphor, imitation and artifice by an apparently clean cut design that separates logic from rhetoric or speculative philosophy from mere grammar. A related assumption of such metaphysics is that the natural and social sciences describe a world of objective facts; they are not discourses that construct schematic orders of power/knowledge out of a flux of experience.

The post-structuralists connect these philosophic and scientific assumptions to the way society and the self have been conceived in the West. Western social life is supposedly rational and civilized, but the post-structuralists argue it is disciplinary. The ordering power of reason merely allows a moralistic segregation of well-disciplined and functionally useful 'good citizens' from dissident troublemakers. Similarly, the individual self or subject, the basis for the western political ideal of liberty and the capitalist ideal of freedom, is defined by his supposed conscious awareness and his ability to control his own destiny. Post-structuralists argue that there is an effect of unconscious psychological processes, society-wide systems of

symbolic construction, and cultural discourses that are beyond our control. Moreover, in Western thought, the

dominant system of Oedipalized hetero-sexual family relations charged with engendering sexed subjects is conceived as being a normalizing institution, rather than a machine for constraining and compressing a potential multiplicity of desires, possible identities, sexual object choices, and libidinal energies into easily manageable, compartmentalized and limited forms of identity.

Further, the post-structuralists argue that Western assumptions about what is good, true and normal are essentially (rather than accidentally) related to the system of patriarchy, heterosexism and capitalism. Moral good does not reside in what is authentic, original and is subtracted from imitation and artifice. The true and the good are the effects of processes of differentiation and replication that confound all moral identities and all simple ontologies of substance that might serve as grounds for moral systems which privilege authenticity and virtue over contingency and artifice. Finally, according to the post-structuralists, what we take to be real does not exist prior to simulation; rather, it is simulated into being and lent a semblance of ontological reality by virtue of acts of representation, masquerade, and posturing that are themselves fundamental and generative of the real. Reality is the successful repression of these processes.

Everything which we consider to be true is at stake. What we think and what we question are all subject to criticism. We must assume if we are to continue within lending Western rationalist culture our assent and voluntary participation - our institutions for producing good citizens, our habits of thinking we are above matter or nature, our values based on the easy segregation of truth from artifice. Literature is a small part of all of this, but in as much as literature draws attention to such things as the construction of realities through signification and explores the undersides of social life that normality banishes from view (one may recall the scenes of extreme tension and irrationality in Shakespeare's *King Lear).* Literature can be an important site for exploring the processes that post-structuralism claims are at work in Western thinking, society, and culture, processes that must be otherwise violently suppressed if the dominant concepts of normality and of reality are to be sustained.

One common root of post-structuralist theory and practice is the work of the nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche took issue with the dominant assumptions of Western philosophy and Christian idealist culture: the idea that there is a coherent human subject, the belief that reality is a stable field of objects capable of being known by a neutral instrument called reason, the belief that knowledge is a recording device rather than a machine for constructing order and identity where there is none, the idea that moral good consists of the suppression of our material natures and the belief that truth is a spiritual quality that rises above language are open to criticism. According to Nietzsche, these concepts of truth are incapable of grasping the flux of matter and sensation in which the human subject is immersed. They ignore the way reason produces knowledge by ascribing

identity to processes that are used to differentiate rather than unify. Nietzsche discredits the moral ideals of western society, which train people to be ashamed of their bodies and of the world of matter in general. He argues that material life should be celebrated and not denied. He sees all the ideals of western bourgeois society, from aesthetic beauty to legal justice, as projections of power, a will to dominate by imposing models that out things into schemes and fixities when in reality, these models of truth are in a state of constant flux. The universal in Nietzsche's view is merely the dominant.

He argues that we should not ascribe meaning to the world and, thereby, impress upon it our desire to be unique, to stand above matter, to feel our lives made significant by a spurious notion of spiritual meaning or non-material ideation. Rather, we should conceive of the world as a material process that includes human reason, as an ongoing repetition of the same - of life replicating itself over and over again without teleology or finality or goal. This view of life has no particular in the spiritual afterlife; as matter without meaning.

Nietzsche's critique of Western moral idealism continues in the twentieth century in the work of Georges Bataille, a French thinker whose work spans the era from the midl 950s to the early 1960s and who also was a major influence on post-structuralism. Bataille argues that Western society and culture represses materiality and heterogeneity in favour of a homogeneous stasis based on rational utility and human servility. Human beings project closed systems of thought and morality on the world and seek to expel everything that discloses the human link to materiality, such as sexuality, excrement and death. Capitalism organizes life around usefulness and appropriation, while ignoring what is most rich about life - expenditure without reserve, the pure enjoyment of pleasurable excitation without any conception of its utility. The sacred is one experience that is a metaphor for our attempt to reconnect with the material totality of nature; another more direct route is eroticism. Bataille was influenced by anthropology, especially the work on gift-giving in primitive societies by Marcel Mauss which allowed Bataille to formulate an alternative to the utilitarian exchange system of modern capitalism, an alternative in which giving away, unreserved spending without expectation of return, would replace utility.

Several ideas from Bataille re-emerge in post-structuralist work. The imagery of madness is populated by animals because humans are still animals 'in nature.' Another theme is the heterogeneity, expenditure and waste that accompanies and undermines all human rational systems that seek to be homogeneous. This excess in life must be restrained if a culture of repression and an economy of limited utility are to operate successfully. This notion applies to language as well. An excess of possible meanings must be repressed if logic and reason are to use it successfully to establish meaning and truth. Another theme is the fascination with evil, criminality and marginality. Those branded as 'perverts' by so-called normal society (writers like the Marquis de Sade) are frequently, according to Bataille, explorers of the limits between nature and culture, the appropriative and the excremental, the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. They undermine the moral values and ideals upon which repressively

normative culture is founded and draw attention to the violence inherent in those ideals of normality (de Sade's corrupt priests and ministers are exemplary of this).

The earliest work characteristic of structuralism was seen in Michel Foucaulf s examination of the history of madness in the early 1960s. Reason, according to Foucault, is positioned as the centerpiece of Western philosophy in the seventeenth century and that positioning requires the banishment of alternate modes of thought, which are deemed mad or unreasonable. Foucault was the first to argue, following Nietzsche, that reason is not the transparent instrument of knowledge as philosophers and scientists have claimed it is, nor is it a touchstone for determining value (what is good is what is rational, for example, which is to say, good is what behaves in a certain logical and orderly way). Reason, rather, represents a certain political choice regarding what shall be counted as reasonable.

In his later works, Foucault argues that knowledge in society consists of discourses that posit and create objects to be known as record pre-existing realities. The way knowledge is organized in the discourses of western society is allied with the organization of power in society. Power seeps into the pores of society rather than occupying a single-state site; over time, power becomes part of the habitual everyday procedures and operations of social institutions such as the school, hospital, prison, and the workplace. Citizens learn to absorb and perform disciplinary actions themselves. Morality, all the ways in which one is instructed to be 'good,' becomes inseparable from voluntary compliance. One no longer needs to be told what to do because one does it oneself automatically.

In the mid 1960s, the writers and critics of the journal *Tel Quel,* many of whom, like Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, would become important post-structuralist thinkers, began to link the study of signification to radical political critiques of Western capitalist society, especially to the disordering and subversion of the reigning modes for constructing subjectivity and reality through language. They focused on the way the signifying potential of language exceeded the semantic orders (the way the meaning or truth of being, of the self, of the good is established) that was formed on the basis of western capitalist culture. Influenced by recent translations of the Russian formalists and the Prague Linguists (a group with connections through Roman Jakobson to the Formalists), who emphasized the autonomy of the operations of language from meaning as well as the role of such structuring principles as binary opposition in the formation of semantic content, the *Tel Quel* writers explored the way the signifying potential of language, its ability to generate multiple meaning effects in a proliferation of possible references, posed a rich and creative counterpoint. The objective was to pin down meaning into singular terms, to annul the play of language by arresting it and elevating language into a vertical structure that placed meaning over language, truth above signification. As per the *Tel Quel* writers truth and meaning are effects of signification, not the other way around.

Jacques Derrida's three books of 1967 - *Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference,* and *Speech and Phenomenon* - provide the crucial analytic devices and concepts for much of the later post-structuralist critiques carried out by thinkers as Jean Baudrillard, Luce Mgaray, and Jean-Francois Lyotard. Derrida, whose work is largely associated with deconstruction, argues that western philosophy claims to speak for reason, truth, and knowledge, however it consists of violent acts of opposition and hierarchy, value judgments that unjustifiably subordinate one set of terms and privilege another. The valued terms are truth (defined as the presence of ideas or of objects in the mind), reason, rationality, meaning, logic, authenticity, originality, speech, immediacy, the living, identity and many more. The devalued terms are broadly categorized as difference, signification, non-identity, repetition, substitution, writing, imitation, representation, artifice, metaphor and many more. All of the first terms allow western philosophy to organize itself as a project of knowledge that seeks to determine truth in an authoritative manner by dispelling falseness. Truth must itselfbe untouched by falseness, by all of the devalued terms listed above, from repetition and difference to imitation and signification. To determine truth as an authoritative self-identical, proper, unique, present, vivid, and original; as something untainted by substitution, repetition, difference, must rely on the theory of differentiation. In other words, differentiation can be understood as that

which distin-guishes an inside (of truth) from an outside (of substitution, difference, representation, and the rest). Language as representation must be understood as rational thought. The inside-outside opposition must already be in place in order to establish truth as that which is identical with itself, living, and authentic. Similarly, it must also establish repetition and substitution as examples of false speech or untruths.

This initial decision to differentiate inside from outside, truth from representation, and identity from difference is never accounted for in western philosophy; it is always simply assumed. As a result, that philosophy declares difference as secondary, as a derivative and external; when in fact it is necessary to the constitution of philosophy in the first place, in as much as that must begin by assuming an identity. If difference were not already at work, allowing an inside to be distinguished from an outside, no philosophical opposition between truth and its others could be established. Yet, according to Derrida, the process of differentiation cannot itself be turned into a philosophical category, one that can be identified or grasped by the mind as a clear and knowable presence, an identity from which all differences had been purged.

Derrida also notes that Western rationalist philosophy assumes an opposition between the intelligible and the sensible, between ideas and the material world, between meaning and signification. These oppositions are parallel to and work in conjunction with the oppositions between inside and outside and between truth and its variations which ultimately derive from the opposition of soul and body, spirit and matter and between the ideal and the physical. Truth is always determined as the presence of ideas to the mind, an internal presence that is almost

spiritual in nature in that it is supposedly a pure intelligibility uncontaminated by external signs, which pertain to the realm of the body and the physical. In the western tradition, speech (the voice of the mind talking to itself) is consistently identified with this ideal of truth as an intelligible presence in the mind. Writing on the other hand, is considered to be a substitute body, a repetition rather than an original presence, a sign of a sign (speech) rather than the thing itself in its living presence.

Derrida argues that these oppositions depend for their existence on what they seek to exclude as additional, supplemental and external. Everything that is placed beyond the boundaries of truth (traits such as substitution, repetition, mediation and differentiation) must be the result of the workings of an ideal. True ideas are usually thought to be universal and eternal; they must be capable of infinitely repeating themselves. What this means, is that they must repeatedly take their own place and substitute for earlier versions of themselves. The very qualities of signification that placed it outside truth -that it is a mere substitute or repetition of something more original are therefore necessary for the truth to exist. The plenitude of truth known as a living idea in the voice of the mind has breaks within it. To be what it is, it must double itself. It must signify itself by repeating itself. As Derrida puts it, there is a supplement at the origin; repetition inhabits presence originally and constitutively what seems as singular and unique is originally doubled.

Derrida's arguments are quite difficult at times. For our purposes, it is enough to say that he argues that meaning and truth are inseparable from signification, that western ideals of identity are founded on a ruse that obscures the way identity is produced by non-identity and difference, that meaning and truth are effects of the same processes of repetition, substitution and differentiation that characterize the modes

of signification such as writing that are supposedly externalto truth, that originality and authenticity are two values linked to truth and do not precede and produce imitation. Rather they too are derived from a process of repetition and substitution that is the same as the one at work in imitation, that texts that participate in the western tradition's value system will privilege values such as virtue or truthfulness that are founded on violent acts of differentiation, hierarchy and subordination. That which is rejected as truth is rejected precisely because they represent a rich multiplicity of semantic possibilities that undermine the paternalist and spiritualist authority of the western ideal of truth. That what counts as true and good is a ruse of domination and an effect of epistemic violence; a violence that can never be taken into account by philosophy if the ruse is to operate successfully.

Other post-structuralists like Julia Kristeva find a revolutionary tool in language for undoing the false identities of meaning and subjectivity upon which western humanist and capitalist culture is based. Avant-garde writers such as Kafka, Joyce, Kristeva and others find a kind of writing that evokes semiotic processes that are subversive of subjective identity and of the barriers that keep the unconscious desire constrained for capitalist ends. The western concepts of identity, ontology and truth efface, marginalize and subordinate the processes of linguistic generativity that make them possible. The orders of truth and reason must suppress the productivity of

signification in favor of models of homogeneous ontology and cognitive certainty. But the generative power of signification, its ability to create effects unbeholden to the regimes of conceptual truth, always threatens what it makes possible and one sees this at work especially in avant-garde writing.

Post-structuralism developed further in the midl 970s work of Deleuze and Guattari on psychoanalysis and materialism and it attains its full articulation in the work of Jean Baudrillard, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Jean-Francois Lyotard in the 1970s and 1980s. Deleuze and Guattari are psychoanalytic materialists who describe the immersion of culture, society, and human psychology in materialnarure. There is no distinction between the representations of culture and the realities of nature; they intermesh and culture is simply a momentary arrangement or form of materiality. Matter has two major tendencies, one toward homogeneous organization or stasis, which they refer to as segmentation and territorialization the other towards disaggregation, de-territorialization and flight. Deleuze and Guattari advocate an undoing of all the identities and congealed masses that constitute capitalist society and culture in favour of nomadic flows of energy that cannot be pinned down to a system of identity or power.

Cixous and Irigaray apply the lessons of post-structuralism to feminism and to the question of gender identity. They argue that the oppositions at the foundation of Western culture have associated men with truth, reason, and the mastery of matter, while women have been linked to falseness, irrationality and unbounded matter. Irigaray is concerned with locating an identity for women that might escape these categorical traps, while Cixous is interested in developing modes of writing, what she calls 'feminine writing,' that transcend the oppositions altogether.

Lyotard's early work focuses on the tension between figural representation, the palpable design of any work of art and the semantic content it supposedly transports or communicates. Any work on changing the semantic contents privileged in western culture must transform the figures that bear them. In his later works, Lyotard will argue that all thought and all meaning is discursive and open to a narrative form. When we

enter into social debates over the shape of the world, we merely trade stories and offer contending narratives. Any change in turn would merely be the success of one narrative over another. Lyotard calls the current dominant narrative - post-modernity, which consists of a rejection of the grand narratives that envisioned society as a project for liberating humanity or the working class or the free humanist individual. In today's world of theories, micro-narratives dominate, and society is organized in terms of cybernetic performativity. This is a theory which explains how people and things function in order to assure the successful operation of a social system in which information is power and in which powerful corporations increasingly dictate the future course of social research. In other words, this theory tries to determine all that can be determined and understood as real. Lyotard examines the pragmatic nature of contemporary knowledge, the way it is constructed as an expanding series

of language games or linked phrases that can never achieve complete description of reality or of truth.

For Jean Baudrillard, capitalist, political and economic life has given way to a domination defined in semiotic terms. The modern world is one in which the distinction between the artificial and the real, the simulated and the actual, has disappeared. Now, everything is a simulation. The rapid disintegration of indexicality has added to the notion of the vanishing original. The modern media especially, are powerful agents that have contributed to the genesis of this theory. The media creates a sense of *hyperreality* in which the real seems to be on display in an unmediated manner, but in fact, this hyperreality is a simulation. Disneyland is the perfect metaphor for a world in which representations replace the real. Disneyland makes it seem as if the real is elsewhere, outside the fantasy, but this is simply a lure of power that leads us to believe that simulations are real. The old philosophic idea of a truth that seductively evades interpretation has given way to a barrage of interpretations in the modern world. Everything now consists of signs without referents. We are dominated by a code that assigns identities, regulates knowledge, and defuses desire in a pervasive manner that attempts to absorb even resistance and revolt. The result is that none of the traditional oppositions hold any longer. The good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the left and the right - all become interchangeable and usable as signs which determine lives more powerfully than any economic instance or political form.

In the late 1960s, structuralism was criticized for its thoughts and modes of thought. Post-structuralism involved looking for possibilities, implications and drawbacks of structuralism and its basis in Saussurean linguistics itself. In a way it was complemetary to structuralism as it offered alternative techniques of inquiry, explanation and interpretation. Post-structuralism was uncertain about whether structuralism was adequate and whether the meaning of any text, in literature, was stable.

Saussure fundamentally distinguished between the signifier and signified, which were at the centre of the instability. Unconsciously, while distinguishing, Saussure, did not reveal any coherence between signs. In fact, he revealed a natural incoherence. Post-structuralism went on to chase Saussure's perception that in any language there merely existed differences without any positive terms showing that the signifier and the signified were not nust oppositional but multiple forces dragging each other in opposite directions, and in the process, ending up with the meaning getting deferred.

Simply put, the process of creation of meaning results in an unlimited series of patterns and sequences, which criss-cross each other.

It is essential to believe in the disproportionate qualities of language (a form of inadequacy) when it comes to a post-structuralist thinking. Therefore, the idea of indeterminacy is a significant element of a deconstructive practice in Jacques Derrida's theory of difference. As per the post-structuralist theory, meaning has a natural instability while a structuralist would believe that it is possible to explain and understand provided there is an

analysis of the conventions and codes of any literary or cultural text or message. Roland Barthes is very significant in post-structuralist theory, because he brings together the structuralist and the post-structuralist movements. In his work *Elements of Semiology* (1967) he says that structuralism possesses the ability to explain any sign system from any culture (i.e. all systems of signification). However, according to his perception, such an explanation makes it necessary to come up with a theory of meaning and explanation. This results in the idea of metalanguage. In other words, something beyond language or belonging to the 'second-order of language'. This order typically describes, explains and interprets the first order of language.

The presumption here is that one order of metalanguage is like to provoke other orders to come into play.

Each order of language naturally depends on a metalanguage, which explains it. In this way, ironically, deconstruction is put in a delicate position where it becomes (against its principles and design) a metalanguage itself. Therefore, are many discourses in regression and all discourses stand a chance to be interrogated. This is one feature of Barthes's post-structuralist thinking and is essentially, deconstructive.

After 1968, the theories of Barthes made him question other stipulations: (a) that the Author (or the concept of the Author) is dead, an idea elaborated in his essay *The Death of the Author* (1968); (b) that there are two primary experiences derived from reading: (i) plaisir and (ii) puissance (c) that texts could be lisible or scriptible (i.e. 'readerly' or 'writerly.'); and (d) that considering the application of certain codes, a text may be called 'readerly' or 'writerly' (or both).

Julia Kristeva came up with some significant psychoanalytic contributions to post-structuralist theory in the French tradition. Her approach, though complex, was fascinating. In La Revolution du Language Poetique (1974), she discussed how the orderly and the rational were related. She also talked about the relation between the heterogeneous or the irrational and between the conscious and the unconscious. Her work examines the link between the 'normal' and the 'poetic'. According to her, semiotic material is irrational and illogical, and while reason is responsible for creating logic, syntax and coherence it results in the 'symbolic' element. Antimonies like feelings and thoughts are implied and there are also antimonies, such as brain and heart as well as the Apollonian and the Dionysiac. In essence, Kristeva conceives the 'semiotic' element (associated with the concept of an infant—a word meaning 'speechless'—in the pre-Oedipal phase) as going against the 'symbolic'. She considers it as a way of undermining the symbolic order, thus creating confusion, because of its fluid and plural nature. This makes it even more baffling to create any fixed meaning. Just like water, the semiotic elements go against anything that is static or not moving. They are also opposed to any binary opposition, such as the masculine - feminine. However, there is more to a fluid-fixed state than a simple binary opposition. In one way, 'semiotic' writing is bisexual (the pre-Oedipal phase is genderless). In English literature, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf are examples of' semiotic' writers who use language freely

arid disseminate meaning in a 'writerly' way and style. In other words, these are examples where they have deviated from the rigid, realistic or conventional. Julia Kristeva goes to the extent of relating sound in poetry to a primary sexual impulse suggesting that a blend of consonantal sounds, could be either feminine or masculine. It is suggested that 'semistic' material may be equated with a feminine tendency, and the symbolic with the masculine. This raises the possibility for feminine theory of the idea of feminine writing.

It indicates writing, which is feminine not just in style but also language, tone and feeling and is totally different from a language and discourse, which is completely masculine. Deconstruction is the main aspect of the post-structuralist theory, which is used in literary practice. Jacques Derrida was mainly responsible for this. His essay *Structure, Sign and Play* (1966) is the first critique of structuralism. He was responsible for initiating the methods of close reading.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What is the central argument of the post-structuralist theorists?
6. How is Nietzsche a post-structuralist?
7. What was the importance of the journal Tel Quel and who were its contributors?
8. What was Julia Kristeva's approach to post-structural philosophy?

5.4 DECONSTRUCTION

Derrida was born in 1930 in the suburbs of Algiers in a petit bourgeois Jewish family. His Jewishness, the sense of belonging to a marginal, dispossessed culture had formative influences on the development of his theory. He went to France as a nineteen year old student; he studied and taught there, later dividing his time between France and the United States. Rebellion is a spontaneous activity in French society and French intellectual tradition must mock the order, state and authority. In France he experienced a degree of rigidity and conservatism in French Universities where, in spite of revolutions, the educational system remained unchanged. The curriculum remained distant to most theories and had not opened itself to Saussure's theory of language. The approach of the Academy with a single authoritative opinion on literature or philosophy was accepted without any questions. The student revolt of 1960 was an indication of the restlessness in French Universities; it could be a matter of a strange coincidence that the student revolution followed the publication of Derrida's most influential work (first published in French) *OfGrammatology* in 1967. An excerpt has been given below:

> Deconstruction simply problematizes all habits of thought in any 'discipline' (the word 'discipline' itself shows how our thinking itself is disciplined) by demonstrating how impossible it is to draw a clear-cut line between reality and representation; this, in turn, will involve a sustained and rigorous attention to the ways in which certain notions of 'language' or 'text' have been taken for granted. Though the focus of study in Deconstruction is 'language/text', ultimately, Deconstruction is a rigorous attempt to (re) think the limits of that principle of reason which has shaped the emergence of

Western philosophy, science and technology at large and its search for an answer to the question: Is the reason for reason rational?

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who translated Derrida's *OfGrammatology* into English (published in 1976), says: 'A certain view of the world, of consciousness and of language has been accepted as the correct one and if the minute particulars of that view are examined, a different picture emerges.'

For example, Derrida examines Rousseau's *Confessions.* Rousseau says, writing is a 'dangerous supplement', an addition to the natural resources of speech ... a necessary evil. Derrida points out that Rousseau uses writing to debunk writing and denounces the very means by which his own ideas are set down for others to read; writing is exactly the mechanism which allows Rousseau to practise the art of concealment to express the opposite of what he feels. A supplement is one that adds and makes the original more complete; this means that there is a lack or absence of something in the original; the inadequacy or deficiency in speech can be supplemented only by writing and in that case, it is not dangerous; it is not a 'necessary evil' as Rousseau says. Incidentally even in the Bible it is written: God said 'Let there be light ...' but the command is written. Often we too use the expression, 'Derrida says' but it is expressed in writing.

Similarly, Derrida minutely examines Saussure's ideas on language and points out that Saussure is not so sure of what he says. For instance Saussure says:

'Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both written and spoken forms of words; the spoken form alone constitutes the object. But the spoken word is so intimately connected to the written image that the latter manages to usurp the main role. People attach more importance to the sign itself {*Course in General Linguistics:* 1916, pp. 23-24).'

Derrida argues that Saussure, like Aristotle, Plato and Rousseau considers speech to be a privilege because of its self-presence; he says that it is not just speech alone that is privileged but its presence is privileged over absence. Derrida says: 'Voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity... writing, on the contrary, destroys the ideal of a pure self-presence.' Rousseau glorifies speech to such an extent affirming it as pure, spontaneous, authentic, original and natural that writing becomes secondary and lifeless. Privileging speech over writing is called phonocentrism; through privileging the spoken word, meaning and truth, reason and logic, the phonocentric tradition becomes essentially logocentric. In other words what is actually privileged through phonocentricism is logocentricism (the Greek word 'logos' means reason and truth). The phonocentric and logocentric tradition spans from Plato and Aristotle to Heidegger, Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Structuralism. As portrayed by Derrida, the logocentric system always assigns the origin of truth to logos or to the spoken word, to the voice, reason and the Word of God. Derrida does not deny that the use of speech comes before the use of writing in the history of language or in the learning of a language by human

beings. What he argues is that the original or true form is not necessarily the purest form. There is a distinction between the earlier and conceptual notion of priority. For example, in mathematics, historically, counting was done with sticks or stones or beads but they have now been discarded for more abstract forms and formulae. We do not bring in historical priority to decide conceptual importance.

Moreover, we cannot take only the Roman system of writing (from left to right) as the representative of all writing systems; there are other systems where writing proceeds from right to left (as in Arabic) or from top to bottom (as in Chinese). So we

cannot assume that the marks on the paper (i.e. the letters) stand for the sound of the spoken language; even in the Roman system there was no one-to-one correspondence between speech and writing. Moreover, writing systems like Chinese or the Egyptian Hieroglyphic or ideogrammatic writing systems where the scripts precede the development of the phonetic or alphabetic scripts. Writing, as we know, started with pictures and ideas and developed as picto-ideo-phono-graphic. Some believe that writing existed before human beings were created, hi Islam, Allah himself gave writing to man but not to the angels. In Hinduism, Chitragupt (chitra—pictorial; gupt—secret) is supposed to be the chief accountant. Linear writing is only one form of writing. Moreover the word writing itself has several other meanings; writing cannot be used only in the conventional sense of inscriptions on a page.

Derrida uses writing in its narrow sense as well as in its broader sense to indicate all systems that shows traces of thinking or interior speech or anything that precedes exterior or actual speech. In its broader sense, arche-writing 'supplements perception before perception even appears to itself.' In the Derridean concept of Deconstruction, writing, in the sense of traces, always exists prior to perception and its presence alone is what we understand as speech. Trace is writing in general and it serves as the foundation of speech. Thus, Derrida reverses the speech- writing hierarchy and privileges writing.

After pointing out that the concept of writing cannot be reduced to a graphic or inscriptional sense, Derrida proceeds to deconstruct another important Saussurean statement that stresses that: In language there are only differences without positive (i.e. fixed) terms. Saussurean differences operate at two levels—signifiers (form/expression) as well as signifieds (concepts). Signifiers are sound images, expressions, audible sounds in speech and visible marks in writing; signifieds are concepts. Both signifiers and signifieds are purely differential.

According to Saussure, 'Language is a system whose parts can and must all be considered in their synchronic solidarity'.

Derrida is not against the term signified; he puts it under erasure (a device used to show that it exists but needs close/ critical examination). Since the word is put under scrutiny it is crossed out; since it exists it remains legible but crossed. Derrida argues that 'difference' will mean presence; both entities are present. But not everything is present in the language system; secondly, what is present is elusive. There are no entities or relations of absences. For

example, look up the dictionary for the meaning of the word 'meaning'. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* tries to define the word in the following circular manner:

Meaning	:	What is meant; significance
Meant	:	What it means
Mean	:	Signify, have in mind, intend
Significance	:	Being significant; meaning, import
Significant	:	Having or conveying a meaning

In an attempt to capture the signified (i.e. the concept or the meaning of the word), we keep moving from one signifier. (word or form) to another signifier; we never get to the signified. The signified gets lost in the search and we keep going round and round. One can mark the circularity of 'signifiers' and how the 'signified' or meaning slips

beneath the circularity of signifiers. One may try defining (i.e. capturing the signified) even simple words like 'a city'; it can never be defined in absolute terms, using population, area, civic amenities and various other checks. We can only say it is a larger town. But, again the word 'town' has to be specified; we cannot say it is a large village. This clearly shows that a sign is a sign of another sign with no fixed meaning or signified; there is no final transcendental signified. 'The meaning of meaning is infinite in its implication, the indefinite referral of signifier to signified —' Derrida points out that in everything (word, text and context) opposite is always already there as a trace. He refers to the Greek word Pharmakon which means both, 'remedy' and 'poison'. We can cite several examples like 'model' which means a copy of the original as well as the original; a model in a fashion show is the original from which the others are expected to copy.

The elements or entities are never fully present because language is a state of dissemination. Dissemination is the state of perpetually unfulfilled meaning. So, Derrida has no use for differences inscribed once and for all in a closed system or a static structure. He coins the term differance to express not only difference but also the endless deferment or postponement. According to Derrida,

'Language is structured as an endless deferral of meaning and any search for the essential, absolute stable meaning must therefore be considered metaphysical; there is no fixed element, no fundamental unit, no transcendental signified that is meaningful in itself and escapes the ceaseless interplay of linguistic deferral and difference. The free play of signifiers will never yield a final, unified meaning that in turn, might ground and explain all others' (Norris, 1982).

This unstable condition entails endless weaving and unweaving of language or text. If there is no signified or entity or thing which is present, what we left with are the postprints, impressions or traces of what is absent. No sign is complete in itself; it depends on another sign and that sign in turn depends on another. In other words, each sign is only a trace of an other/another and, without the one that supplements it, no sign is complete. For every sign, a half of it is 'not that' and the other half 'not there'. This means that there are no clear-cut forms and no entities; there are only formations, indications, impressions, imprints, traces where each sign supplements the 'other'.

The notions circularity, plurality, indeterminacy, free-play, differance and supplementary are crucial to the understanding of deconstruction. A summary has been given below:

Trace	Difference	Supplement
No fixed or finished entities only indications, impressions, imprints, footprints of the object. The trace is a word that is absent and can only give formations and not forms. (Something like *samskara).*	To differ and not to differ only to transcend while no transcendental sources of the signifieds are given; only movement that indicates an endless deferral from the signifier to the signified and eventually to a state of dissemination. (Something like *leela)*	This is a state of one getting defined through the other. To supplement is to add what is missing; to supply a necessary lack in the other; to Substitute perpetual dependency on that which is required to complete some existing lack. Nothing is complete in itself. (Something like the concept of the *ardhanareeshwar* - the half and half principle)

These are the important features of writing before speech and conventional writing; it is implied here that any system that exhibits the three features mentioned above is 'writing' in the Derridean sense.

If a sign is a sign of another sign, a text must be a text of another text. No single element - a word/sentence/discourse-may be present in and of itself referring only to itself without referring to another element, which is not present, whether in a spoken or written discourse. The notions of trace, difference and supplement are applicable to texts as well. A text is henceforth no longer a finished body of writing. Some content is enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces.

This textual combination of different tests is the text produced only in the transformation of another text. There are differences everywhere as there are signs of traces. There is no original trace as there will be transcendental signifieds if there could be one. Only the linkage among texts (the intertextuahty which is produced through the transformation of one text into another) is the 'text'.

Derrida argues: 'The essence of a rose is its non-essence; it is its odour as it evaporates - the effluvium that is thrown out (a belch, the excrements, its dissipation). The text is thus a gas.' (Derrida in Glas pp. 69-70). Etymologically the text is a cloth and 'textus' is the form from which 'text' is derived and it means 'woven'. According to Lacan a 'text' is like a dream; you can never say what it means.

Roland Barthes, a French structuralist who turned deconstructionist, followed Derrida and made useful distinctions between 'work' and 'text':

'The work is concrete, occupying a portion of book-space (in a library, for example); the text, on the other hand, is a methodological field... The work can be seen in book stores, card catalogues and on course lists, while the text reveals itself, articulates itself according to or against certain rules. While the work is held in the hand, the text is held in language; it exists only as a discourse... the text is experienced only in an activity, a production. The text practises the infinite deferral of the signified ... it cannot be apprehended as part of a hierarchy or even a single classification of genres... the text is dilatory… the text is plural.' *{From Work to Text).*

 If a sign is a sign of another sign and if a text is a text of another text, then a context is a context of another context. This implies that even contextual meaning is not fixed and there is no limit to what may be called 'contextual meaning'. The same endless deferral with supplementarity and traces is found in contextual meaning. Context is boundless in two senses: a) any given context is open to further description and b) there is no limit to what might be included in a given context. In other words, any context can be grafted into the context it tries to describe, yielding a new context. Context is not just physical; in any context, there is always already a mental/emotional/ spiritual/imaginative 'Other' within the text that 'supplements' the given context.

Derrida points to a suggestion by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein remarks that one cannot say 'bububu' and mean - 'If it does not rain, I shall go out for a walk'. Ironically, Wittgenstein himself has made it possible [for us] to do that. If you are carrying a white umbrella and someone says 'I have never seen a white umbrella; you can say- he has seen one. For example, an expression such as - Not now darling, could have been

said by a mother to her child in front of an ice-cream parlour; the contextual meaning 'decomposes' because it can be grafted onto another context. The mother could be thinking of another context in which the same expression could have been used on her by her husband. This in turn, can be grafted onto another fictional context by saying that this entire episode happened in a short story which could be based on one of the experiences of the writer ad infinitum ad nauseam. In this manner there is endless deferral in contextual meaning

If you get into the spirit of deconstruction you are thinking of the unthought. Derridean deconstruction urges you to think beyond what is given as absolute knowledge into the area of the unheard or unthought thoughts. To deconstruct is to do and undo ceaselessly; to undo is not the same as to destroy but rather it is akin to decenter, to constantly destabilize what has been done and to rigorously demystify what is received in the name of knowledge. To deconstruct is to examine minutely in order to dismantle conventional hierarchies in the given system to arrive at an exactly opposite position. The deconstructive enterprise involves extensive vigilant skepticism, a labour of thought; it is not an open-ended, unlimited textual 'free-play' and a farewell to rigorous reading, as some people think it is. Some American deconstructionists think that Deconstruction is a kind of hermeneutic free-for-all, a joyous release from all the rules and constraints of critical reading and understanding. In fact, it needs the highest standards of argumentative rigour because it is a disciplined identification and dismantling of the potentialities of textual power. The 'text' is shown to be read against itself through the exposure of what might be called the 'textual subconscious', where meanings are directly contrary to the surface meaning; the text is shown as multiple, disunited, with shifts and breaks, contradictions, silences, 'aporias' (blind spots) and 'fault-lines' (much like the cracks in rock formations) that reveal previous activity and movement.

Though Barthes ideas on literature and literary criticism have taken several turns, he is one of the most entertaining and witty French theorists of the sixties and seventies. He was a structuralist and his belief that only Structuralism could explain all the sign-systems of human culture is explained in *Elements of Semiology* (1967). But under the influence of Derrida he abandoned structuralism and turned into a post-structuralist. His short essay *The Death of the Author* (1968) gives an extended meaning to the notion inherent in New Criticism according to which the unity of the text is in the text itself and not in the author's 'intention'. Barthes in his post-structuralist writings *S/Z* (1970), *Mythologies* (1972), *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975) celebrates pluralism, heterogeneity and the productive capacity of the text. He declares that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'. Barthes makes an interesting distinction between readerly texts and writerly texts. A readerly text (or a readerly approach to a text) allows the reader to be a passive consumer of a fixed, given meaning; a writerly text (or a writerly approach to a text) turns the reader into a producer. All along, according to Barthes, we have had the privileged consumption of over production, in the reading of classical texts, in our literary interpretation, in the teaching of literature and in the classrooms. The 'proper or correct' consumption of literature called interpretation and production is regarded as something beyond the capacity of the reader. Barthes says that the author is always supposed to go from signified to signifier, from content to form . . . 'This is how the readerly approach (i.e. an archeological dig) takes place at the site of the text and the text 'itself promotes an infinite play of signification where there is no fixed or transcendental signified or 'closure' of the text.' The endless deferral makes the text expand to several times its original

ize. For example, Blake's *Tyger* has been treated as a readerly text by many, but it can become 'writerly' in the hands of competent critics. One can say that able critics have always treated texts as 'writerly' but it can be added that Deconstruction has opened it further. '

Barthes, in his inimitable style, argues that re-reading is an operation contrary to the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have 'thrown away' the story once it had been consumed, ('devoured'), so we are then able to proceed onto another story. Rereading is tolerated only in certain marginal categories of readers - children, old people and professors. His book *S/Z* marks his transition from structuralism to post-structuralism; it is a reading of Balzac's short novella *Sarrasine.* The reading is divided into five reading units or narrative codes: hermeneutic (questions and suspense), semic (connotative), symbolic (binary distinctions in the theme), proairetic (indication of actions) and cultural. This division is structural and sometimes not clearly demarcated; but his analysis denies the text a classical status as a realistic story and demonstrates an anti-reading and dismantles the masculme-feminine difference.

Post-structuralism and deconstruction are virtually synonymous. Deconstruction arises out of the structuralism of Roland Barthes as a reaction against the certainties of structuralism. Like structuralism, deconstruction identifies textual features but, unlike structuralism, deconstruction theory concentrates on the rhetorical rather than the grammatical aspect of the text.

Deconstruction accepts the analogy of text as syntax as presented by Ferdinand de Saussure and adapted by the structuralists. But whereas structuralism finds order and meaning in the text (in the construction of a sentence), deconstruction finds disorder and a constant tendency of the language to refute its apparent sense. Hence the name of the approach: texts are found to deconstruct themselves rather than to provide a stable identifiable meaning.

Deconstruction views texts as open to various subversive readings as it denies any final explication or statement of meaning. It questions the presence of any objective structure or content in a text. Instead of alarm or dismay at their discoveries, the practitioners of deconstruction theory celebrate the text's self-destruction, that inevitable seed of its own internal contradiction, as a never-ending free play of language. Instead of discovering one ultimate meaning for the text, as formalism seems to promise, deconstruction describes the text as in a perpetual state of change, furnishing only provisional meanings. All texts are thus open-ended constructs and sign and signification are only arbitrary relationships. Meaning can only point to an indefinite number of other meanings.

Deconstruction involves taking apart any meaning to reveal contradictory structures hidden within. Neither meaning nor the text that, seeks to express has any privilege over the other and this extends to critical statements about the text.

The break with structuralism is profound. Structuralism claims kinship between systems of meaning in a text and a structuralist theory itself. Both would reveal the way human intelligence works. When deconstruction denies the connection of mind, textual meaning and methodological approach, it represents a kind of nihilism and anarchy for structuralists.

Further, deconstruction opposes logocentrism, the notion that written language contains a self-evident meaning that points to an unchanging meaning authenticated by the western tradition. It would demythologize literature and thus remove the privilege it has enjoyed in academia. In deconstruction, knowledge is viewed as embedded in texts, not authenticated within some intellectual disciplines. Since meaning in language shifts and remains indeterminate, deconstructionists argue that all forms of institutional authority shift in a similar manner. Since there is no possibility of an absolute truth, deconstructionists seek to undermine all pretensions to authority, or power systems in language.

The most important figure in deconstruction has been the French philosopher -Jacques Derrida, whose philosophical skepticism became widely adopted when his work was translated in the early 1970s. Because of the academic location of many other deconstructionists at the time, deconstruction came to be known by some as the Yale school of criticism.

Derrida claimed that the Western tradition of thought repressed meaning by repressing the limitless vitality of language and by moving some thoughts to the margin. While Derrida argued to subvert the dominant Western mindset, he also recognized that there is no privileged position outside the instabilities of language from which to attack. Thus, deconstruction deconstructs itself; in a self-contradictory effort, it manages to leave things the way they were, the only difference being our expanded consciousness of the inherent play of language as thought.

The major attacks on deconstruction have responded to its seeming lack of seriousness about reading literature and more seriously, to its refusal to privilege such reading as an act at all. Its opponents feel that it threatens the stability of the literary academy, that it promotes philosophical and professional nihilism, that it is dogmatic, that it is deliberately obscure and that it is mostly responsible for the heavy emphasis on theory over practical criticism in recent years. Various critiques of deconstruction have pointed out that deconstructive readings all sound oddly similar, that it does not seem to matter if the author under study is Nietzsche or Wordsworth. Furthermore, deconstructive readings always seem to start with a set conclusions thereby lacking any sense of suspense about the outcome of the reading.

Despite its alleged shortcomings, the value of deconstruction may be as a corrective, as some of its cautions are absorbed into other interpretive approaches.

Deconstruction, or deconstructive or post-structural criticism, can almost be characterized as the opposite of everything for which formalist criticism stands. Deconstruction philosophy begins with the assumption that the world is unknowable and that language is unstable, elusive, and unfaithful. Language is all of these things because meaning is largely generated by opposition: hot means something in opposition to cold, but a hot day may

be 90 degrees whereas a hot oven is at least 400 degrees. Deconstructionists seekto show that a literary work (usually called 'atext' or' discourse') is inevitably self-contradictory. Unlike formalist critics, who believe that a competent author constructs a coherent work with a stable meaning and that competent readers can perceive this meaning, deconstructionsists (e.g., Barbara Johnson, in *The Critical*

Difference [1980] says that a work has no coherent meaning at the center. Jonathan Culler, in *On Deconstruction* [1982], says that 'to deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts'. Johnson and Culler provide accessible introductions, but the major document is Jacques Derrida's seminal work *Of Grammatology* [1967, trans, 1976]). According to this the text is only marks on paper and therefore as a reader goes the author of a text is not the writer but the reader. Texts are 'indeterminate,' 'open' and 'unstable.'

Despite the emphasis on indeterminacy, one sometimes detects, in deconstructionist interpretations, a view associated with Marxism. This is the idea that authors are 'socially constructed' from the 'discourses of power' or 'signifying practices' that surround them. Thus, although authors may think they are individuals with independent minds, their works usually reveal—unknown to authors—the society's economic base. Deconstructionists 'interrogate' a text, and they reveal what the authors were unaware of or had thought they had kept safely out of sight. That is, deconstructionists often find a rather specific meaning—though this meaning is one that might surprise the author.

Deconstruction is valuable so far as new criticism is concerned, it encourages close, rigorous attention to the text. Furthermore, in its rejection of the claim that a work has a single stable meaning, deconstruction has had a positive influence on the study of literature. The problem with deconstruction, however, is that too often it is reductive, telling the same story about every text. Again and again, we see how a text is incoherent and heterogeneous.

Some authors seem overtly aware that the emphasis in deconstruction theory is on instability and incoherence and therefore aim to entertain instead of adding to the ongoing debate. They probably would claim that they do not deconstruct meaning in the sense of destroying it; rather, they might say, they exuberantly multiply meanings and to this end they may use such devices as puns, irony, and allusions, somewhat as a poet might, and just as though (one often feels) they think they are as creative as the writers they are commenting on. Indeed, for many deconstructionists, the traditional conception of literature is merely an elitist construct. In this regard, all 'texts' or 'discourses' are unstable systems of decoding. If literature (in the usual sense) occupies a special place in deconstruction theory it is because literature delights in its playfulness, its fictiveness, whereas other discourses nominally reject playfulness and fictiveness.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. Quote Derrida's explanation of deconstruction.

10. What is the notion of the 'unthought' with regard to the theory of deconstruction?

11. What is the central argument embedded in the theory of deconstruction?

12. What has been the impact of deconstruction on new criticism?

ACTIVITY

Read Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, *Can the Subalterns Speak?*

DID YOU KNOW?

Neitzsche came up with the quote,' God is dead'.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The word structure has been used in different contexts in various disciplines of Science and Humanities.
- Structuralism as the word suggests, is concerned with structures, and particularly with examining the laws by which they work.
- All the social sciences resort to Structuralism abundantly.
- Structuralism is widely used in anthropology and linguistics.
- In the 1960s, Structuralism, which had dominated French intellectual life since the mid-1950s, began to be replaced by another more antinomian movement that first came to be known as post-structuralism and then post-modernism.
- If Structuralism emphasizes order, structure and rules, post-structuralism argues that language is subj ect to contingency, indeterminacy and the generation of multiple meanings.
- Rather than being an instrument of understanding, the meanings render themselves open to reasoning.
- Meanings are instruments of mastery, discipline and social control.
- The most influential of all postmodern and post-structural theories is the theory of deconstruction given by Jacques Derrida.
- Derrida is the single most influential intellectual author in current philosophy and Anglo-American literary theory.
- As far as literature and literary criticism are concerned, structuralism challenges the long-standing belief that a work of literature (or any kind of literary text) reflects a given reality; a literary text is, rather, constituted of other conventions and texts.

- Structuralism is in explicit opposition to mimetic criticism (the view that literature is primarily an imitation of reality), to expressive criticism (the view that literature primarily expresses the feeling or temperament or creative imagination of its author) and to any form of the view that literature is a mode of communication between author and readers.
- More generally, in its attempt to develop a science of literature and in many of its salient concepts, structuralism departs radically from the assumptions and ruling ideas of traditional humanistic criticism.

- The post-structuralists argue that western assumptions about what is good, true and normal are essentially (rather than accidentally) related to the system of patriarchy, heterosexism and capitalism.
- Moral good does not reside in what is authentic, original and is subtracted from imitation and artifice.
- The true and the good are the effects of processes of differentiation and replication that confound all moral identities and all simple ontologies of substance that might serve as grounds for moral systems which privilege authenticity and virtue over contingency and artifice.
- According to the post-structuralists, what we take to be real does not exist prior to simulation; rather, it is simulated into being and lends semblance of ontological reality by virtue of acts of representation, masquerade, and posturing that are themselves fundamental and generative of the real.
- Deconstruction accepts the analogy of text as syntax as presented by Ferdinand de Saussure and adapted by the structuralists.
- Whereas structuralism finds order and meaning in the text (in the construction of a sentence), deconstruction finds disorder and a constant tendency of the language to refute its apparent sense.

5.6   KEY TERMS

- **Structuralism:** It is a school of thought developed by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, in which cultures, viewed as systems, are analyzed in terms of the structural relations among their elements.
- **Russian formalism:** Also known as formalism, is an innovative 20th-century Russian school of literary criticism.
- **Proairetic code:** This is the code of actions, the sequence of events within a story; it is the 'glue' which binds the events together.
- **Deconstruction:** It is a form of philosophical and literary analysis, derived mainly from work begun in the 1960s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, that questions the fundamental conceptual distinctions, or 'oppositions', in Western philosophy through a close examination of the language and logic of philosophical and literary texts.

5.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The two disciplines in which the word structure has been used are: Science and Humanities.

2. Saussure made a number of important original contributions: (a) the concept of language as a sign system or structure whose individual components can be understood only in relation to each other and to the system as a whole rather than to an external 'reality;' (b) a distinction between langue and parole: langue representing a language as a whole (e.g. French, English, German), and parole representing utterance, a particular use of individual units of langue.

3. Saussure defined language as a system of signs and the linguistic sign is a two-sided psychological entity composed of a concept and a sound-image.

4. Structuralism as the word suggests, is concerned with structures, and particularly with examining the laws by which they work. Structuralism also tends to reduce individual phenomena to mere illustration of such laws. Nevertheless, it constitutes a distinctive doctrine which is not to be found in Frye.

5. The central argument of the post-structuralist theory is that there is an effect of unconscious psychological processes, society-wide systems of symbolic construction, and cultural discourses that are beyond our control.

6. Nietzsche is a post-structuralist as he discredits the moral ideals ofWestern society, which train people to be ashamed of their bodies and of the world of matter in general. He argues that material life should be celebrated and not denied.

7. The imporatnce of the *Tel Quel* was that many of its contributing writers such as, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva, became important post-structuralist thinkers. They were the initiators of the study of Signification and created radical political critiques of western capitalist society.

8. Julia Kristeva approaches post-structuralist philosophy by discussing the relationship between the orderly and the rational, the heterogeneous or the irrational, between the conscious and the unconscious and between the 'normal' and the'poetic'.

9. As per Derrida, Deconstruction problematizes all habits of thought in any 'discipline' (the word 'discipline' itself shows how our thinking itself is disciplined) by demonstrating how impossible it is to draw a clear-cut line between reality and representation.

10. The notion of the 'unthought' is the Derridean notion of deconstruction that urges one to think beyond what is given as absolute knowledge into the area of the unheard or unthought thoughts. To deconstruct is to do and undo ceaselessly.

11. Deconstruction philosophy begins with the assumption that the world is unknowable and that language is unstable, elusive, and unfaithful.

12. Deconstruction is valuable so far as New Criticism is concerned, it encourages close, rigorous attention to the text.

5.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. State the relationship between a sign and a signifier.
2. Comment on the significance of the text vis-a-vis a structuralist perspective.
3. Highlight the importance of the contribution of Roland Barthes in structuralism.
4. Outline the contributions made by Saussure in the field of structural linguistics.
5. Define language according to Saussure.
6. Give a brief description of post-structuralism.
7. Critically analyse Nietzsche's view of moral idealism in the twentieth century.
8. What was Julia Kristeva's contribution to semiotic writing?
9. Define the theory of deconstruction. 10. Comment on Spivak's translation
of Derrida's *OfGrammatology.*

Long-Answer Questions

1. Give a brief overview of structuralism which had dominated the French intellectual life since the mid 1950s.
2. Recapitulate Lacan's views of language and sign.
3. Describe the semic code and the hermeneutic code.
4. Critically analyse the proceedings in literary criticism that gave rise to post-structuralism.   "
5. Explain Derrida's contribution to the theory of deconstruction.

5.9 FURTHER READING

Blamires, H., *A History of Literary Criticism,* London: Macmillan, 1991.

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