ENG815

ADVANCED LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

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COURSE GUIDE

Course Description

ENG815 is a study of the various developments of literary principles and analysis. It pays close attention to major classical and contemporary approaches including, archetypal, formalistic and sociological. In doing this, ENG815 also attempts to study the critical theories in relation to selected literary texts, including African novels, play and poems.

Introduction

Advanced Literary Theory and Criticism, ENG815, is a one-semester two-credit unit course. The course is organised in fourteen units and designed to expose you, the student, to major literary principles and methods of literary criticism. This course assumes that you have already been exposed to Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism. It therefore represents an advancement of that undergraduate course. ENG815 provides you with insights into the development of literary criticism and attendant principles advanced by scholars across the English literary history. Fundamentally, the course exposes you to universal principles broadly arranged into Classical and Modern. Specifically, it examines Classical, Renaissance, Neoclassical, Romantic, Victorian, Modern and Post-Modernist views. The course emphasises traditional and current archetypal, sociological, psychological, historical, epistemological and biographical theories. These cater for formalistic, structural and ideological approaches. It also distinguishes the expressive, objective and pragmatic orientations in literary criticism. In addition, ENG815 equips you to apply literary theories in the analysis of literary texts. It therefore offers you an essential basis and procedures for professional reading, interpretation, appraisal and recommendations of literary texts. This course is compulsory for all Literary Studies students of National Open University of Nigeria. Additionally, ENG815 will be beneficial for literary students and scholars of other universities. Other category of readers who engage in literary appreciation, especially at the formal level, will also find this course helpful.

The function of literature has been a subject of controversy. Its academic viability appears uncertain. This is as a result of the derivative nature and ancillary function of literature. However, scholarly views endorse the academic study of literature and insist that it represents observable independent and separate reality. The later view justifies the inclusion and development of Literary Studies within the mainstream scholarship in spite of the noted

pessimism. As such Literary Studies, as an academic field, requires a methodized approach grounded upon given universally accepted principles.

It is based on this that ENG815 concentrates on issues as nature and function of literature, meaning and scope of literary theory and criticism, the relationship between the two, objective and procedure of literary criticism, different perspectives to literary criticism, the major conceptual standpoints of each perspective, areas of convergences, divergences and advancements of ideas in literary criticism. The primary responsibility of this course, nevertheless, is to identify and discuss the various classical, modern and postmodern approaches to literary criticism. This course examines the central postulations of different literary scholars from Plato to the present. ENG815, furthermore, notes their respective impact in literary criticism. In doing this, the course will underscore the mutual relationship between literary theory and criticism. The course will further discuss the interconnections between the different ages, themes and techniques, philosophies and cultures. In addition, it will investigate the major modifications in the comprehension of the nature and classification of literature and attendant criticism. ENG815 will thus pay attention to the distinguishing characteristics, major statements and principal theorists of each category. These will be examined along the history of literary criticism and in relation to relevant texts spread across the three genres and different regions.

The main function of this collaborative course guide is to present to you with a concise view of Advanced Literary Theory and Criticism, ENG815. It also works to introduce you to a set of textbooks and course materials you need to work with. Furthermore, this course guide tells you the time allotted to each of the fourteen units and the number of tutor-marked assignments you are required to attempt. In other words, this course guide performs the role of a chaperon and is basically intended to enhance your success in this course.

It must be added that the essence of this course guide is to make you understand what you are required to study in this course. Secondly, it will help you comprehend and appreciate your interpretative role as a prospective literary critic. The course guide will additionally motivate and encourage you to prepare for that life-time responsibility.

This course is very necessary because you need to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the various literary theories. As a post-graduate student of Literary Studies, you will have a very close

relationship with literary texts. Thus, you need principles and procedures that will help you make the best out of that relationship. This course will aid your comprehension of literature, as an art form, in its topicality and universality. ENG815 will also train you to be an informed and creative donor into humanity and the academia from the vibrant angle of literary discussions. It is therefore a legitimate training ground for a prospective literary scholar/ critic. Moreover, this course will help you improve your personal life by teaching you to examine issues critically and objectively in order to make value judgments over human condition.

Based on the above, I advise you to carefully read this course guide in order to get properly acquainted with ENG815. The course will further be discussed, in units, during tutorials. Please endeavour to attend all lectures, participate actively in class discussions and seminars, study the main course material and recommended texts. Also submit your assignments at the proper time and write the final examination. The dates for the examination will be published. If you do all these, you will benefit optimally from this course.

COURSE AIMS

In ENG 815, you are expected to acquire an advanced knowledge and understanding of/to:

- ❖ The meaning and origin of literary theory and criticism in addition to the relationship between both.
- ❖ Broad and specific categories and traditions of literary theories based on different historical periods, approaches and focus.
- ❖ Identify and explicate the central thesis, defining characteristics and contributions of each critical theory to the development of Literary Criticism.
- ❖ Discern the universal theme of the theoretical essays as well as areas of divergences, convergences and extensions.
- ❖ Attempt an application of the ideas encapsulated in each major theory in reading and criticism of selected literary texts.
- ❖ Essential theoretical and practical insights for objective textual criticism.

Course Objectives

At the end of ENG815, you should demonstrate certain skills, knowledge and attitude as evidence of what you have learnt. The objectives are meant to direct your study and guide your self- assessment exercises. At the end of this course, therefore, you should be able to:

- ❖ Demonstrate familiarity with the nature and various developments in literary theory and criticism from the Classical to the post-modern period.
- ❖ Read, and interpret theoretical texts, exhibiting in-depth understanding of the central universal and peculiar ideas espoused in relation to the content and function of literature as well as the role of the artist.
- ❖ Identify the conceptual underpinnings of different critical and literary texts.
- ❖ Exploit various theoretical insights and approaches in the practical examination, interpretation, appraisal of literary texts. This is in order to project the meaning content of literary texts and make recommendations and value judgments.
- ❖ Possess an advanced intellectual ability to adopt and defend a personal literary and critical concern and style.
- ❖ Provide informed views on issues and establish connectedness between universal and provincial ideas across periods and texts.
- ❖ Demonstrate enough verbal, written and interactive proficiency for formation and profession of ideas inside and outside the academic world.

Working through the Course

In this course, you will work through fourteen study units. You are advised to study the subject of each unit and attempt the included questions. Remember that you are part of NOUN post-graduate knowledge community and therefore should participate actively in class activities. You should be centrally involved in group and individual oral and written presentations. These activities help you develop independent and collaborative research skills and attitude and to improve your presentation skills. These are aspects of scholarship. ENG815 is a practical-based course and as such you will engage in guided reading, practical analysis and discussions of

original theoretical texts (English translation). You will in addition be required to apply the major theoretical ideas in reading of selected critical and literary texts. The exercise is geared towards aiding you develop critical skills and improve your theoretical knowledge bank. The course guide and other course materials are intended to encourage you towards objective reading, critical thinking and purposeful writing. Why not start now if you are yet to do so? You will be graded on the basis of class participation, seminar presentations, periodic tutor-based assignments and final examination. The dates for these assessments will be published in due course.

What You Will Learn in this Course

Advanced Literary Theory and Practical Criticism, ENG815, will expose you to the abstract world of literary theories. It will equally engage you in actual application of the theories in criticism. This course takes a holistic and comparative approach to the study of the major developments within the history of literary theory and criticism. Moreover, it involves you in personal and group as well as oral and written interactive learning sessions. As such ENG815 offers you the platform to discuss theoretical ideas and employ such in actual interpretation of critical and literary texts. The course therefore tutors you in the art and act of advanced literary criticism. ENG815 will enhance your comprehension, interpretative, evaluation and recommendation skills. Moreover, it will teach you to develop objective approach to issues, make informed choices and give value judgment. In this course, you will learn guided creativity. You will be schooled to formulate general principles and procedures applicable to given conditions of life.

Course Materials

ENG 815 is made up of:

1. Course guide
2. Study units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule

Study Units

Each study unit represents a week's study activity and begins with objectives. You are required to first examine the objectives before the other parts of the unit. The study units contain the reading materials, self- assessment exercises and tutor-marked assignments. Your ability to achieve the stated objectives depends on these study and assessment materials in addition to tutorials.

ENG 815 is constituted by **14 units organised under 4 Modules**. Module 1 is a one-unit module because it deals with basic issues and so provides a general background to all the other units.

Module 1:   Preface

Unit 1:   General Background

Module 2:   Classical Criticism

Unit 1:   The Literary Theory of Plato

Unit 2:   Aristotelian Concept of Literature

Unit 3:   Longinus' Literary Ideas

Unit 4:   The Literary Concept of Horace.

Module 3:   Between the Classical and Modern Periods

Unit 1:   Philip Sydney's Principle of Literature (Renaissance)

Unit 2:   Literary Theory of John Dryden (Neo-Classical)

Unit 3:   Wordsworth's Principle (Romantic)

Unit 4:   The views of Mathew Arnold (Victorian)

Module 4:   Modern and Post-Modern Critical Criticisms

Unit 1:   T. S. Eliot

Unit 2:   Structuralist Literary Theory and Criticism   (Roland Barthes)

Unit 3:   Psychoanalytic Literary Theory and Criticism (Sigmund Freud)

Unit 4:   Feminist and Marxist Theories of Literature

                    i. Feminism (Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter)

                    ii. Marxism (Karl Marx, Terry Eagleton)

Unit 5:   Post-colonial Literary Theories (Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Spivak)

Set Textbooks/References

Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary terms* (7th ed.) USA: Earl McPeek.

Barry, Peter. (2009). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (3rd ed.)   Manchester U. P.

Bertens, Hans. (2001). *Literary Theory: The Basics*. New York: Routeledge..

Bressler, Charles E. (2011). *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* 5th ed. Longman.

Culler, Jonathan. (2000). *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford U. P.

Eagleton, Terry. (1996). *Literary Theory: An Introduction* 2nd ed. USA: Blackwell.

"Giambattista Vico" (2010). [Headnote], *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,*

(2nd ed.) Gen ed. V. B. Leitch. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 315-19.

Habib M. A. R. (2011). Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present: An Introduction.. UK

Wiley-Blackwell.

Kaplan, Charles and William Davis Anderson. Ed. (2000). *Criticism: Major Statements* (4th ed.). New

York: Bedford/St. Martins.

Tyson, Lois. (1994) *Critical Theory Today: a User-friendly Guide.* New-York: Routledge.

Assignment File

The file contains all the assignments you must complete and submit for rating. Other necessary details on the assignments are included in the assignment file and within this course guide. Please note that the marks you earn from the assignments are part of your total score for ENG 815.

Presentation Schedule

This is part of your course materials. It contains the information on the dates you are expected to complete and submit your tutor-marked assignments and the dates for your tutorials. Be reminded that you are duty-bound to dully submit the included exercises within the stipulated time range.

Course Marking Scheme

The grading criterion for ENG 815 is presented in the table below.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1 – 15	30% - from three highest scores out of the 15

assignments.

Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

Course Overview

The table below offers an overview of the units under the three modules and the no of assignments you are required to complete in ENG 815.

Unit	Title of Work	Weekly Activity	End of Unit Assessment
	Course Guide	1	Assignment 1
Module 1			
1	General Background	2	Assignment 2
Module 2			
1	The Literary Theory of Plato	3	Assignment 3
2	Aristotelian Concept of Literature	4	Assignment 4
3	Longinus' Literary Ideas	5	Assignment 5
4	Literary Concept of Horace	6	Assignment 6
Module 3			
1	Philip Sydney's Principle of Arts	7	Assignment 7
2	Literary Theory of John Dryden	8	Assignment 8
3	Wordsworth's Concept of literature	9	Assignment 9

4	The Literary Theory of Mathew Arnold	10	Assignment 10

Module 4

1	T. S. Eliot's Modern Theory	11	Assignment 11
2	Roland Barthes' Structuralism	12	Assignment 12
3	Psychoanalysis		Assignment 13
4	Feminism and Marxism		Assignment 14
5	Post-colonialism		Assignment 15
			Review
			Review
			Review

Table 1: Course Overview

How to Get the Best From the Course

Considering the distant-learning system of this program, the study units of ENG 815 are purposely conceived and prepared to be self-explicit and thus easily comprehensible. Hence, in the physical absence of a lecturer, you can still read and understand the information and do the assignments. Each study unit covers one week and introduces you to the weekly topic. In addition, it provides you with the stated objective of the unit and other necessary information. This course is both theoretical and practical. It therefore demands commitment and creativity from you. To be a thorough-bred critic, you must follow all the instructions contained in all the course materials. You also need to get and study the recommended texts, attend lectures and actively participate in class discussions.

Assessment

You will be graded on the bases of tutor-marked assignments and written examination. The presentation schedule and assignment file, both parts of your course materials, provide you with assignments and deadline for submission of each. You are required to complete and submit the assignments to your tutorial facilitator for grading. The tutor-marked assignment constitutes 30% of the overall course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA's)

Advanced Literary Theory and Criticism is a course that demands reading, comprehension, interpretation, evaluation and application. The course mediates between theory and practice and as such you should prepare your mind for focused reading and creative interpretation. Based on this, you will be regularly appraised on various conceptual views of scholars across literary periods. You will also be frequently tested in the identification and application of such views in critical and literary texts. The various study units in your main course materials and recommended textbooks, in addition to other relevant sources, will provide the necessary information for the execution of the assignments.

Your assignment file contains assignments for the different units of ENG 815. Please try to submit your completed assignments along with the tutor-marked assignments to your-tutorial facilitator within the specified time limit. Three of these exercises, which attract the best grades, will be used for the compulsory continuous assignment. The three constitutes 30% of the overall course mark.

Final examination Grading

The final examination marks the formal end of the course ENG 815. You will write the examination in three hours in which you are expected to answer three questions. One question attracts 30% and to each of the remaining two is allotted 20%, so the three add up to 70%. Remember that the tutor-marked assignment attracts 30% already. Therefore, the total is 100%.

The examination questions are largely modeled after your tutor-marked assignments. You are advised to revise through the different units of the three modules of ENG 815. You should get conversant with the major theoretical postulations and relevant literary texts for textual analysis before the final examination.

Tutors and Tutorials

10 tutorial hours have been allocated to ENG 815. You will be assigned into one tutorial group under one tutorial facilitator. Your tutorial group, tutorial facilitator and his/her phone number/e-mail address as well as the location, dates and time of your tutorials will be made available to you. Your tutorial facilitator has the responsibility to grade and supervise your tutor-marked exercises and class attendance. Please stay in constant touch with your tutorial facilitator, he/she has been empowered and authorized to help you face the challenges that you may encounter as you study your course materials.

Summary

Advanced Literary Theory and Criticism is intended to get you more acquainted with major theoretical ideas espoused by various scholars throughout the English literary history and attendant criticism. This course is organized to ensure a cumulative approach which will help you learn naturally. ENG 815 has been designed to equip you with conceptual knowledge and practical skills for purposeful reading and interpretation of texts even beyond the confines of scholarship. This course guide provides you with all the information necessary for you to make the best out of this course. Other course materials are waiting to give you further information and take you from the beginning to the end of ENG 815. Remember that at the end of this course you will be expected to demonstrate what you have learnt. That means that you should be able to exhibit advanced knowledge of the various literary theories and account for their respective contributions to the development of practical criticism. In addition, you should discuss the major conceptual positions that underline critical and literary texts. Moreover, you are expected to display adequate competence in the use of literary concepts in textual analysis.

At the end of this course you can answer questions like:

1. What do you understand by advanced literary theory and practical criticism?
2. Why is ENG 815 necessary for you as an advanced literary student?
3. What literary periods and orientations do ENG 815 course cover?
4. What aspect of literature is this course concerned with?
5. Is there anything I can gain from this course outside the classroom?

The time to start is NOW! Good luck!

ENG 815: ADVANCED LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

MODULE 1 UNIT 1   PREFACE

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction

2.0   Objectives

3.0   Main content

    3.1   General Background

        3.1.1   Nature and Scope of Literary Theory and Criticism

        3.1.2   The Relationship Between Literary Theory and Criticism

        3.1.3   Justification for Literary Theory and Criticism

    3.2   Procedures for Literary Criticism

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Module 1 Unit 1 of ENG 815 functions to enlighten you on the fundamental elements of the course. It defines the course and identifies the mutual relationship between its two arms. Furthermore, Unit 1 presents the different theoretical classifications and processes of criticism. This unit again establishes the central place of literary text within this course, rationalizes the act of critiquing and identifies the duties of a literary critic. Literary Criticism is a standardized practice which focuses on literary texts and exploits critical theories. That is what this course is all about. It is therefore important that you understand the basis of ENG 815 because that will enhance your relationship with the subsequent units this course.

Advanced Literary Theory and Criticism involves a lot of focused reading and critical interpretation. It deals with conceptual, critical and literary texts. ENG 815 is both theoretical and practical. As a student, you need to comprehend the various directions you must face in this course. Unit 1 helps you establish your focus and scope, discover your tools, and understand your obligation as a student of Literary Studies and a prospective literary critic. All these will gradually emerge as you immerse yourself in this introductory unit of ENG 815.

1.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of Unit 1, you should be able to:

➢ Understand the concept and scope of Literary Theory and Criticism and analyze the relationship between the two.
➢ Distinguish the major and specific types and perspectives of literary theory and establish the classificatory basis (historical periods, approaches and perspectives).
➢ Discuss the procedures of literary criticism.
➢ Explain the status of the literary text within the scope of literary theory and criticism and justify literary criticism.
➢ Determine your focus and tools and comprehend your role as a literary student and a potential critic.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Basic Issues

Literary Criticism, especially in its advanced form, is initiated and sustained through an intimate association with conceptual statements. These abstract statements represent the different argumentations of various scholars across historical periods on the nature and function of literature. Each of them manifests a given perspective and approach and regulates critical reading and interpretation of literary texts. Literary criticism goes beyond casual reading. A critic

examines both the stated and the unstated in a bid to identify the different meanings generated by a fictional piece. Those literary meanings are largely functions and features of human conditions. This is the reason why you need this preface. It will enable you understand the background to the theories and criticisms. In it is contained a number of scholarly definitions of concepts to help you understand such concepts better and then define them in your own words. A good starting point for this unit will be to explore the nature and scope of Literary Theory and Criticism as an academic course.

3.1.1   Nature and Scope of Literary Theory and Criticism

Theory is a set of universal or general principles that distinguish a body of fact or art. Criticism is the practice of examining a piece of work or writing. Holcombe (2007, p. 1) defines theories as "philosophical positions, with insights and modes of argument." He adds that a theory does not illustrate "absolutes but … possibilities, speculations, elusive chains of thought." His definition illustrates the nature of theories. Theories are thus assumptions. They are conjectural statements. Literary Studies, as an academic domain, exploits a class of these assumptions in its attempt to account for various meanings projected by literary texts. The theories applied in literary studies are called literary theories. You have to deal with literary theories because they constitute a major aspect of ENG 815. So what is a literary theory? Literary theories are fundamental principles which supply insights for analysis of literary texts. They contain concepts and processes employed in the interpretation and comprehension of literature. According to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

> Literary theory is the body of ideas and methods we use in the practical reading of literature. By literary theory we refer not to the meaning of a work of literature but to the theories that reveal what literature can mean. Literary theory is the description of the underlying principles, one might say the tools, by which we attempt to understand literature. (Brewton, "Literary Theory," n.d.)

Nwahunanya (1988, p. 12-13) adds that "from critical theories we get the basic assumptions for the study of literature and we gain an insight into literary categories using generalized principles." Some of these principles are adopted from other disciplines. For instance,

Psychoanalysis is from Psychology while Marxism is a socio-political theory. However, aspects of the postulations have since been domesticated and used in literary criticism for textual analysis.

Literary criticism has been in practice since the inception of literature. Whoever reads a work of art and holds an opinion about its value, consciously or unconsciously, engages in literary criticism. Literary Criticism, in a broad sense, communicates a notion of judgment but in modern scholarship it refers more to analysis of literary texts irrespective of the genre. It has to do with disclosing the meaning content of a work and how that is communicated. In other words, in literary criticism a critic makes meaning out of a literary work from a given perspective. The critic therefore plays the role of an interpreter and thus a mediator between a writer and a reader. Its intention is to educate rather than to judge. Literary criticism is synonymous with literary analysis, literary appreciation, practical criticism and critical analysis.

Technically, literary criticism is the examination and interpretation of a piece of literature. Such examination is regulated by several ideas of literary theorists from the classical to the contemporary period. Literary works easily lend themselves to examination, interpretation, interrogation, classification and recommendation. In literary criticism these responses are standardized. Anyadike explains that "Literary criticism consists of the sensitive close reading, analyses, interpretation and evaluation of a literary text from the perspective of one or a combination of literary theories" (2001, p. 307). Comprehensive book reviews are also included in literary criticism. It is usually articulated and presented in the shape of a critical essay. Over the years literary criticism has developed into a very significant part of English Literature and has become a robust discipline. Therefore, this course has a very wide scope. You should understand that literary theory and literary criticism are two sides of the same coin but each is different.

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 1

Attempt a personal definition of literary theory and criticism.

3.1.2   **Relationship Between Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**

Literary theory and criticism are like Siamese twins. Both are components of Literary Study which also includes Literary History. Literary theory is interested in inventing modules of artistic regulations designed to guide the production and evaluation of literary works. It generates philosophies and thus deals with abstractions and that makes it intellectually demanding. Literary criticism is a practical activity. It entails reading, illustrating and evaluating a work of art on the basis of ideas advanced by literary theories. Eissa (2012, p. 2) locates the difference between the two in the fact that they manifest "different objects of investigation." While literary criticism investigates as its object one or more literary piece, literary theory investigates as its object, the various manners in which literary works are considered. Hence while criticism is directly interested in a literary piece, literary theory is directly concerned with how that literary piece is examined. Coleman (1999, p. 1) offers a more comprehensive clarification of the difference. In his terms:

> Literary theory, then, is the lens or framework through which a critic views a work, coloring how they perceive it and what literary features they focus on. Literary criticism is the act of analysis--and the evaluations critics produce--critiquing a work according to favored theories."

Thus, theories are conceptual devices employed in criticism. Literary theory aids the reading and interpretation of literary works and so plays a guiding and supporting role. In criticism, theories are operationalized. Put differently, abstract concepts are employed in the examination of literary texts. Theories provide the literary critic with conceptual materials for effective analysis of literary texts. In criticism, the meanings contained in a piece of work are isolated and this is done logically. Literary theory and literary criticism are therefore inseparable and are shaped by each other. Effective study of literature takes place when the two are properly deployed. Therein rests the relationship between the two arms of this course. The question at this point is: What is the utility of this association, especially within the academic context?

3.1.3 **Justification for Literary Theory in Criticism**

You ought to be aware that the employment of literary theory in Literary Studies has elicited ambiguous reactions. These principles, at some point, have been considered avoidable, unproductive, limiting, even meddlesome and more destructive than constructive to modern criticism. Scholars have questioned the inclusion of literary theory in criticism and this is despite its contributions to effective and logical analysis of texts. Some of these views are not unfounded especially when the discipline of literary theory and criticism is replete with categories and sub-categories of perceptions and contentions. There are so many literary theories contending for attention within Literary Studies. You must understand that there is hardly any accurate and universally received literary theory. Consequently, each of the theories has been proven limited in one way or the other but each has donated new perspectives and visions, for a more wholesome writing, reading and comprehension of literature. For example, the Freudian Psycholoanalysis concept of Oedipal conflict illuminates Okonkwo's contrastive relationship with his daughter, Ezimma, and his son, Nwoye, in the African classic, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe. Again, the Post-colonial concept of Othering, postulated by Edward Said, explains Robinson Crusoe's attitude towards Friday's indigenous religion in Daniel Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

Theories are inevitable for effective literary scholarship and interpretation of the human state. Theory illuminates, broadens and interrogates our perception on a given experience or human condition as represented in a fictional writing. It helps you to identify meaning, formulate ideas, ask questions and proffer solutions. This aspect of knowledge crystallizes fictional truths and makes it easier for you to engage in proper organization of literary essentials. Literary theories provide you with many perspectives and thus different options to choose from as you study literary texts. The ideas encapsulated in the theories instigate and shape your own ideas of the reality represented by an author in a work of literature. The theories thus facilitate your comprehension and interpretation of texts. They equip you to communicate better in writing and speech. In addition, when you are familiar with the literary theories, your comprehension of the world and humanity is enhanced. The knowledge will help you make better meaning out of real-

life events and experiences and interpret human behavior more accurately. Considering the 'beyond-the-class' value of literary theory and criticism, this course is very profitable to you in and outside the classroom. As an academic field, Literary Criticism follows a process.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 2

Justify the application of theories in criticism giving at least five reasons.

3.2 Procedures for Literary Criticism

The main function of a critical treatise is to portray the student's/critic's understanding of the meaning inherent in a text or texts and how that meaning is communicated. That is the mission of literary criticism. From late 20th century, literary criticism has continued to develop into a standardized field. As such a critic/critic-in-training is expected to adhere to certain general processes in critiquing a text(s). Leo and Spirit individually, provide guidelines which you will find very useful in critical analysis.

Literary texts are categorized in genres/sub-genres and traditions. The initial step is to briefly identify the genre and the tradition your text belongs to through its peculiar employment of elements of literature. You will then later determine if those elements are appropriately used and justify your position. For instance, while Aeschylus' masterpiece, *Agamemnon* (458 BCE) is classified as a traditional literature, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) is a modern piece. Both are however tragic plays. In addition, "Rape of the Lock" by Alfred Lord Tennyson fits into the tradition of mock-heroic poem of the Neo-Classical age of English literature as deducible from its language, subject, style and structure. Please note that some texts exhibit a complex nature and can hardly be strictly classified into a specific group. This preliminary procedure works to put the necessary elements into proper perspective and it shapes the direction of the essay.

Secondly, every writer has a particular message to share with the reader and utilizes other elements of literature to convey that given message implicitly or explicitly using language. When a writer communicates his/her message effectively, the critic receives insight into a given

human condition. A critic ought to discover the theme of a fictional piece, its relevance to human condition and the method applied in communicating that message. For instance, the Greek classic *Oedipus Rex* explores the concept of fate in the traditional Greek society using the tragic hero, Oedipus. J. P. Clark and Isidore Okpewho individually examine the effects of the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War through the agency of poetry and prose in "The Casualties" and *The Last Duty*. Hence, every creative writer discusses certain issues in a particular human society and displays distinctive use of language in prose or verse. You have to identify a writer's peculiar choice and determine its effectiveness in communication of meaning to the reader. For instance, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe are respectively known for difficult and simple languages in prose writing as exemplified by *The Interpreters* (Soyinka) and *Arrow of God* (Achebe), both set in post-independent Nigeria.

The above illustrations also throw up elements of characterization, setting and plot. These should also constitute the next relevant procedure. Characters, especially protagonists, are the principal tool used by the writer to convey his/her meaning. At least one of the characters usually functions as the author's mouthpiece in drama and fiction. A critic has to identify them and illustrate how the writer puts them to use. For example, Ahmed Yerima, in the play *Hard Ground* set in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, deploys characters, especially the protagonist Nimi, to discuss the lingering Niger Delta question and its impact and dynamics. Moreover, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in the novel *The River Between* (1965), set in the colonial period in Kenya, deploys characters, including Nyambura, to condemn religious extremism and intolerance. In addition, the incidents in a work take place within a specified physical environment and time. The story/stories (plot) in a literary work progresses through initiation, conflict, climax and conclusion. These enhance the message. It is your responsibility to identify this development and evaluate its effectiveness in relation to the themes.

Fiction portrays a particular cultural idea of the world (world-view) and from a writer's point of view. For example, Thomas Hardy and Achebe employ the concept of curse, found in oral tradition, in The Mayor of Casterbridge and Things Fall Apart. In the former Henchard curses his employee, Farfrea and in the second Okonkwo curses his son, Nwoye. This type of folk

superstition reveals the rural setting of the novels. A perceptive critic/student should note the ethical standard of the writer's universe and his/her comments on such. In addition such a student should be able to determine areas of convergences and divergences between his/her world and the fictional world as well as the writer's point of view and narrative technique. Again, a critic should establish the relationships among fictions of various provenances and periods. For instance, Marie-Elene John's *Unburnable* (2006) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006) exhibit the cultural connection between the Igbo ethnic group in African Nigeria and her diaspora in the West Indian Dominica. Again, there is an obvious thematic correspondence between the sonnet, "The World is Too Much with Us" (1807) by the English Romantic poet, William Wordsworth and "Our to Plough not to Plunder" (*The Eye of the Earth*, 1986) by the African socialist-Marxist writer, Niyi Osundare.

Lastly, ensure that you advance your personal perception of the text in relation to the message, subject, aesthetic and technical properties.

It is also good that you develop an effective critical style. Lyn (1997, p. 10-11) holds that there is hardly any "sure-fire formula" of writing a critical essay. For Lyn, the style and organization depend on your textual data, secondary sources, personal perspective, interpretations, and definition of the writer's significant subjects. Your best bet may well be to state your position and method at the introductory part. Defend that position with textual evidences from both primary and secondary sources in the main body. Spirit (2011, p. 2) suggests that "paraphrasing should be preferred to quoting." At the concluding part you reiterate your position and make submissions on other essential meanings of the text. You can also add relevant remarks at the concluding part of your critical essay. Try to cultivate the attitude of exposing your work to peer review at this advanced stage of your academic endeavour. It helps.

Literary analysis has a register, discover and apply it because it injects a sense of technicality and maturity into your critical writings. Terms like text, concept, notion, classic, magnum opus, suggest, display, encapsulate, interrogate, demonstrate, dramatize, thematize, postulate, interrogate, seems to, tends to, comparatively, similarly, conversely, tangentially, fundamentally, corpus, etc. belong to Literary Criticism and scholarship. For instance, it may be better to say that: 'Said posits that …' than to say that 'Said shows that …' The first clause articulates better

the inherent approximate position of Said's conceptual idea with its capacity to generate contentions. Generally, your ideas will be better comprehended if you represent them in lucid and accurate expressions. If you follow these procedures, your argument will effectively project the meaning of a text which is the central focus of literary theory and practice.

3.3 Position of the Literary Text in Literary Theory and Criticism

Literature has identifiable values. However, its indirect approach and ancillary position make it difficult to appreciate such values easily. As an art form, literature shows loyalty to human conditions and experience. It speaks fictional truths. Each literary work represents a world of experience and elicits various kinds of feelings to which a reader, as an audience, responds to. A critic professionally responds to these experiences, and attempts to find conceptual justifications for those conditions in order to illuminate the meaning component of the text. He/she also helps elucidate the necessary questions asked in a text in order to facilitate constructive thoughts capable of providing solutions to human problems and predicaments. In doing this the critic extends the frontiers of the work and facilitates effective communication between the writer and his/her audience. Thus, European classics, including *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, are the central factors in the works of prominent critics, like the Sierra Leonean Eustace Palmer's *Studies on the English Novel* (1986). Palmer's examination provides in-depth insights into in the several English literary texts.

The end of all the activities you engage in within this course is the literary text. Literary principles are theoretical speculations on the nature and functions of literature and the role of the writer. The concepts are constructed upon literary texts. Literary Criticism examines a literary text by exploiting ideas provided by those theories. Consequently, the literary text occupies the most central position within the ambit of literary theory and criticism from its emergence in the classical period. The responsibility of a literary critic/student is drawn from his/her relationship with the literary text.

3.4 Responsibility of the Critic

A literary critic engages in literary criticism. He/she attempts an analysis, explanation, and appraisal of one or more texts and makes suggestion in relation to a literary production(s). The literary text is the basic material of a literary critic. A literary critic examines and interprets a literary piece. When you take up a responsibility to methodically examine a piece of prose, drama or poetry, using one or more literary theories, you play the role of a literary critic. For instance, Lois Tyson in the book, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, did a critique of Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, from different theoretical perspectives – Marxist, Feminist, Deconstructive, Psychoanalytic, etc. That qualifies her as a literary critic. This course trains you to do that. That is why it requires that you read, comprehend, interpret and apply different theoretical ideas to the analysis of literary texts. You must also learn to logically and methodically represent your views on literary productions verbally and in writing. These activities deepen your theoretical consciousness, enhance your critical thinking and broaden your analytical scope. At this point you should endeavour to acquire a basic understanding of the different schools of literary theory and how these affect their classifications into categories.

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 3

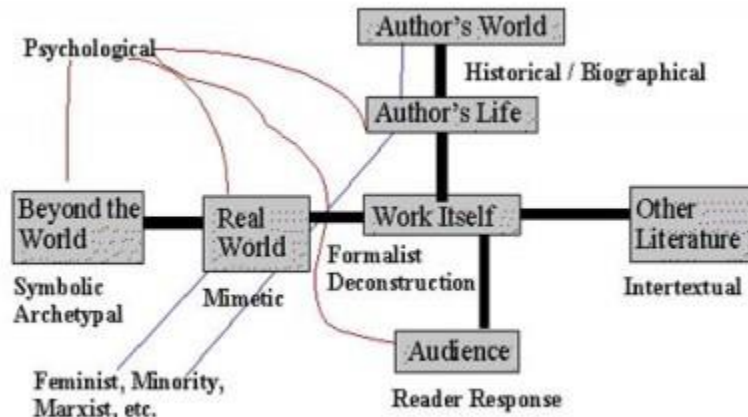Identify the relationship between literary texts, literary theories and a critic.

4.0   **Major Categories and Approaches**

4.1.   **Categories of Literary Theory**

The different schools of literary criticism are based on the different perceptions and approaches of interpreting literature. Each shift in the conceptual comprehension of literature results into a varied critical approach. The structure of literary texts is influenced by theory and criticism and both in addition regulate the trend of the literary text. Literature, as an art form, manifests the world in its characteristic diversity. It therefore follows naturally that several principles will be conceived to account for the multi-dimensional varieties. Views on literature are reflections of the cultures, ideas, tastes and goals which are expected of the literature of a given society and period by a group of people. This explains why different ages manifest dissimilar views about values and appropriateness in literature. Erumkahan's (2012, p. 1) diagrammatic adaptation from

Elements of Literary Criticism, offers an explicit view of the different focus of literary criticism.
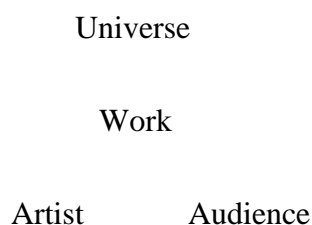
Diagram 1:   Different Perspectives of Literary Criticism

Source: Erumkhan (2012, p. 12).

M. H. Abram's 1953 classification however remains, perhaps, the most generally accepted. Under "Orientation of Critical Theories", which serves as the introduction in the book, *English Romantic Criticism: The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams explores the diversity of critical approach. His illustration includes a simple triangular diagram of elements involved in criticism under the segment "Some Co-Ordinates of Art Criticism."

Illustration 1: Elements of Literary Criticism

Universe

Work
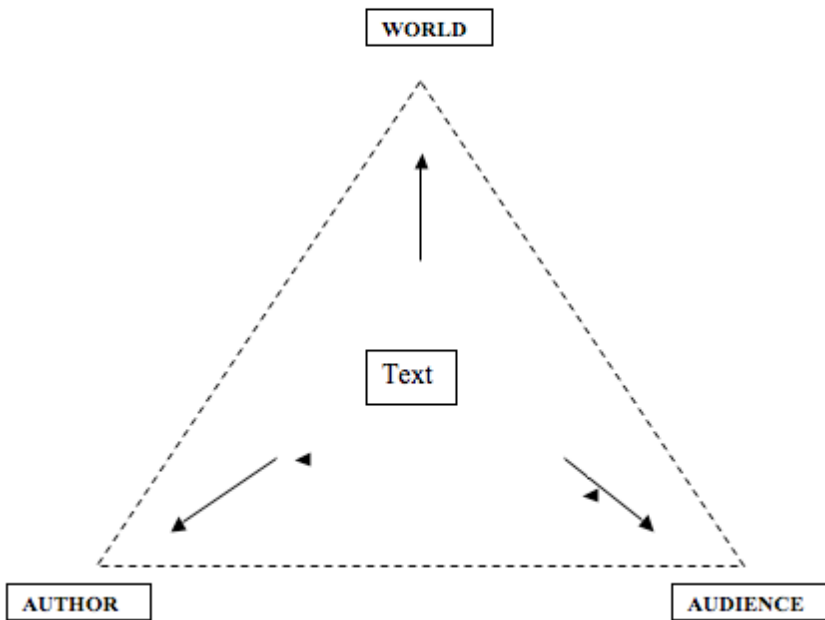
Artist   Audience

Source: M.H. Abrams (1953, p. 6).

Do you notice that the above arrangement expresses the central position of work (literary piece) in the expressed relationship scale? Nelson (2008) later modification offers a more explicit picture of Abram's view.

Diagram 2:   Elements of Literary Criticism

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Adapted from M. H. Abrams│
│ The Mirror and the Lamp │
│ New York: Oxford, 1953  │
└─────────────────────────┘
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                    ┌─────────┐
                    │  WORLD  │
                    └─────────┘
                        △
                       ╱│╲
                      ╱ │ ╲
                     ╱  ↑  ╲
                    ╱   │   ╲
                   ╱ ┌──────┐ ╲
                  ╱  │ Text │  ╲
                 ╱   └──────┘   ╲
                ╱  ◄╲       ╱◄   ╲
               ╱    ╲     ╲     ╲
              ╱      ▼     ▼      ╲
             △───────────────────────△
    ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐
    │  AUTHOR  │              │ AUDIENCE │
    └──────────┘              └──────────┘
```

Source: Nelson (2008, p. 3).

Observe that Nelson replaces Abram's "universe" with "world" which he adjudges "a more modest" term and he completes Abram's incomplete triangle.

Abram (1953, p. 6) posits that "*four elements are discriminated*" as constituting common trends within recognizable theories. He thus classifies literary theories into four categories according to the way they tend to concentrate on the four elements. Theories that examine the relationship of a work to the world, that is the subject; "nature", he classifies as mimetic theories (8). Those that are interested in "the work, the artistic product itself" Abrams terms objective theories (26). Furthermore, the group of theories that interrogates "the artificer, the artist" is expressive theories (22) while the class that pays attention to the effect of the work on "the audience" fills the slot for pragmatic theories (14). In other words, the mimetic theories associate the work of art

to the universe while the pragmatic theories focus on the impact of the text on the audience. Expressive theories concentrate on the relationship between the work and its author and the objective theories examine the text as an autonomous unit; while three function by associating the work to the extraneous factors of the universe, the audience, or the artist, the fourth considers the work as an autonomous entity. So Abram's postulation exhibits the following variables.

➢ text-universe
➢ text-author
➢ text-audience
➢ text-in-isolation

Please note that a theory may express one or more of these four approaches. Thus, they are not mutually exclusive.

4.1.1 **Mimetic Theory**

The Mimetic category is the oldest and according to Abrams, the   most primitive of the four. This category of the esthetic theories has been traced to Platonic and Aristotelian discourses (427-347 and 384-322 B.C.). Under this theory, art represents an imitation of portions of life; nature of things and actions of man. Like in a mirror, in art, the world is reflected. The emphasis is on accuracy and truth of literary representation and for this, the perspective is broadly considered as realism. Thus, artists imitate slices of the visible world as demonstrated in the legendary Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*. Embedded in this concept is an expression of relationship based on three factors; world of essence - eternal and unchanging Ideas   reproduced in the world of appearance - the world of sense (natural or synthetic) and replicated in shadows, images and mirrors. This concept of art lasted into the post-Aristotlean period to the eighteenth century. Critics throughout this period utilized the expression imitation or synonymous terms including representation, copy, image, reflection and counterfeiting in the designation of art. Eventually, this critical trend was modified and the preceding period exhibits a work-to-audience leaning as against a work-to-universe persuasion. Another category was therefore initiated in literary criticism but this later class still bears imprints of Plato and Aristotle's ideas.

4.1.2 Pragmatic Theory

In literary criticism, the term 'Pragmatic Pole' represents the ancient tradition initiated by Plato and Aristotle which focus is the impact of literature on its audience. The Pragmatic perspective constitutes the prevailing approach of analysis from Horace to the early 19th century and owes a good deal of its vocabulary to the ancient scholarship. Under this orientation, the effect of a work of art on the audience constitutes the focus of criticism. A work is therefore examined in line with its ability to perform the function of providing both instruction and pleasure. The character, scope and result of that directional transformation is perhaps best articulated in Sir Philip Sidney's "The Apologie for Poetry." In Sydney's postulation literature imitates in order "to teach and delight." This position illustrates the pragmatic approach without totally ignoring the mimetic element. Within the 18th-century Neoclassical criticism, Samuel Johnson endorses Shakespeare's artistic ability to imitate and mostly to "instruct by pleasing" in the very influential "A Preface to Shakespeare." Shakespeare's drama typified by the eponymous *Macbeth* demonstrates this view constructed on mimetic and pragmatic approaches. Artists are regarded as not only makers but also as prophets.

4.1.3 Expressive Theory

The Expressive orientation dislodges the mimetic and pragmatic views in the late 18[th] and early 19[th] centuries especially with the radical approach of the 1830s Romantics. In that period the artist transforms from his traditional role as the "mirror," into the "lamp" as his internal feelings becomes the major subject of his art. The artist then becomes the primary focus as the source and subject of his/her work which are considered as the externalizations of the internal. That is, the writers mind – attitude, feeling and actions. **Expressive approach is thus artist-oriented.** Wordsworth, in his 1800 "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" projects a seminal definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." **His view endorses the expressive perspective in which the writer's expressions are basically the center.** John Keats' poetry "Ode on a Grecian Urn" exemplifies this concept in art.

4.1. 4 **Objective Theory**

The Objective alterative in literary criticism emerges as a modern phenomenon and becomes the governing approach from the first part of the 20th century. Aristotle's view, which considers tragedy as a complete object with cohesive elements designed to elicit certain response from the audience, influenced this view. Under this orientation, the work of art is, in principle, considered an independent entity. It is therefore isolated from all previously considered extraneous factors. Literature is thus examined on the basis of its constitutive and intrinsic qualities. T.S. Eliot and the New Critics' ideas approve this approach. "Art for Arts Sake" becomes the conventional expression of diverse ideas under this approach. T.S. Eliot's dictum of 1928, that poetry should be considered mainly as poetry and nothing else, articulates the kernel of this persuasion.

In summary, mimetic approaches guided the age of Plato and Aristotle. In the Ancient Greek (323 BC – 31 BC) and Roman eras, pragmatic persuasion replaced the mimetic perspective. In the 1800 to 1900 expressive approaches developed and from the early 1900s to the present, the objective theories dominate the critical scene. Gomathy (2006, p. 4) posits that "Abrams has analyzed the growth of criticism thematically, chronologically, historically and critically. This wins a special place for him in the genre of criticism." However, other scholars have also made insightful contributions in this area. `

4. 2   **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Criticism**

Eaglestone (2002, p. 39) examinines "critical attitudes" and classifies "different methods of interpretation" in critical analysis. These are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic criticism attempts to discover meaning within the text and so examines the work as an isolated unit. It has a formalistic orientation. On the other hand, extrinsic criticism holds that the meaning projected by a text cannot be divorced from the context of such a text. This approach studies literature in relation to contextual factors.

4.3   **Comprehensive Overview**

Broadly speaking, the traditional period of literary criticism lasted from Plato to the Victorian Age. The modern period started in the end of the 19th century as propelled by F.R. Leavis' and T. S. Eliot's individual thoughts. The formal orientation pays attention to the form rather than the content. The structural is interested in language rules. The ideological approach considers the socio-political context of a work and the sociological places the work within its sociological milieu. The biographic persuasion focuses on personal experiences of the author. The psychological affiliations exhibit interest in the human (writer and characters) impulses and behaviours.

New Criticism is, based on the above explanations, a modern, intrinsic/formalistic and objective approach of literary criticism. On the other hand Aristotle's principle is traditional, extrinsic and pragmatic. In addition based on his all-inclusive concern for the formal structures of drama, the theory also manifests structural/formalist approach. This is why Aristotle is regarded as the first formalist/Structuralist in literary analysis. The pragmatic orientation exists in contradictory relationship with reader-response. While the first caters for what a literary work makes out of a reader, the second is interested in what the reader makes out of a work.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 4

Using diagrams and or tables, classify the four different orientations according to their multiple identities?

5.0   CONCLUSION

Unit 1 of ENG 815 has engaged in a comprehensive discussion of the fundamental information you need. The aim is to provide a formidable platform for further discussions. You have been introduced to the two interlocking segments of the course and given an insight into practical procedures of analysis. In addition, the status of the literary text within this scheme has been established. Moreover, this chapter introduces you to your responsibility as a literary critic/student. This unit has also discussed the major approaches and traditions in literary criticism.

6.0   SUMMARY

At this point, this unit must have exposed you to:

The nature and scope of literary theory and criticism.

The reasons why this course is necessary within and outside the academic universe.

Processes you should follow for effective and efficient literary criticism.

Different classes, sub-classes and traditions of literary criticism and the basis for such demarcations.

What is expected of you as a literary critic/student:
If you understand what is already discussed above you should comfortably attempt the questions below. You also need to consult the stipulated materials that make up the last segment of this unit. After here, it is time to move on and conference with the various assumptions. If you are ready let us go over to the next unit and start our study of theories.

7.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the concept of literary theory and criticism clearly stating the relationship between both arms.
2. Discuss the factors that influence the classification of literary criticism into different categories.
3. If you are given two fictional texts to analyze what processes are you going to follow to ensure that you generate a comprehensive and methodological critical text?
4. Discuss your responsibility as a potential critic.
5. Write short notes on the following:
    a. Mimetic theory
    b. Pragmatic theory
    c. Expressive theory
    d. Objective theory
    e. Intrinsic and extrinsic criticisms

8.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2 UNIT 1   THE PLATONIAN PRINCIPLE

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Unit 1 of Module 2 represents the beginning of your exposure to the different statements that have initiated altered, sustained, defined and characterized literary criticism across the major periods. This unit is interested in Plato's concept of arts. Plato's view marks the formal introduction of hypothetical ideas into the literary enterprise. This unit discusses the socio-political milieu of Plato's scholarship. It concentrates on the major points of Plato's assumptions. The unit also identifies Plato's method of presentation and its value. In addition, this part identifies Plato's importance within Literary Studies as an academic discipline. The inadequacies

of Plato's thoughts are, in addition, observed in this unit. Lastly, Unit 1 suggests some guidelines for an application of Plato's thoughts to textual analysis.

In Unit 1, you are expected to read and understand the key assumptions contained in Plato's logic and note how it has informed literary theorizing and criticism. This is to enable you become conversant with Plato's concept and its implications. Part of your responsibility in this unit is to interpret and evaluate Plato's theory of literature and his manner of presenting such ideas. Furthermore, you will apply Plato's principles in reading literary texts. This unit provides insights that will help you do all these. It therefore goes without saying that you will interact directly with the English translated version of Plato's text. In doing this, please try to note the orientation category and type of criticism his position represents based on what you have learnt in the previous unit. Remember that this course is both theoretical and practical. As you go through this unit, be prepared not only to read but to comprehend and interpret the views and then apply Plato's standard to textual analysis.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of Unit 1, you should be able to:

Account for the formal beginning of literary criticism.

Identify and interpret the kernels of Plato's philosophy of art without ignoring the orientation and background.

Discuss his method of presentation and appraise its efficiency.

Comprehensively discuss Plato's significance/contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism and the inadequacies of his blueprint.

Outline how, as a critic, you can apply Plato's conjecture to textual analysis and examine at least two short texts on the basis of Plato's principles.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Historical Background

The literary tradition is mainly constituted by the existing body of works in a particular society as well as the comments those works elicit. The early Greek playwrights adopted materials from their immediate environment to entertain, inform and instruct. Thus, Greek myths and legends were deployed in literary creativity in a manner that provides new insight into the messages embedded in such literary forms. Scholars, based on those artistic productions, began to project varied views on the production and consumption of literature. Consequently, classical playwrights, best personified by Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes, supplied the initial materials for literary criticism. Literary criticism started in the classical period.

You must understand that literary criticism existed in its rudimentary form in the literary psyche and legacy of the ancient period even before the emergence of literary formulas. Before the emergence of formal literary criticism, works of literature were produced. The audience interpreted and evaluated different aspects of those works. That was literary criticism. Then some ancient scholars, best represented by Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, worked to collect, characterize, collate, consolidate and thus formalize that which had been arbitrarily practiced in their society in that classical period. Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus are generally accepted as the four most renowned critics of the classical period. This tells you that Western literary criticism dates back to the classical period.

Plato (427-347) was a classical Greek scholar. His writings manifest the initial conceptual concerns in the examination of works of literature. Before we discuss Plato's ideas it is important you understand the socio-political ambiance that informed his scholarship. This will enhance your understanding of his position. Plato's treatise is, to a large extent, a scholarly reaction to the pervading socio-political instability and attendant insecurity of his society. Plato wrote at a period when the ancient Greek civilization was already declining. Greek education, including her literature, had equally crossed its period of excellence following the glorious period of epic and tragic poetry. Greek literature suffered pollution and relapse. Literary Studies, though in its rudimentary stage, exploited the works of Homer. Homer's epics were distorted and his meaning misconstrued. In addition, slavery was prevalent and women were assigned a subjacent status. Plato's Greek society was in a state of intellectual, political, and moral disorder.

Plato's prescription was therefore largely modified by the type of society he visualized. As one of his society's thinkers, his interest was propelled by the desire to volunteer a novel political and ethical construct to regenerate the decaying Athenian state. Plato professed his views at the classical period when there was no formal compartmentalization of disciplines. Thus, according to the dictates of his period, Plato's thoughts cut across History, Political Science, Economics, Natural Sciences and of course the Humanities. He organized his views in about ten books with *The Republic* as the most validated. His significance in literary criticism is a by-product of his statements on literature. Plato's ideas on literature are mostly contained *The Republic* under the Title "Poetry and Unreality" (Robin Waterfield's translation). Platonic idea on literature is contained in Book III and Book X of *The Republic*. The major concern of the first is the impact of poetry. The second book, which is more comprehensive and incisive, examines the epistemological value of literature.

3.2   Basic Assumptions

Plato's basic assumptions are founded on two premises of content and form of literature. The Platonic Theory of Forms is a further development of the latter. Plato's argument against poetry is based on different factors. His complaint revolves around the object depicted by the poet, the truth merit of the poet's creation, the question of the poet's knowledge and the effect of poetry on the audience. Plato's objection to the literature of his period is based on more than one reason. First, he argues that literature encourages detrimental emotions and is therefore not ethical. Again, Plato insists that since literature fails to supply true knowledge, it is not philosophical. Moreover, the theorist posits that literature is inferior to other practical arts and so it is not pragmatic as it hardly demonstrates any educational merits. Plato's view is therefore clothed in a moralistic garb.

 To aid your understanding of Plato's logic, his views on literary productions have been segmented into three: inspiration, imitation and functions of literature. The three are the central focus of Plato's philosophy of art. They are comprehensively discussed below.

3.2.1   Inspiration

In the classical period the concept of inspiration was a very profound aspect of literary creativity. The muse, a supernatural guiding force, was a pervasive phenomenon and functions as a protagonist in all concepts of inspiration within creative imagination. All great works of literature were attributed to his inspiration. In Plato's calculation, poets were but receptacles through which the gods deliver their messages undiluted. The concept of inspiration, in Plato's estimation, does not suggest artistry. As such the issue of embellishment does not arise. The poet speaks a pure, unornamented, straightforward, direct message of the gods and under complete divine possession. Plato therefore eliminates art from his good literature. So he votes for outright possession which demands a sort of an unconscious state for the interpretation of the metaphysical message. This implies that no skill is required in the transmission of literary message.

Plato unconsciously addresses the crucial issue of creativity and artistry. His argument thus holds some merits, especially in relation to selectivity in arts. His theory that the divine messages ought to be transmitted raw and undiluted illuminates the essence of selection of useful materials by a worthy artist. This theory of selection operates principally in literary imagination. Selectivity reflects the writers' idiosyncrasies and attendant variations even over same subjects. Plato seems to insinuate that a good artist objectively selects his materials in order to properly communicate his meaning. The thoughtful addition of "… recollected in tranquility" in the seminal definition of poetry by Wordsworth authenticates Plato's postulation. In this logic is rooted the entrance of ideology into literature.

Can you perceive the implication of Plato's principles of art? His thesis eliminates the idea of positive inspiration. In other words, the poet is not in any way a subject of positive inspiration. He is but a servile copier. The poet therefore cannot lay claim to his creative production. Again, Plato's postulation, in denying artistry skills, interrogates the place of training in creativity. In addition, he deprives literature of its essential coloured garments in divesting it of artistic embellishments. Moreover, his interest in the metaphysical limits the scope of literature by classifying as acceptable only a slim body of literature to the detriment of commonplace literary compositions.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

a. "For all good poets … compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed" (15). "God takes away reasons from poets, and uses them as his ministers … God himself is the speaker, and through them he is addressing us" (16).

   Examine the above assertion in relation to the place of inspiration in literary creativity.

b. In the light of Plato's concept of possession in arts, read and analyze the indicated passages of the novels listed below.
   1. *Anthills of the Savannah* (Achebe), pages 124, 125 and 153.
   2. *The Last of the Strong Ones* (Adimora-Ezeigbo), pages 82-85.

3.2.2   Imitation

The concept of imitation or *mimesis*, plays a very fundamental role in classical thoughts. In that period literature is considered an imitation of the real and thus a fiction. The idea of imitation however is variously defined. Plato's view on the link between art and illusion as contained in his theory of forms portrays his definition of imitation. For Plato, imitation means counterfeit or fake. It implies that somewhere an original exists and that original is copied in artistic representations. In Plato's estimation, the original idea, concept or image of an object resides with God in His consciousness. In other word, the first, the original and the only authentic artist is God. In his memorable illustration, Plato advances the example of bed, table and the carpenter. For him the real bed is in our unconsciousness and good poets should portray the primordial essence of man which unites all. In Platonian terms, the table is a divine prototype, the original. A carpenter's finished product is an imperfect copy of that divine prototype and so is "at a remove from the true model." The poet in his composition relies on that flawed imitation of the carpenter. The result is an impression "at a second remove from reality." In Plato's conclusion, "the art of representation is a long way removed from the truth." This implies that the table as represented by an artist has undergone two different notions before getting to the audience and is so incapable of portraying reality adequately and effectively. Based on this, art should not be

taken seriously because it is not a dependable denominator of reality. In this view literature is presented as an incapable vector of truth.

Again, Plato is interested in the thematic engagements of literature. He regards the mundane poetries as imitative and not inspirational. Thus, subjects like gladiators, prostitution, sex, and so on, are outside his limited literary space. Based on this view, novels like *Moll Flanders* (1722) by Robinson Crusoe and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) by Charles Dickens, which discuss prostitution and mob logic, are imitative and will not be permitted in Plato's republic. Moreover, he is against propaganda and agitation. On this basis, most Marxist and feminist texts have no place in Plato's world. Plato conceives poetries inspired by the gods as divine products rather than the poets' creations. In his estimation, such poetry is closest to the original as it is given by the gods through the artist who must be completely possessed by such gods. Therefore, the supernatural reality should be the model for artists.

It is necessary that we reiterate the import of Plato's statement in relation to poets (creative writers) and the function of the concept of table and carpenter. The former is sufficiently explicated in Adepitan's interpretation. Adepitan (1999, p. 135) notes that Plato's stance has a double implication "for the status of the poet." The first is that since the poet is only an inept imitator of what already exists, he has lost the license of being a maker or a creator of his work. Additionally, because he is but only a vector for the muse, the poet lacks the right to be regarded as the vendor and custodian of the truth. In other words, Plato's philosophy enervates creative writers by cheating them out of their creative rights and position as curators and transmitters of the truth.

Secondly, the idea of table and carpenter is central to Plato's philosophy. Scholars have employed it in various interpretations of Plato's ideas. There are three realms in Plato's universe. These are realms of ideas, particulars, and reflections of particulars; the reflection refer to art and other expressions. You can observe that the last is the furthest removed from the first which represents the 'ultimate truth" and thus a mimetic art is accorded very little esteem in Plato's world. Socrates shares Plato's position as he ranked the third realm, which is mimetic art, at the lowest rung of the ladder and terms it the most "untrue". Socrates, in his famed interpretation of the three beds, assigned the first bed to the gods, the second to the carpenter and the last, to the

artistic representation. For him art represents a representation of the ideal bed. Both observations are directly linked to the functions of literature as envisaged by Plato.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 2

"Of all the many Excellencies which I perceive in the order of our state, there is none which upon reflection pleases me better than the rule about poetry." What rule is Plato referring to and what is the implication of the statement above?

3.2.3. Functions of Literature

On the functions of literature, the third strand of his argument, Plato demonstrates a pragmatic orientation to critical analysis. He holds that poetry has a corrupting influence on the audience. Plato's denunciation of poetry is based on his view that the art form appeals to the base and womanish nature of man at the detriment of reason. According to Plato, poetry has the capacity to subvert the intellect and as such it is inferior. In other words, Plato holds that poetry "destabilizes the individual human psyche, encouraging various kinds of unwelcome destructive and self-destructive feelings and actions" (Johnson, 1997, p. 7). Thus, literature elicits responses which are not welcomed in Plato's ideal society of gentlemen and soldiers led by the philosopher king. Consequently, Plato's model republic closes its gate to majority of the poets because they could make a man display emotions unbecoming of a gentleman and soldier. Only a slim body of poets who wrote for moral instruction would be permitted into his kingdom. On the other hand, he posits that Philosophy provides knowledge and truth which fortify the mind. Plato advocates for the endorsement and cultivation of the rational part of man because it helps man to deal with calamity and misfortune. For Plato literature should be realistic and posses the capacity to educate. It should be geared towards an attainment of perfectionism.

Plato therefore condemns most literature of his age and supports having then censored for educational, theological, philosophical and moral reasons. Educationally, his objection is on the

ground that literature does not instill good behavior in the young. Plato is worried that poets project the wrong specie of models in their representations of great men, legends and even gods. He posits that poetry should eliminate the lament of famous men as that is an immoral example and cannot stimulate the youth towards virtue. This implies that those representations could deform the mind and facilitate moral corruption instead of ennobling virtues. For Plato, writers ought to characterize the protagonists of Greek myths and legends as incorruptible because they are generally regarded as exemplars of virtue in that culture. Moreover, young men, in his view, should be portrayed as subservient to constituted authorities to enhance discipline. His argument thus acquires an epistemological, religious and moralistic signature.

Theologically, the gods, according to him are misrepresented by poets as Homer and Hesiod. Plato exonerates the gods from evil and from man's weaknesses and excesses. For him, vices and inadequacies are functions of other causes and forces as god is infinitely good and must be thus represented. To misrepresent God, in Plato's estimation, will elicit irreverence and detract from the grand image of the divine being. The scholar believes that the artistic image of capricious and recalcitrant gods could be a bad example for the Athenian youths. For him such an image is capable of undermining the political basis of much of Greek education principally constructed upon religious structures. Philosophically, Plato finds poetry guilty of distorting the truth. He insists that it is an inferior representation of reality and adds the poet has no adequate idea of the reality he represents. Morally, poetry fans the embers of the emotional and base aspect of man, in Plato's estimation. He believes that the emotional should be suppressed while the rational gets developed. In his understanding, it is the rational, rather than the emotional, that sustains virtue in man. Still in line with his pragmatic orientation, Plato disapproves the deification of Homer on account of his wide knowledge. For him that knowledge is only commendable if it is directly useful. According to the Platonian principle, products are only useful when they are practically relevant and can elicit feedback from consumers.

Obviously, literature does not and cannot function Plato's way and so cannot be useful in his evaluation. It must be noted that Plato's hostility against poets of his age is because, the poets functioned centrally in the "cultural conditioning" of the Greece society (Waterfield, 1993, p. xxx). They were generally regarded as teachers. Again, the main function of literature is

educational and as such the artistic part constitutes but a secondary consideration in the consciousness of Plato's society.

Plato's view has an implication for the writer, the text and the audience. The creative process involves inspiration and that means complete possession of the writer by a higher power. Again, the writer engages in senile and imperfect replication of nature. The poetic text is good only when it depicts poetic truth and that is the original message. Otherwise it is a fake production. On the impact of poetry, he condemns most poetic productions as corrupting and enervating.

You must have observed that Plato, unwittingly, acknowledges the potency of literature as an entertainer and a teacher. In this Plato admits the intense force of art which he assigns but a marginal position in his republic. He addresses two issues of function and creativity in arts. His view considers the utilitarian value a sine qua non in arts. He seeks for direct benefits from literary ideas in terms of the feedback from the consumer. Literature is only valuable if it contributes to the development of his model state by molding patriotic citizens. Creativity and artistry form the second issue. Plato implies that the good artist is him who selects his materials and deploys such to reflect the gods' messages in its raw and undiluted form. In this he hammers on the theory of selection in art which underscores a huge aspect of creativity. Here also Wordsworth's definition of poetry in its addition of "… recollected in tranquility …" illuminates Plato's idea. In his theory of form, Plato analyzes the connection between art and illusion as motivated by the style of manifestation.

Self Assessment Exercise 3

Can you identify the principle concern of Plato in his thesis?

3.3.   Genres

Even in its form, Plato fails to observe recommendable quality in the poetry of his age. He recognizes three – tragedy, comedy and lyric. The difference between the forms is based on their manner of presentation. To communicate with their audiences, the first two forms – tragedy and

comedy – utilizes representation while the last – lyric uses the voice of the poet. For him, dramatic and epic poetry display base characters that could not provide the required nobility which the youths should imitate. In Plato's world, tragedy, comedy and epic are guilty of instigating the youth to assume other characters outside their personalities. These are therefore not permitted in his model political enclave.

The implication of Plato's statement is that the concept of impersonation in drama is misleading. This is because it allows the youth assume other characters apart from their natural selves. In addition, epic admits characters who, for him, have very little to offer in the education of the youth. Thus, Plato's interest in the proper development of the Athenian youth runs throughout his essay.

4. 0. Additional Notes

4. 1.   Key Passages

The key passages encapsulate what is considered the most significant parts of Plato's theory of arts. In this course material, the page numbers are from the English translation of literary theories The title of 'our text' is *Criticism: Major Statements* (4th ed.), edited by Charles Kaplan and William Davis Anderson. The text was published in 2000 in New York by Bedsford/St. Martin.

1. Page 2: The "imitative kind of poetry" and their impact on the audience.
2. Pages 3, 4 and 5: Three different beds, their respective makers and their various distances from the truth.
3. Pages 4 and 5: The concept of different point of views and direct and indirect mode of perception.
4.   Page 6: Utility value of poetry.
5. Page 7: The natural paraphernalia of arts in "metre, harmony and rhythms."
6. Page 10: Imitative art conceived as inferior production.

7. Page 12: Impact of poetry on the audience.

8. Page 13: position of Homer and status of tragedy, model poetries and the age-long relationship between poetry and philosophy.

9. Page 14: the double role of poetry in teaching and entertainment.

10. Pages 15 and 16: The exclusion of art and consciousness from the concepts of possession and inspiration.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 4

Open to page 13 of 'our text' and write out, in lucid terms, what you consider three most crucial points discussed in there.

4. 2.   Methods

Plato uses a number of methods to communicate his theory of literature. These include the:

1. Conversational prose style.
2. Informal question and answer format.
3. Principle of grading.
4. Delineates his focus on the imitative kind of poetry.
5. Short self-defining clauses.
6. Comparative method.
7. Metaphors, concrete images and symbols.
8. Examples

Plato's methods enhance the comprehension of his ideas. He "uses a conversational prose format to explore the nature of society, seeking to define the characteristics of an ideal society, or republic" (Jelena, 2005, p. 1). The overall conversational mode is natural rather than academic.

Plato's deployment of the informal question and answer system makes his presentation personal, dramatic and persuasive. His thesis sounds more like a private discussion. It is direct and theatrical and therefore true to life. Plato is able to define his subject and his scope. This establishes his area of interest. In addition, the scholar employs the principle of grading to depict a hierarchical organisation of different shades of reality. This technique functions to classify materials into categories in such a way that their unequal status is underscored. Plato's illustration of differences is couched in clauses that are self-defining and as such easily intelligible. This is best exemplified by "thrice removed from truth." The method aids a reader's comprehension of the different levels of reality as propounded by Plato.

Furthermore, Plato employs the comparative method. For instance, he draws a comparative relationship between Literature and Warfare, Medicine and Government (6) and poets and scholars in other fields. The method helps in locating convergences and divergences between two or more forms. The idea of table and carpenter epitomises Plato's adroit manipulation of imageries and symbols in philosophy and logic. Perhaps Baktir's explanation will help you understand this point clearly. He states that "Plato uses mirror and water as constant metaphors to clarify the relationship between reality and the reflection of eidon" (2003, p. 172). The method creates a concrete picture, using ordinary materials, to illustrate an abstract notion. It aids his illustration of the concept of points-of-view. That technique infuses a measure of literariness into his thesis and this is emblazoned in the idea of table and carpenter. Again, the use of concrete examples, as the example of bed, table, flute-player and flute-maker (8), makes his writing pictorial and therefore very graspable.

Ironically, Plato who denounces poets sounds poetic. He is generally admired as a literary artist. This is because "Plato wrote dramatic dialogues rather than didactic volumes and did so with rare literary skill" (Barad, 2012, p. 7). Jelena's adds that Plato is acclaimed as a fine "prose stylist and the *Republic* is regarded as one of the most exemplary texts in this genre, praised for its craftsmanship and poetic qualities" (2005, p. 1). Based on these observations, Plato's method of presentation could be considered effective. His treatise draws vivid common pictures and projects such in a manner that enhances an easy comprehension of his meaning.

4. 3.   Significance/Contributions

From our previous discussions in this unit the significance of Plato in Literary Studies should be decipherable to a vigilant student. You will probably understand Plato's donation to Literary Studies by classifying them in line with how his ideas deal with the literary work, creative writer and reader.

Plato is a very significant voice in literary criticism. His theory provides the first philosophical standpoint for literary analysis. According to Jelena (2005, p. 1) "Plato has come to occupy a key position in the history of western philosophy and is often called the father of philosophic idealism." However, it must however be observed that Plato's significance is not a consequence of any profound or coherent discourse on literature but is due to his inauguration of literary criticism. In fact, his critical views are collated from about seven different dialogues especially *The Ion, The Symposium, The Republic and the Laws.* That is why scholars, epitomized by Barad, holds that "he can hardly be described as a formal literary critic" (2012, p. 3). His negative opinion concerning the role of literature in western civilization gains him a central position in the history of criticism because of the several reactions it elicits. Some of these reactions have developed into manuscripts of rules for literary scholars. Thus he started a debate which is sustained and expanded and has persisted into the contemporary period. In that lies his importance.

Plato formally establishes the symbiotic relationship between a literary product (work), the producer (writer) and the consumer (reader), albeit tacitly. This is irrespective of the fact that he assigned a diminished status to the writer within that economy. In dealing with the nature, functions and classes of poetry, Plato projects literature as deserving of critical attention and as such paves the way into its being admitted in to the ambit of scholarship as an independent discipline. He also identifies the direct and indirect ability of poetry not only to entertain but also to instruct in his overt concern with the development of an ideal Athenian state.

 Plato, indirectly though, identified the preeminence of theme in literature as well as its moral and psychological effect on the audience. Furthermore, he develops some of the most prominent terminologies employed in literary criticism. According to Johnson, he "provides the vocabulary

which shapes the debates" (1997, p. 2). His concept of bed, carpenter, table and "thrice removed from reality" remain recurrent decimals in literary criticism from the classical to the present age.

He is the first to identify the ideological element of creative writing and makes anticipatory statements on its consequences. Plato assigns a specific status to artists in terms of their creative contributions and productions.

4. 4.   Limitations:

Plato seeks for a direct benefit of art. This subject of direct benefit of art has never stopped bothering scholars and critics from the traditional to the modern period. As long as value is dependent on the materials, literature will add very little value to human existence. This is because literature by its nature offers but an indirect value.

Plato employs fiction in the literal sense of the word as lies and illusion and therefore counterfeit. His definition contradicts the position that considers poetry as imaginative production that reflects reality to teach and instruct.

Plato's concept of imitation is overwhelmed by epistemological and metaphysical concern. In Baktir's analysis, Plato "takes the word 'mimesis' with pedagogic attributes and uses it in educational and ethical context …" (2003, p. 169). So his literary principles are subjected under his passion to create and maintain his ideal state. Plato's concern is the education of obedient and valiant youths who will readily and willingly make sacrifices for the reconstruction of the decaying Athenian state.

He denies the poet the right of ownership of his work as he conceives the work of art as the property of gods rather than the poet who, for him, is but a passive vector. He enervates the poet and reduces him to the status of a copy-cat. Plato's principle circumscribes the poet by denying him/her a voice and a right to manipulate available resources to create art. In his conception, only pictures of good people and hymns to the gods are permissible as ideal poetry. Plato's recommendations "are unrealistic" (Waterfield, 1993, p. xxxii). He advocates for the extraction

of the literariness in literature, that is 'deliteraturing' of literature. This implies the murder of literature.

4. 5 Application

Based on Plato's philosophy, a critic will:

1. Pay attention to lyric poetry, which is Plato's preferred choice, and be apprehensive of tragedy, comedy and epic.
2. Validate the mysterious as he/she disregards literature works with mundane concerns because they are imitative and so fake and far from reality.
3. Examine a work for evidence of divine possession in artistic composition.
4. Accord greater importance to reverential hymns to the gods and celebration of the virtuous.
5. Examine as good text representations of the young as disciplined, obedient and subservient to constituted authority.
6. Seek out depictions of legends and gods as incorruptible.
7. Search for direct benefit of a literary composition to the audience.
8. Analyze political and nationalistic essence of a work of art, especially in the education of youths for the good of the state.

Plato will reject classics like *Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles) and *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* (Achebe) because the works depict the weaknesses and emasculations of famous men – Oedipus and Okonkwo, and god – Ulu.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 5

According to Plato's classification, which of the genres best represents literature and can you decipher the factors that determine his choice?

5.0   CONCLUSION

In Module 1 Unit 1 of ENG 815, Plato's judgment and recommendations on literature have been comprehensively discussed. Plato's view is organized on the basis of inspiration, imitation and functions of literature. In addition, the epistemological and psychological perspectives of his concepts are established. At the epistemological level, Plato avers that the inventions of the poets depart from the truth. At the level of the psychological, he holds that they nourish the emotional/irrational aspect of human mind and as such minimizes the capacity of such minds to comprehend the truth. Plato's interest is fired by nationalistic zeal. In other words, his primary interest is political rather than artistic. Waterfield reminds us that, "Plato's criticism of poetry develops within the perfectionist and educational context" (1993, p. xxx). His logic represents a traditional extrinsic criticism with a mimetic and pragmatic orientation.

6.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The socio-political and psychological background of Plato's period and thoughts.

Basic assumptions of Plato's argument under inspiration, imitation and functions of literature.

His methods of presentation.

Significance/Contributions as well as the inadequacies of Plato's theoretical ideas.

Suggestions towards an application of the Platonic principle of art in literary criticism.

7.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the position of Plato in relation to the formal inauguration of literary criticism.
2. Closely examine Plato's philosophy of arts without ignoring its conceptual orientation and background. Your response should cater for his specific views on inspiration, imitation and functions of literature.
3. Closely examine Plato's employment of the concept of bed, table and carpenter and state how the illustrative system advance his thesis.
4. Identify at least five methods of presentation utilized by Plato and appraise the value of each within the scheme of the essay.
5. Comprehensively discuss Plato's significance/contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism and the intrinsic inadequacies of his blueprint.
6. Attempt a critical analysis of two classical literary texts of your choice using Plato's standard.

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MODULE 2 UNIT 2   ARISTOTELIAN THEORY OF LITERATURE

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The essence of this unit is to acquaint you with the first formal, albeit indirect, response to Plato's theoretical statement. It focuses on Aristotle's standardized protestations over Plato's spontaneous provocations. This unit marks the first recognized extension of conjectural ideas in the history of literary theory and criticism. It also takes into cognizance the backdrop of Aristotle's conceptual views. Module 1 Unit 2 is specifically interested in the major statements of Aristotle's erudition on literature. This unit also takes into consideration Aristotle's approach and the attendant merits. Furthermore, it locates Aristotle's contributions and place in Literary Criticism without ignoring the limitations of his postulations. Finally, this unit makes some suggestions on the application of the Aristotelian principles in literary criticism.

Unit 2 requires you to engage in a close reading of Aristotle's submission on production and consumption of literature. This is because you are expected to understand and appraise his views and their consequences. You should endeavour to decipher Aristotle's principal notions and identify the impact of such on literary theory and criticism. It is also important that you decode the relationship between the separate views of Aristotle and that of Plato. In other words, you are expected to locate the divergences and convergences of the positions of both scholars of antiquity. In addition, it is important that you identify Aristotle's presentation technique and assess its effectiveness in relation to the comprehension of his thesis. Consequently, you must

become familiar with Aristotle's argument on literature. That means that you will read the English translated version of Aristotle's hypothesis in the same way you read Plato's. However, you cannot afford to disregard Plato's ideas even as you study Aristotle's. This is because the Aristotle's position, to some extent, draws from Plato's. Moreover, try to place his ideas into their appropriate orientation category. This implies that you still have to apply the knowledge acquired in Unit 2. I hope you have not forgotten that ENG 815 is a bi-directional course and as such is composed of both philosophical and practical arms. It is your scholarly obligation to attempt a deployment of Aristotle's principles in a study of given literary texts. Lastly, as a student of Literary Studies, be prepared to engage in purposeful reading, informed evaluation, logical comparisons and objective criticism. If you have made up your mind to follow suit, please read the subsequent section to understand the specific objectives of this unit.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Situate the status of Aristotle in Literary Criticism and state how he advances the course of the discipline.

Classify and evaluate the chief concepts of Aristotle's theory of art without ignoring their conceptual orientations and informing condition.

Discuss Aristotle's presentation technique and review its impact on his thesis.

Examine the significances and limitations of Aristotle's concepts in Literary Theory and Criticism

Attempt a comparative investigation of the respective positions of Plato and Aristotle on literature.

Exploit Aristotle's ideas on tragedy in a critical analysis of at least two archetypal dramatic texts.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

The kernel of Aristotle's principle of arts is clearly stated across the twenty-six parts in which his thoughts are organized. His thoughts are equally influenced by certain socio-political realities and sensibilities of his world.

3.1   Background

Aristotle was Plato's pupil. In his period the political pressure which deeply marked Plato's time had subsided. Athens had assumed a second-rate position with less socio-political influence. All these developments affected Aristotle's views which are equally modified by an already existing tradition established by Greek classical writers. Plato and Aristotle are the two most recognized "critics of antiquity" (Adepitan, 1991, p. 133). However, of all the critics of antiquity, Aristotle is generally acknowledged as the single most significant voice of the classical period. Most importantly, he is regarded as the scholar who established formal literary criticism.

Aristotle's views can only be objectively discussed with an acknowledgment of its continuation role on the ancient debate revolving around the status, form and function of literature. His writing in *Poetics*, even when not explicitly stated, contradicts Plato's position. It adopts a more organized, formalized and comprehensive fashion of presentation. *Poetics* (4th century B.C.) comprehensively deals with the art of poetry. The seminal influence of the *Poetics* started in the Renaissance era (Thrall et al., 1960, p. 115). Aristotle's view was later codified into rules for literature and guided creativity for a long time within literary history.

3.2   Basic Assumptions

Aristotle's essay, like Plato's, addresses the three areas directly connected to form and functions of literature in his society. These are inspiration, imitation and functions of literature, Aristotle's statements on the production and consumption of arts equally redefine the place of the poet in relation to his materials and audience. Moreover, his argument, to a lesser degree, examines the content of a literary text. Furthermore, Aristotle engages in general classification of arts and literature into genres based on three dynamics. He again puts forward an extensive series of rules for creation of tragedy as a major literary genre.

3.2.1   Inspiration

The concept of inspiration in Aristotle's standard incorporates artistry. He considers art a very fundamental aspect of inspiration. Aristotle, like Plato, attributes creative imagination to the muse in accordance with the temperament of the classical period. However, he believes that the poet should relay his message with a lot of embellishment. In his view, it is human nature to respond to harmony and rhythm in a work of fiction. For him therefore the poet must exploit metaphor, simile, images, symbols and other decorative language devices natural to literature. In Aristotle's scheme, literature is not synonymous with a literal message. It is both figurative and connotative and as such must not be conveyed unadorned but clothed in its requisite garb.

You will observe that Aristotle deemphasizes the supernatural role in creativity. He disregards the concept of unconscious possession in inspiration as propounded by Plato. You will also discover that possession ended with Plato as other critics deal with different levels of inspiration beginning with Aristotle. In addition, Aristotle believes in adding colour and flavour to messages of poetry. This implies that he does not vote for Plato's position in delivering the message undiluted. Angel Jose (2004, p. 8) holds that "Aristotle ignores inspiration in his discussion of poetry, to insist on the technical, rational side of poetry." But did the theorist actually ignore inspiration? It may be more accurate to state that he rather separates inspiration from possession. For him good literature needs skill, commitment and rational reasoning. Aristotle's logic recognizes the essence of art in inspiration and thus the relationship between literature and artistic tongue. Plato's did not. The implication is that Aristotle considers the poet the creator of his production; creators of imitation, a right Plato is not willing to accord them. Aristotle's idea is thus inconsistent with Plato's concept of inspiration.

Aristotle's concept has been generally adjudged more appropriate in arts. This is because literature, stripped of the embellishment that art presupposes, becomes 'deliteratured' and so less than literature. Try to imagine how Sophocles would have described the pestilence in Oedipus' kingdom without employing the personifying term "fiery demon" in *Oedipus Rex*. Do you think Achebe would have created a brighter picture in *Things Fall Apart* if he fails to describe the impact of colonialism in Africa outside his seminal figurative term, "they have put a knife to the things that held us together and we have fallen apart?" Visualize what *Animal Farm* (George Orwell) and *Lord of the Flies* by (William Golding) would have read like without the adept employment of symbolic characters in conveying their universal messages? The exercises are to

enable you appreciate the implications of both Aristotle and Plato's different positions on inspiration.

3.2.2 Imitation

The concept of imitation also arises in Aristotle's theory of literature. However, it acquires a different interpretation. For him, imitation means representation, recreation and reenactment and not necessarily counterfeiting of reality. It thus connotes creativity and skill. Art, in his interpretation, is not a servile copy of reality as suggested by Plato. Literature is not a graphic duplicate of the entire life. Rather it is the representation of selected aspects of life organized into a logical sequence of actions or words to achieve a premeditated objective. Arts do not detract from the truth but leads to it through imitation.

Aristotle believes that man is naturally constructed as an imitative being and derives gratification from harmony and rhythm. For him, every writer imitates though the interest and level vary. In addition, Aristotle defends artists, like Homer, whose representation of gods Plato repudiates. In his view, the reenactment is in consonance with the existing literary tradition contained in folklores. Though cultural, he notes that the content of such folklores may neither be truth nor advance the truth. To buttress his point further, Aristotle draws a distinction between Philosophy, History and Literature. Philosophy concentrates on ideas/truth, whereas art deals with illusions and universal truth and history recounts past event. History presents reality in past event/truth. Literature represents reality and deals with possible event/truth. The poet's responsibility is to describe possible events because such are either plausible or crucial in a given situation. Literature is not a counterfeit but deals with the probable and as such is superior to both Philosophy and History. Consequently, Literature, for him, operates within the ambience of the law of probability beyond the reach of Philosophy and History. In Aristotle's theory, literature is even more philosophical because it discusses universal truths unlike History which narrates particular facts. Based on this observation, he holds that literature should be accorded more attention than History. Aristotle thus assigns a superjacent status to poetry.

Isn't it easily observable that Aristotle, unlike Plato, hardly has any problem with imitation? His modification suggests that Plato misunderstands the concept in its wholesomeness in his interpretation of imitation as fake or counterfeit. Aristotle's literary theory considers the artist's bed and table on its own merit rather than in connection to the original concept preserved in the essences. He therefore engages in a separation of the text from its imposed connection to the universe in Plato's Socratic dialogue. Thus, in Aristotle's blueprint, literature is an independent establishment and as such requires an independent appraisal standard. Nevertheless, Aristotle still recognizes the huge debt the literary text owes the universe it images in slices. A vigilant reader will perceive that Aristotle employs 'mimesis' (imitation) as an independent form in contrast to Plato who subordinates it under socio-political considerations based on its utility value. For Aristotle, the concept is "an aesthetic phenomenon …. a theory of arts" (Hassan Baktir, 2003, p. 167 and 173).Aristotle further identifies types of knowledge and their respective areas of concentration. Compartmentalization of disciplines is perceivable in this differentiation that compares Literature to Philosophy and History. Relying on that comparison, let us attempt a brief comparative analysis of two influential figures, M. K. O. Abiola (late Nigerian politician) and Ezeulu (the protagonist of *Arrow of God*). Do you remember that both are subjects of political tragedies? However, while Abiola is a feast for the historian, Ezeulu, as a character, is for the literary artist.

3.2.3   Functions of Literature

Aristotle's view on the value of poetry is decipherable from the last portion of his seminal definition of tragedy. In it he advances the concept of purgation of extreme emotions of fear and pity and subsequent achievement of the equilibrium for the betterment of the audience. In other words, Aristotle philosophizes that tragedy functions for the purgation of emotions of pity and fear which in turn restores the mind to a much needed balance. In that Aristotle endorses the concept of catharsis. Aristotle, like Plato, acknowledges the functional quality of literature in direct relation to its effect on the audience. However Aristotle's principle considers this effect from an affirmative and productive angle. He postulates that the catharsis literature produces is therapeutic and humbling. He thus rebuts Plato's position that arts make humans unduly emotional. Morally, Aristotle believes that the aim of poetry is to please though it teaches too

and even better than philosophy. He holds that every good literature provides pleasure and that is related to moral lessons.

One can observe that Aristotle believes that poetry has an analytical function as against Plato's informative function. Psychologically, he gives a different interpretation to the form and control of emotion art elicits from its audience. The impact of arts, for him, is positive and constructive rather than corruptive and destructive as postulated by Plato. So the concept of catharsis is rooted in the consumer's reaction to literary text. This implies that there is a vital connection between certain components of the text and the audience response according to Jose (2004, p. 22). Please do not lose sight of the main issue here. That is; Aristotle conceives literature as a vehicle for achieving an essential psychological balance. So for him, it is a "means to an end", employed to reduce passions of fear and pity "to a healthy, balanced proportion" (Brize and Tompkin, 2010, p. 1 and MacManus, 1999, p. 3). Consequently, we can conclude that Aristotle's theory of Catharsis has an ethical function.

Aristotle's theory of arts holds that the creative process entails creativity and thus engages in a conscious use of skills as against outright possession. The poetic text, in subject matter and theme, represents an artistic domestication or an approximation of nature and is thus original. The text should therefore manifest poetic language and materials for best effect. This involves literary technicalities. On the reception of literature, he holds that a text should elicit pleasure and passion as it entertains and informs. This works for purgation of emotion and thus offers psychological equilibrium.

Have you observed that the respective views of both scholars on inspiration, imitation and the utilitarian value of poetry exhibit areas of divergence, convergence and elaborations? You must have observed that for Plato literature is subordinated under politics, theology and morality. It is therefore considered from a didactic perspective. The Aristotelian concept assigns a distinct personality and function literature. It is not defined in relation to politics, theology and morality but acquires a definite place in the scheme of things.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Identify the basic differences between the respective interpretations of Aristotle and Plato in relation to the concept of mimesis? Your illustration should take into consideration the idea of 'the three beds.'

3.3   Classification of Arts and Literary Forms

Apart from his view on forms and functions of literature, Aristotle recognizes the different branches of arts as a creative corpus. He first classifies various forms of art and then he discusses forms and features of poetic imitation. Aristotle dedicates the greatest attention to Tragedy as a poetic form of arts without completely ignoring other forms which he considers alongside tragedy. He moves from universals to particulars in explicating his position.

Initially, Aristotle argues that all arts are mimetic but differ in three ways. The three are: medium, object and manner of imitation. First is the medium. Artists all converge in imitation of objects but depart on the basis of medium through which the objects are represented. While music imitates rhythm and sounds, painting imitates forms and colors and poetry imitates events through actions and words. This means that a painter depicts various objects through the medium of colour and forms. The musician exploits the natural resources of harmony and rhythm. A poet mediates with language and actions. He manipulates connotative, denotative, rhythmic and even musical forms. Aristotle's classification explains how Nigerian artists such as the late musician Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and the playwright, Bosede Ademilua-Afolayan variously attack the same corruption using different art media. While Fela employs Afro-beat music epitomized by "International Thief Thief" – ITT (1980), Ademilua-Afolayan employs *Once Upon an Elephant* (2015), a drama piece. In literary creativity, tragedy and comedy are demarcated on the basis of how those words are used in meter and verse.

What of the object of artistic imitation? In poetic imagination, lives and times of characters vary. When a poet is interested in times of heroic characters, his work becomes Tragedy/Epic. On the other hand, if a poet relays the lives of lowly characters, he creates Comedy/Satire. Tragedy represents people better than they are in real life and Comedy depicts people worse than they are in real life. Homer, in Aristotle's example in *Poetics* II, makes men better than they are,

Cleophon as they are, Hegemon (the Thespian, the inventor of parodies) and Nicochares the author of the *Deiliad,* worse than they are.

Connected to the two above is the manner of imitation, the last of the three distinguishing factors. The representation could manifest either in language alone and that makes such a narrative. When presented in language and action, a production is classified under the dramatic genre. Again, if the representation is in language alone, it could be either prose or verse. A narrative could be delivered in first or third person point of view. Homer uses the last two in his Epics while Sophocles uses action (drama). Aristotle draws a crucial connection between the leading literary writers of his period based on these factors. For him Sophocles and Aristophanes belong to the same class based on the use of common manner of imitation; the dramatic genre. On the other hand, they differ on the object of imitation. While the Sophocles deals with higher characters, which constitute the objects of tragedy, the Aristophanes focuses on lower characters that constitute the objects of comedy. From another perspective, Homer and Sophocles share same category on the basis of object, higher characters but differ on the manner of depiction. Homer prefers narrative but Sophocles speaks in drama.

Here the principle of selectivity in representation arises in a different mode. Aristotle therefore distinguishes different art and literary forms on the bases of medium, object and manner employed in the imaginative imitation of life. He identifies features of art forms – painting, music, drama and poetry thereby giving the reader an insight into the collective and specific traits of different art forms. Nevertheless, he pays intense attention to tragedy as a genre and that is our next object of discussion.

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 2

Based on Aristotle's examples on medium, object and manner, identify areas of convergence and divergence between Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Diop's *"The Vultures"*.

3.4   Tragedy

Aristotle's treatise was the first to attempt a detailed classification of literature into genres. He distinguishes between epic, tragedy and comedy. The *Poetics* ends with Aristotle's inquiry into the status of epic and tragedy. In his definition, epic possesses a national character with a patriotic and idealistic hero. Tragedy, on the other hand, has all the basics of an epic in addition to music and spectacle, both not found in epic. Tragedy is shorter, more cohesive and can be meaningfully accessed both in reading and acting, unlike an epic text. Because tragedy culturally imitates the serious side of life and comedy the trivial aspect, Aristotle concludes that tragedy is a higher form of imitation while he assigns a lower status to comedy. In Aristotle's categorization tragedy is more conservative while comedy is a more liberal form. In Homer's creativity, Aristotle locates elements of the two, the former more. His observation thus eliminates a clinical dissection of both forms in practice. Thus, Aristotle ennobles tragedy as the greatest of all dramatic arts. He defends his position in a very erudite manner. The scholar demonstrates his interest in that form by the degree of attention he commits to the examination of its nature, scope, structure and content.

Aristotle defines tragedy as:

> An imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in several parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation of these emotions" (*Criticisms: Major Statements*, 2000, p. 23).

Aristotle's enduring definition of tragedy captures the essence of the genre. In that definition, you can isolate the qualities of tragedy. First, tragedy is an imitation captured mostly in actions as against narrative. Secondly, the actions must be of grave magnitude. Thirdly, it employs embellished language. Moreover, it is independently complete. Furthermore, it functions for purgation of emotions through the stimulation of pity and fear. All these imply the factors of medium, object and manner of imitation. Before you go further, attempt an identification of aspects of the definition which relate to each of the three factors of medium, object and manner of imitation?

3. 4. 1　　　Parts of Tragedy

Aristotle goes on to classify the various constituents of tragedy. He stipulates that every Tragedy must have six parts. The six are; Plot, Characters, Thought, Diction, Song and Spectacle; arranged in their order of importance. Each of these elements contributes, though in different degrees, to the quality of a tragic text.

3. 4. 1. 1　　Plot

Plot is "the first and most important" element, it is "the soul of tragedy" (25, 24), in Aristotle's view. He provides two primary reasons for his choice of plot over character. First, tragedy imitates actions/events not men and therefore develops on a network of incidents. Again, tragedy cannot exist without action but can without characters. Consequently, plot embodies the essential spirit of a tragedy. The ancient scholar pays attention to different aspects of the plot as a literary element. These are plot progression and purpose, the three unities, quality and relationship of events, types, and divisions.

According to Aristotle, a plot must be a whole with a beginning, middle and end (incentive moment, climax and denounement) dependent on a cause and effect principle initiated from the beginning and geared towards eliciting a premeditated emotional effects. It must exhibit a complete and organized series of actions. Thus, it manifests unity of action. As to the length of the action itself, Aristotle advises that it should not go much beyond one complete day. It must be pointed out that this was the practice of the major Greek tragedians. Again, the actions should take place in a limited space. In these he propounds the concept of the three unities of action, place and time. In quantity and quality, the plot must be of certain magnitude and should be integrally and independently sufficient. In addition, Aristotle distinguishes two major types of plot namely complex and simple plot. Both exhibit a change of fortune. However, while the complex plot includes reversal of intension (Peripeteia) and recognition (Anagnorisis), both associated with the change of fortune, the simple plot does not. The complex type is Aristotle's preferred variety. For him, a complete play obligatorily includes a reversal in which all hidden aspects are exposed. This leads to climax which is the highest point of a tragedy. Again, he holds that a plot must be constituted by five acts all linked, in order, into an integral unit. This is

because tragedy should be a cohesive, condensed and sufficiently comprehensible unit with a beginning, middle and end. It should be delivered in action through embellished and elevated language to suit its noble subject. This is where character comes in.

3. 4. 1. 2   Character

Character takes the second position in Aristotle's scale of preference. In characterization, he identifies four standards. The character must be: (i) good, (ii) decorous, (iii) credible and (iv) consistent.

In Aristotle's stipulation, a tragic hero should be marked by certain qualities. He should be an eminent and noble character, neither too good nor too bad, for the sake of balance. In addition, he has to fall from glory and prosperity and his fall should have a national significance. The transformation should be a consequence of an error of judgment (harmatia) or character flaw. For him, only when these standards are met will the emotions of fear and pity be aroused in the audience who witness an undeserved misfortune in a fellow human being. The error of judgment is derived from ignorance of some material fact or circumstance. Hamartia is related to human limitations. Peripetia represents dramatic irony while anagnorisis means an acquisition of a hitherto absent knowledge. Oedipus demonstrates these four qualities and that makes him the tragic hero of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Aristotle thus propounds the principles of harmatia, reversal/peripertia and catharsis/purgation; all in relation to a dramatic tragic hero and the audience.

Aristotle's prescriptions are observed in some dramatic texts. For instance, Othello is too fast and careless and Hamlet freely made unintentional decisions, (Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Hamlet*). The two characters represent dramatic evidences of error of judgment. *Othello*, further dramatizes Peripetia and anagnorisis, using the tragic hero, Othello. Hamartia is related to human limitations as perceived in Macbeth's unbridled ambition in another Shakespeare's eponymous drama *Macbeth*.

3.4.1.3   Thought and Diction

Aristotle hypothesizes less about thought, and most of what he postulates are associated with how speeches should reveal character. However, we may assume that this category would also include what we call the themes of a play as suggested by MacManus (1999, p. 2).

Diction refers to the language of delivery. Aristotle prescribes metaphoric and elevated language suitable to plot, character and purpose of tragedy.

3.4.1.4   Song and Spectacle

For Aristotle, song/melody and chorus should be totally incorporated into drama to enhance the unity of the plot. This serves the function of embellishment accompanied by spectacle.

Spectacle takes the least position because though it elicits emotional appeal it is not an integral aspect of literature. A good poet arouses pity and fear mainly through the internal construction of a drama. Spectacle thus plays a secondary role in Aristotle's inventive environment.

ANALYSIS

You will observe that Aristotle's classification of epic and tragedy is based on constituents, delivery and consumption of the two forms. From his explanation, the major difference between the two is in the manner of imitation – that the method of presentation. Again, note that Aristotle's definition of tragedy is, in the words of Jose (2004, 15) and Barad (2012, p. 15), "systematic and precise" and "the definition is compact." Every word of it is pregnant with meaning. Each word from it can be elaborated into a separate essay." It identifies the essential properties of tragedy, as a genre of literature. Thus, Aristotle, through his definition, advances standards for categorizing tragic works. The definition represents one of the major legacies of Aristotle to posterity.

Furthermore, it is obvious that of the six elements of a tragic text, plot and character mean more to Aristotle than the rest. Conversely, the third element, thought, attracts a relatively little attention. This implies that in his world, technique is more important than theme. His inclusion of song and spectacle illustrates the elasticity of drama in its capacity to incorporate other art forms like music and visual arts. Again, Aristotle's standard provides the basis of the principle of

decorum in characterization. His tragic hero is directly linked to nobility, a feature, Aristotle believes intensifies the impact of his fall and elicits profound pity and fear. By Aristotle's prescription, the tragic flaw element functions to humanize the tragic hero and serves as an instrument of instruction for the audience. The theorist's prescription guided creativity for about two thousand years. However, modern drama, exemplified by Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, repudiates the standard in its choice of a common man like Willy Loman, as a tragic hero.

Please note that Aristotle's position is heavily dependent on his perception and comprehension of the works of creative writers of his period including Homer and Greek tragedians like Sophocles and Aristophanes. The classical literary convention, which reflects the ancient Greek ideas, serves as the springboard for Aristotle's postulations on literature. In *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, Sophocles images Oedipus' tragic fate as originally predetermined in accordance with the ancient Greek concept of predestination. However, in *Mayor of Casterbridge*, Thomas Hardy redefines the concept of fate as inevitably predestined by the supernatural. The protagonist, Henchard's fall could be attributed to a litany of indiscretions, which makes him guilty of his own fall. The same goes for Okonkwo, the protagonist of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Henchard and Okonkwo's characterizations demonstrate that the Aristotelian theory of drama is, to some degree, applicable to the novel. Thus, it can guide "any fictional story", drama and otherwise (Stenudd, 2006, p. 1).

If you have followed the analysis of Aristotle's essay, you should be able to identify some of the main portions of his argument and attempt the question below.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 3

Comment on the following Aristotelian statement. "The plot then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of tragedy."

4.0   Other Essentials

4.1   KEY PASSAGES

Below are some of the most significant parts of Aristotle's theory of literature. Remember that our text is *Criticism: Major Statements* (4th ed.), edited by Kaplan and Anderson.

1. Page 21, division IV: the nature of imitation.
2. Page 23, division VI: formal definition of tragedy, functions of literature and identification of elements of tragedy.
3. Page 24, division VI: status of plot.
4. Page 26, division IX: differences between literature and other disciplines and focus of literature.
5. Page 27: status of a poet in relation to his/her work.
6. Page 31, division VI: Qualities of a tragic hero.
7. Page 42: inspiration and arts.

There are other critical passages. As you read please take note of them. If you have followed Aristotle's argument you would have observed that his thesis is methodically delivered.

4.2   Approach

Aristotle's presentation (is):

1. Adopts a formal and scientific approach.
2. Employs a defensive posture and tone.
3. Initiates its argument by explicitly stating its primary focus.
4. Adopts the comparative method of analysis which usually precedes a declaration of its position in each aspect of the subject of discussion.
5. Utilizes a lot of classifications, definitions and evaluations.
6. Moves from the general to the specific and from the concrete to the abstract.
7. Applies several literary examples in its illustrations.
8. Is interested in structure rather than theme and is organized in sections.
9. Adopts a prescriptive approach.

Aristotle's discourse is enrobed in a sober garb. This suggests that the scholar perceives his subject as a serious enterprise that must be formally handled. He thus advances a more serious, coherent and analytical discourse in comparison to Plato. Aristotle's essay exhibits a coordinated and scientific approach to criticism. While Plato is simply a philosopher, Aristotle is an analyst in addition to being a philosopher. His formalistic approach makes his treatise read like an instructional manual in its overt technicality even as he defends literature. It seems prescriptive. Aristotle classifies, analyzes, and evaluates each part of his subject for proper comprehension, classification and judgment. Consequently, his essay treats every part of his interest methodically. This implies that the scholar pays attention to details. Aristotle's method illustrates objectivism in a manner that makes his essay more academic. Therefore, his approach is scholarly.

The essay adopts a defensive approach that is less critical and more accommodative in tone and content. That approach makes it read like a protestation against Plato's unprovoked assault on arts and artists. However, it projects the other side of the coin and in that way creates a much-needed balance. In addition, Aristotle's view progresses from the universal to the particular and from the concrete to the abstract. This method facilitates his discussion and enables him to examine his subject from both general and specific dimensions. This is epitomized by his analysis of the media of imitation in arts general and in literature specifically.

Again, he draws correspondences and discrepancies between different forms before making his conclusions. This is best realized in his analysis of the different focus of literature, history and philosophy as well as different forms of arts and various poetic forms. This method aids effective comparative analysis. In addition, his theory is enriched with a lot of relevant and literary examples including Oedipus Sophocles and Homer's epics. This functions to make his contributions concrete and practical.

Moreover, Aristotle's concept of literature is organized in 26 sections according to different aspects of his concern. In the first segment, for instance, he states his focus and scope and this helps the reader to follow his argument. In part 25, he is interested in how a good creative writer must represent reality in literature. Furthermore, Aristotle's theory adopts a prescriptive approach. For instance, he insists that the tragic plot "must not be composed of irrational parts" (*Criticism: Major Statements*, Kaplan and Anderson, p. 42). Again, he states that the poet "must

of necessity imitate" reality as it is, is said to be and ought to be. (*Criticism: Major Statements*, Kaplan and Anderson, p. 43).

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Attempt an analysis of Aristotle's method of presentation noting the unique merits.

4.3   SIGNIFICANCE/CONTRIBUTIONS

Aristotle is the most valuable voice of the classical period. His postulations on critical factors of text, author and audience constitute a very significant aspect of literary theory and criticism. First, his essay extends Plato's limited circle and takes a wholesome approach. He is the first formalistic critic in his detailed attention to form and structure of literary texts. that is why Thrall notes that the Aristotelian-Platonic dichotomy represents an intrinsic and extrinsic separation (127). Aristotle identifies the beginning, types, sub-types, characteristics, impact, benefits and shortcomings of literature. Consequently, his view represents a very important response and advancement of Plato's theory of literature. The scholar's position formally extends the theoretical arguments that last from the classical to the contemporary period of literary history. Thus, it institutes formal literary criticism and establishes that discipline as an independent area of literary studies. Therefore, his essay exemplifies a major legacy to scholarship.

Secondly, Aristotle establishes the distinction between literature and other disciplines and thus identifies the position of literature in his society. He represents the initial attempt at the classification and definition of arts and its different manifestations. Again, the scholar provides the earliest attempt in the systematic study of literature as a distinct variety of scholarship. Therefore, under Aristotle's scholarship, literature is liberated from socio-political, moral and theological enslavement. He projects literature as a mimetic form that plays an important

representational role in relation to reality. Thus, Aristotle ennobles literature by paying attention to its unique from and functions.

Furthermore, Aristotle develops a universal principle of art. His theory, though mainly based on Greek literary tradition, "is not culture-bound" and thus is applicable within and beyond the western drama (Stephen Cox, 2010, p. 1). This means that even African drama can employ his theory in creativity. Remember *The Gods Are Not to Blame* by Ola Rotimi. His theory is also applicable, though to a lesser degree, in narratives. Can you identify his concept of the tragic hero in characters like Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*? His idea, especially on drama, sets the standard for other literary theories. It equally identifies the structure and internal mechanism of the literary art form. Moreover, Aristotle's treatise represents "one of the earliest attempts" to establish "some basic guidelines for authors" to achieve their artistic objectives, according to Brizee and Tompkins (2010, p. 1). His prescription on the tragic hero, for instance, provides the philosophical foundation for characterization in literature and also the basis for the modern reconstruction of that concept.

The significance and relevance of *Poetics* is double-fold. It serves a restorative purpose in relation to the self-esteem of poets and poetry subsequent to Plato's scathing criticism. Secondly, *Poetics* provides an early attempt on a systematic study of literature. It has continued to exert seminal influence in literary history. Aristotle's *Poetics* is indeed a significant conceptual document. Barad, (2012, p. 21). His insights are responsible for the reverence he attracts across centuries. Do you now understand why Aristotle occupies a preeminent status in literary Criticism? However, in spite of Aristotle's phenomenal influence, his *Poetics* maintains certain limitations.

4.4   LIMITATIONS

First, Aristotle's thesis is very prescriptive and therefore rigid and restrictive. His postulation appears ahistorical, uncompromising and rigid. Aristotle's insistence on the three unities in drama and his concept of the tragic hero represents such prescriptions that make his concept sound like a set of rules. Moreover, Aristotle fails to appropriately distinguish between two major roles of literature – teaching and entertainment. Both are mostly lumped together though they have separate existences.

Furthermore, Aristotle is less concerned with inspiration. Meanwhile, the classical society he lived in was intensely marked by religiosity and this is evident in the literature of that period which acknowledges the supernatural reality. According to Jose, "this neglect of the religious side of tragedy impairs very seriously the value of his theory for an understanding of Greek tragedy, though its originality as a purposive and ideological theory is enhanced" (2004, p. 27). Isn't Jose's criticism objective?

Again, Aristotle's approach concentrates more on structure, unlike Plato's. It pays attention to the rational and technical aspects of literature. This posture is detrimental to the thematic preoccupation of literary texts. It therefore diminishes a very crucial aspect of literary creativity. In addition, his approach is very formal. Even though he defends poetry he sounds more like a judicial scientist and that is ironic. Though he discusses drama extensively, he is less dramatic than Plato. As a result, Aristotle's work exudes a sort of stiff ambience that creates a gap between the reader and the essay.

In spite of all the limitations, Aristotle's discourse remains a reference point for literary creativity and consumption as well as literary theorizing. It has guided literary criticism across ages.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

From what you have read so far, do you agree that Aristotle represents the most valuable voice of the classical literary criticism? As you answer the question keep the value and inadequacies of his logic in view.

4.5   APPLICATION

If you desire to critique a literary text based on Aristotelian theory of arts as discussed above, you have to:

1. Choose a tragic drama instead of a comedy or an epic.

2. Show more interest in literary techniques and intrinsic form of a work than on the thematic engagement. As such, criticism takes an objective approach guided by an intrinsic/formalistic orientation.

3. Place plot in a preeminent position in relation to other elements of literature. Under this segment, the critic must pay attention to the arrangement of related incidences in 'Acts' without ignoring the three unities.

4. Examine the tragic hero in the light of the recommend four qualities and identify his/her harmatia.

5. Examine the representational role of a text in relation to reality. This suggests relationship with mimetic theory of arts.

6. Treat the concept of outright possession in inspiration with caution and reservation.

7. Consider how a text works towards achieving emotional equilibrium. In this is implied a pragmatic persuasion.

8. Investigate the use of language in relation to the plot and character and seek out embedded music and spectacle in a literary text.

Based on the above, one can safely conclude that *Death and the King's Horseman,* (Wole Soyinka) better represents the impact of colonialism in Africa than a narrative like *The River Between* by (Ngugi Wa thiong'o). Again, dramatic texts like *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, are hardly good dramatic texts, based on characterization and plot development. Meanwhile, Aeschylus' *Agamenon* represents a good drama.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 6

You must have read J. P. Clark's *Ozidi.* Can you identify the position of the supernatural and roles of music and spectacle in it? Please keep Aristotle's concept in mind as you do this exercise.

5.0   CONCLUSION

Module 2 Unit 2 have worked to make you conversant with Aristotle's theory of arts. As such his investigation, evaluation and suggestions are all discussed. In addition, attempts are made to appraise Aristotle's various submissions. Aristotle makes a distinction between different branches of knowledge. He then treats literature as an independent discipline with integrated but isolable units. His theory covers his separate views on inspiration, imitation and functions of literature. It thus supplies an essential response to Plato's postulations on the same issues. For him, inspiration is not synonymous with absolute possession and incorporates arts. Secondly, imitation implies representation. Furthermore, literature has a positive function in human existence. In addition, Aristotle advanced a systematic classification of Arts and literary productions into different forms based on three basic factors. It must be observed that Tragedy takes a considerable quantity of his attention in that essay. He identifies elements of tragedy and discusses them in their order of importance. Baktir, in consonance with this unit, observes that Aristotle, unlike Plato, "does not pay much attention to the ethical and epistemological aspects of 'mimesis' (2003, p. 176). He nevertheless acknowledges the power of literature to provide pleasure and teach. Aristotle's theoretical essay manifests mimetic, pragmatic and objective approaches to criticism.

6.0   SUMMARY

Module 2 Unit 3 has exposed you to:

The historical background of Aristotle's Theory of Arts.

His basic assumptions on concepts of inspiration, imitation and functions of literature.

Major areas of agreement and disagreement between Aristotle and Plato's views on production and consumption of literature.

Classification of Arts and literature into forms and genres based on factors of medium, object and manner of imitation.

Aristotle's appraisal and proposals on tragedy, as the highest literary genre.

Key passages of Aristotle's essay.

His methods of presentation.

Aristotle's significance/contribution to literary criticism and limitations of his thoughts.

In addition, there are a number of self-assessment exercises in the body of this unit. You are advised to attempt each of them because all are designed to help you gain a better understanding of the major theses of this unit.

As you go into subsequent units please endeavour to identify vestiges of Aristotelian donations in other theoretical logics.

7.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT `

1.   Attempt a comparative examination of the Platonian and Aristotelian views on inspiration, imitation and the uses of poetry.

2.   Define the place of Aristotle in the English literary history.

3.   Modes of imitation differ "from one another in three respects, - the medium, the object, the manner or mode of imitation …" Discuss.

4.   Identify five methods employed by Aristotle in his presentation in the *Poetics* and state how each facilitates a better understanding of his thesis

5.   Examine Aristotle's concept of tragedy. Your answer must be supported by at least two standard dramatic texts of different writers and periods.

6.   Identify the inadequacies of Aristotle's theory of arts.

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MODULE 2 UNIT 3   LITERARY THEORY OF LONGINUS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Unit 3 of this module is concerned with the postulations of Longinus on the forms and functions of literature by drawing from the conceptual essay "On the Sublime." Apart from the background, this unit provides the basic assumptions of Longinus' work, locates its key passages and discusses his method of presentation. In addition, this unit is also interested in the

merits/contributions and inadequacies of the theorists' position. At the end of Module 2 Unit 3 you are given some hints that will guide you in textual analysis based on the conceptual standards of the ancient thinker, Longinus.

Based on what is already discussed above, it is clear that you are expected to be at tune with the essential spirit of Longinus' arguments. In essence, you must closely study, comprehend and interpret the views of the scholars and their implications on literary creativity, consumption and criticism. Again, you need to identify the main contributions of Longinus to the on-going debate. Please do not forget to note areas of consensus and dissensions in the conceptual positions of Plato, Aristotle and Longinus. Remember that each new debate implies an addition to an already existing corpus. Consequently, the ideas cannot be treated as independent entities. This means that you have to approach each bearing others in mind in order to make the best out of this ENG 815.

Apart from what is already noted, you need to assign Longinus' ideas into the appropriate theoretical persuasions, based on the concerns and approach of the theorist. I hope you have not forgotten Unit 1. It will guide your placement of Longinus' theory into a category in terms of approach. At this point, let us emphasize the abstract and practical nature of this course ENG 815. The reminder is necessary because you need to exploit the abstract ideas we are dealing with in a practical analysis of literary texts. So, part of the duties of this unit is to encourage you adopt the theoretical standard of Longinus in a critical reading of an identified literary text, preferably a classic. In summary, please note that you must critically study, deduce and estimate the minds of the literary theorists under study in this unit. In addition, you should be ready to identify existing connections between the present ideas and the former notions contained in the previous units. Are you ready? Then take note of the objectives that will guide your study in this unit.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of Module 2 Unit 3, you should be able to:

Account for the historical background of Longinus' essay under study.

Understand and discuss the major ideas of Longinus' theory of the Sublime and determine its critical approach.

Identify the relationship (if any) between Longinus, Aristotle and Plato's respective concepts of literature.

Examine the methods of presentation adopted by Longinus and determine how his choices facilitate and/or impede an effective communication of his concept.

Employ the major concepts of Longinus' "On the Sublime" in analysis of literary texts.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

Here the historical background and the major ideas of Longinus' principles of art are discussed in that order. It is organized in two parts to enable you keep track of principal ideas.

3.1.   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"On the Sublime" is perhaps written in the first century A. D. It represents the main conceptual treatise of the Neo-Platonism period which was prevalent in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The identity of Longinus, the proponent of the doctrine of the sublime, has been a subject of controversy. When and where he existed is yet to be established with certainty. However, scholars have observed three different claims in relation to the writer of the work and each group has some valid points.

The first group argues that the writer is Cassius Longinus, as previously suggested by Renaissance scholars. This is because, according to historical documentation, Cassius Longinus was a cerebral Greek scholar who lived under Roman law and wrote a discourse on "Art of Rhetoric" in the third century. Though this is hypothetical, Longinus in Chapter 12 of "On the Sublime" described himself "as a Greek" and his panelists and partners as "You Romans." In addition, his partiality for the Athenian Demosthenes over the Roman Cicero is plain. In the view of the second group, Longinus, the writer of the Sublime is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a

renowned Greek scholar of the eastern Mediterranean. This position finds its bearing on the caption to "Dionysius or Longinus" as represented in the table of content of the surviving original manuscript of Longinus essay. The last contestants, agrees that it is impracticable to accurately identify the writer of "On the Sublime." However, they suggest that the work dates back to the reign of the emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68) because of a noticeable correspondence between some of Longinus' subject (like cultural decline) and the prevalent scholarship of Nero's period. Though all the three claims have certain merits, they are all speculative and as such none can be regarded as accurate. The implication is that Longinus' historical background remains shrouded in mystery unlike Plato's and Aristotle's. As you read "On the Sublime" you may identify statements that could serve as pointers to Longinus' origin.

In the midst of all these contestations do not lose sight of what is most important in this context. Longinus, the author of "On the Sublime", is a sophisticated scholar as suggested by his concern and technique. His thematic preoccupation, which applauds excellence and sound mind and bemoans prevalent anarchy, is also telling of his personality. Again, Longinus is a connoisseur of literature and is very much at home with literatures of several regions including the Bible. His intimate relationship with Greek is implicitly stated in his choice of authors and works including Homer and Plato. In addition, his essay shows exposure to a robust body of intellectual discourses. The principal assumptions of "On the Sublime" revolve around excellence in creativity.

3.2   BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Longinus' theory "On the Sublime" has endured as a significant concept in literary creativity, theorization and criticism. Please note that 'sublime' as a term is originally designated to mean 'high' or 'elevated' style," (Zachary Sng, 2006, p. 1). Presently, the concept has been re-conceptualised and employed in several disciplines including Cultural Studies, Media Studies and Literary Criticism.

Longinus' definition of the sublime is broad and demonstrative. For him sublimity entails loftiness or elevation in language, accounts for excellence in Literature and can occur in any class of text. Longinus is interested in identifying factors that inject greatness into writing. Initially he searches for *hypos* (Greek) that is 'greatness' or 'sublimity' in text. He perceives

sublimity as "always an eminence and excellence in language" (48). The term, as used by the scholar, connotes dignity, grandeur, excellence, brilliance, nobleness. He claims that excellent passages move the audience to ecstasy and is therefore more potent than others which seek to "persuade and to please" (48). Longinus holds that sublimity alone defines enduring texts and makes a creative writer extraordinary. Furthermore, he attributes greatness in writing to both talent and art. Longinus also identifies two attributes of a great poet. He goes further to characterize factors that hamper sublimity in writing. The central message of his thesis is that each great literature embodies identifiable elements that are enduring and universal in nature. These qualities he locates in certain classic texts. For him, a great work of art must be capable of uplifting the soul.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

In your own understanding, why does Longinus' link sublimity to use of language in literary creativity?

Longinus identifies "five different sources" of greatness in writing (52). The first two he classifies as natural, the other three as acquired. They are:

- ➢ Dignity of Thought.
- ➢ Facility for Strong Emotion
- ➢ Proper Employment of Figures of speech
- ➢ Nobility of Diction
- ➢ Dignity and Elevation in Composition

In Longinus' terms, the "first and most potent" of the five is "the faculty of grasping great conceptions" (52). The theorist identifies the second element as "passion, strong and impetuous" (52). For Longinus, no writer can produce a sublime work unless his thoughts are sublime. He postulates that sublimity in arts is a function of sublime thoughts which produces venerable and undying texts. The realization of sublimity is a demonstration of excellent acumen of a writer and the nobility of his/her personality. It is the unmistakable marker of a great soul.

The third source of sublimity, as prescribed by Longinus, is proper handling of figures of speech. He classifies figures of speech under "figures of thought, and figures of diction" (52). Under his concept, these are crucial in creativity. He advocates that these be employed spontaneously and should be an output of authentic emotion. His thesis thus acquires a psychological bent in his suggestion that the employment of figures of speech be coupled with thought and emotion.

The forth source of the 'Sublime' is diction and this is inclusive of choice and arrangements of words as well as the application of metaphor and simile. This entails "noble phraseology"; selection of words and use of tropes and elaboration (52). He locates remarkableness in writing in the appropriate choice and arrangement of both common and striking words. For him each man bears within him that force which desires nobility and greatness.

Lastly, Longinus advocates for a harmonious organization of words in composition under the arrangement of words. In his view, the achievement of verbal order, otherwise tagged rhythm, exhibits melodious blending that fascinates to the soul of the consumer. In other words selection must go with coordination and coherence for sublimity to be attained.

In other words, Longinus categorises two traits of a great poet. The first is the ability to perceive great ideas. The second is strong and impulsive passion. These two result into sublimity in arts. Sublime, as conceived by Longinus, is a quality that springs forth from the capacity of the writer/speaker. This capacity is both inborn and acquired through practice. However, dignity of thought and strong and inspired passion are the most essential capabilities and are innate. Employment of figurative language, nobility of diction and elevated compositions are the other sources and are artistic properties obtainable by training and practice. Imagination, picturesque production and proper manipulation of language make good poetry in Longinus' assessment.

In Longinus' calculation, certain emotions like fear, pity and worry are bereft of sublimity and as such should be disassociated from excellence which should naturally exalt and aspire man to nobility and greatness. Longinus furthermore identifies the effect of sublime on the audience (hearer of reader) as "transport" – *ektasis* like the effect of rhetoric is persuasion. For him however sublimity goes beyond persuasion and pleasure. It is that element of a channel which overwhelmingly smashes the consumer's composure. Sublimity represents that ability which lies

within the writer to exercise control over the reader/listener through artistic composition. It enables the writer to exhibit his/her subjects like a flash of whirlwind in appealing shades.

Furthermore, Longinus reveals three pitfalls a writer must be wary of if his work must achieve sublimity. These are: excessive sublimity, immaturity and misplaced and meaningless passion. For the first he adjudicates that excessiveness gives birth to bad writing as they are usually empty and incredible. Secondly, immaturity entails obscurity and negates the sublime and thus detracts from the beauty of an artistic piece. On the third, he hits at misapplication of emotion and states its disastrous effect on the reader. In summary Longinus states that inappropriate expression of passion and diction hamper sublimity. He locates all these faults in the inordinate desire for scholarly innovation prevalent in his period.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the implications of Longinus' view that no one can produce a great work unless his thought is sublime.

3. 3   ANALYSIS

Have you observed that structure, form and quality are hardly important to Longinus'? Thus, his interest departs from that of Aristotle. Literary history, classification of literature into genres and constituents of genres fail to attract his attention like they did Aristotle's. He is interested in the sublime which he conceives as that quality that guarantees literary excellence. Longinus is rather concerned with whatever could fascinate him from any literature of any genre. Put differently, he is interested in excellent compositions wherever it is discovered in literature. Anyadike (2001, p. 309) terms him the "first critic of general literature" and Neeraj Bhatt (2012, p. 1) observes that the scholar is concerned with that "passage which strikes fire from his mind".

Longinus identifies sublime passages in both prose and verse. For him, works that exhibit sublimity are Homeric epics, Sappho's love-lyric, Aeschylus' tragedies, and in prose, the philosophical writings of Plato, Historical treatise of Herodotus, rhetorics of Demosthenes and Biblical Genesis account of creation. Longinus, with these examples, endorses the classical

standard as the model. He thus advocates a backward glance in the composition of works of arts. You will also observe this in Horace.

It is important that you note Longinus' view on the impact of a sublime text on the audience. Longinus suggests that man responds naturally to sublimity in arts. He implies that excellent art unshackles the spirit from the ordinary and transports it through an unanticipated channel into a beatific condition of the eternal. In Michael Bryson's interpretation, "the elevated language of the sublime aims to cast a spell over the audience", and beyond persuasion captivates and transports the reader to that realm intended by the writer (2012, p. 1). Can you observe how Longinus re-conceptualises Plato's idea from the audience perspective? Plato's concept of inspiration is thus reflected though not in relation to the writer but the reader. Inspiration also makes room for imagination in Longinus theory. His view corresponds with Aristotle's in his recognition of arts in possession. Conversely, Longinus' perception of the emotions of fear, worry and pity debunks Aristotle's analysis of that same psychological process. In his estimation literary composition goes beyond mechanism and into the realm of the transcendental, emotion, feelings and imagination as well as that ability to deliver in an extraordinary language. With resounding regularity, he hammers on the spiritual and indefinable aspect of literature as against technicalities favoured by Aristotle. Consequently, he places aestheticism above regulations.

Longinus' theory is guided not by any statuses but his personal experience developed along his protracted and intimate interaction with great literatures. At this point, it must have been clear to you that "On the Sublime" advocates an elevated style in composition of literary works. We can therefore classify the essay as an overt approval of sublimity, imagination and height. Due to his position that sublimity in arts is a reflection of sublimity of thoughts, Longinus becomes associated with deep thoughts. Moreover, in his identification of the three arch-enemies of composition, Longinus reveals what sublimity excludes. Therefore, the theorist balances his earlier advancement of elements that constitute sublimity. He thus states what should be admitted and what should be avoided by any writer who desires to create a sublime work.

Please do not miss the evolving trend in literary theory and criticism as we go through the essays. Remember that Plato's acerbic censure initiates literary criticism. Aristotle's methodical response charts the landscape in his concern with form, structure and quality. However,

Longinus exhaustive exploration attends to texts with enchanting capabilities that cannot be limited by any previously laid down creative ordinance. In other words, mimesis as introduced by Plato is modified by Aristotle and further re-intellectualised by Longinus.

Longinus comparative analysis of Odyssey and Iliad and copious quotations and examination of Sappho's text shows his familiarity with the literature of his period. As a literary student this should stimulate your interest. His analysis attempts a logical examination of fictional experiences from the writers' and readers' perspectives. He extensively exploits Greek literature as Aristotle did. His recommendation of past poets as veritable models for new writers places him within the critical traditions of T.S. Eliot and Harold Bloom's respective ideas espoused in the seminal essays "Tradition and Individual Talent" and "Anxiety of Influence".

The three critical factors in literary production and consumption – the writer, the text and the audience – are catered for in Longinus' theory. The creative process for Longinus should entail both skill and talent. For him, knowledge, skill, inspiration and imagination are all important in creativity. The attributes of a poem includes demonstration of passion and organized language. The extraordinary genius is the poet who can grasp great conceptions and possess passion and he has two attributes – using language to persuade and using language to please. For this you can consider him a great Augustan with robust Romantic spirit, in his attention to both feeling and reason in creativity. On the text, he avers that the entire work matters and should be organized to produce sublimity. In addition, the poetic text should exhibit deep content, expressed in appropriate language and cast in lofty style that can uplift the soul. Lofty style is equivalent to sublimity and is one of the fundamental qualities of literature. Literature, for him, goes beyond a persuasive art. It moves to ecstasy. He made explicit statement about the context of a text. For him the impact/reception of poetry should be captivating, uplifting and delightful. If you still recall the different critical approaches discussed in Unit 1, you will be able to easily identify the critical inclinations of Longinus theory especially from this paragraph.

 Longinus scholarship abhors waste and advances so much that is crucial and enduring. It is fully-packed, energetic and its potency is overwhelming. His thoughts are cast in memorable costume and achieve an enviable stature. In the apt description of *Poetry foundation* "On the

Sublime" is a "masterwork of antiquity … subtle, iconoclastic work" infused with "intellectual energy" (N.D, 10). You can decipher the most significant aspects of Longinus' excellence and brilliance in the key passages of his treatise.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 3

In your own language, attempt a two-page analysis of the major theses of Longinus' essay 'On the Sublime'.

4.0   FURTHER NOTES

4. 1   KEY PASSAGES

1. Page 48 section III – constituents and result of sublimity.
2. Page 50 section II - three pitfalls to guard against towards an attainment of sublimity.
3. Page 51 section V – causes of faults in literary creativity.
4. Page 52 section VII – Longinus' basis of appraisal.
5. Page 52 section VIII – two attributes of a great poet and five sources of sublimity in composition.
6. Page 53 section VIII – the emotions of pity, fear and grief excluded from sublimity and the concept of divine possession.
7. Page 53 section IX – the concept of talent and skill and sublimity as a mark of great soul.
8. Page 55 section IX – record of the Biblical account of creation, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as examples of great compositions.
9. Page 59 section XII – impact of a sublime work on the reader.
10. Page 59 section XIII – concept of imitation; the past writers as veritable models of creativity.
11. Page 60 section XV – concept of imagination (as against the earlier inspiration).

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 4

Study excerpts of Sappho's and Homer's respective writings employed by Longinus in his analysis in pages 56 – 58 of our recommended text. Examine the texts in relation to Longinus' evaluations and critique his view of both writings.

4. 3   METHOD

The different methods adopted by Longinus should be easily detectable to a vigilant reader. Longinus' 'On the Sublime' (is):

10. Presented as an epistolary discourse and is cast in an intertextual mode.
11. Delivered in a passionate and expressive style.
12. Both a literary criticism in addition to being a theoretical discourse
13. Adopts the form of an expository argument.
14. Employs the comparative method of analysis.
15. Employs the analytical, logical and psychological methods.
16. Utilises ample examples and several illustrations from different sources especially from the literary field.

'On the Sublime' is delivered as an epistle addressed to a close associate, identified as "dear Postumius Terentianus (48)" So it is in "an epistolary form" (A. K. R. Kiran 2010, p. 1). It is, in addition, cast in an intertextual mode. This confers upon the work an interactive and friendly quality that in turn creates a mutual atmosphere without compromising its serious investigative tone and character that exhibits the essay as an intellectual venture. This method is closer to that of Plato's but hardly like Aristotle's. However, Plato's presentation differs in that it is in a debate form. Longinus style functions to invite the reader into the essay as an interactant. *Poetry Foundation* (N.D, p. 3) holds that Longinus adopts an "amiable, intimate, yet soberly critical attitude".

'On the Sublime' is a quintessential literary criticism in addition to being a theoretical discourse. Thematically, it is interested in aestheticism as found in work of fiction. However, Longinus

comprehensively examines the character of the sublime as the major factor of excellence in writing. In doing this, he engages in actual literary criticism by evaluating works of arts. Due to this, the work could be described as standing on two feet. It seems Longinus adopts this style to project an example of what literary theory and criticism should be.

Furthermore, in spite of the much spoken-about state of the original copy of 'On the Sublime', including disconnectedness, non-partitioning, apparent gaps and sudden end, the text still maintains a quality of lucidity and legitimacy in content and character. It is delivered "in a style that is itself enthusiastic and eloquent" (William Thrall et al., 1960, p. 115). In addition, Longinus adopts the expository logic blueprint. He initially identifies his interest, explains his method and offers a plain picture of his interrelated and progressive ideas. This makes it easy for a reader to follow his thoughts as they develop. He thus follows Aristotle's steps, but not with Plato.

Longinus again employs the comparative method that is historical and interregional in scope and capacity. From Greek Demosthenes to Roman Cicero, he selects his data and notes different creative abilities and impacts on the audience. "On the Sublime" is a testimony to his unconcealed versatility and astuteness. He shows dexterity in his handling of literature and his uncanny ability to compare literatures of different authors, climes and periods is amazing. For instance, he engages in a comparative analysis of Odyssey and Iliad and quotes copiously from Sappho. This method enables him to identify the common characteristics of different literatures and also emphasize the distinguishing qualities of each work in an original way. Longinus' adoption of the comparative technique has attracted so much critical commendations. In Kiran's reading, Longinus deploys both the "historical ad comparative methods (and) as a critic, he displays a rare breadth and catholicity of outlook, and a mind disinterested and free from prejudice" (2010, p. 1). His method of hypothesizing is logical but emotional and persuasive. His approach, largely due to its emotional quality, departs from that of Aristotle.

Longinus' treatise exhibits the employment of analytical and inductive methods of analysis. This method is an investigative and is a logical technique commonly used in scholarship. Both facilitate a purposeful examination of relevant objects in order to draw objective conclusions. It

is thus related to the comparative method. Longinus investigates his data comprehensively before arriving at his conclusions. This point is endorsed by his robust attention to various writers and their writings including Sophocles and Homer. "On the Sublime" is in an emblematic condition. Longinus illuminates his position by projecting ample and relevant examples from Greek literary family including Euripides, Demostheus etc. This method works to concretize his theoretical ideas making them more comprehensible.

Though termed a "technical treatise", Longinus consistently selects and presents his ideas to the audience in common figurative language. His description of sublimity as the "soul" of good literary composition adequately represents such. It is for this reason that critical commentaries find his writing profound, lucid and memorable. Kiran's evaluation, below, confirm this point and states the impact of this method. Longinus thoughts are:

> Expressed in memorable fashion … rich with metaphors, compounds, and poetical expressions, his style at the same time, has a peculiar intensity of his own; and this is due partly to his use of striking epigrams and picturesque similes, and partly to his use of long sentences brought to a triumphant, effective close. Indeed it was Longinus who gave a new guidance and direction to criticism. (2010, p. 2)

This style suggests that Longinus seeks to situate the sublime experience within the natural and universal perhaps to make it more comprehensible and acceptable. In addition, his lavish employment of figurative devices brings his theory closer to literature on which he speculates.

While Aristotle's essay sounds academic and appears formal and stiff, Longinus is passionate and personal. While Aristotle is technical and dogmatic, Longinus is spiritual and expressive. In his work Plato resurrects as an object and model and in matter and method. Generally, the potency of Longinus' theory is evident in his concern and method. In both is situated his enduring importance in literary theory and criticism.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 5

As a critic, examine Longinus' presentation style.

4. 4   SIGNIFICANCE/CONTRIBUTION

Longinus is a significant theorist of the classical period. His essence is a function of his innovative thoughts on literary production and consumption as encapsulated in the conceptual essay 'On the Sublime'. In him antecedent theoretical doctrines are reviewed. In Longinus again, seeds are sown for successive conceptual canons. His distinctive concern and technique improved the lot of literary criticism tremendously and that makes him an irreplaceable aspect of literary speculation. His conjecture attends to the dynamics of writer, text and audience.

'On the Sublime' is a highly venerated text and is largely responsible for the relevance of Longinus within the academic discipline of Literary Studies. In the estimation of most scholars, 'On the Sublime' is an archetypal Western theoretical and critical document with an original insight. For instance, Thrall et al consider Longinus' discourse as one more Greek essay of "primary significance" which departs from Aristotle's Poetics "in content and spirit" (1960, p. 115). In the estimation of *Poetry Foundation* (N. D., p. 1), Longinus' 'On the Sublime' usually "ranks second in importance only to Aristotle's Poetics …". For Abrams,   his replacement of analysis with ecstasy as the measure of excellence forecast "the substitution of taste and sensibility for the analytic and judicial procedure of earlier criticism" (*The Mirror*, 1953, p. 73). The three respective observations specify the importance and contributions of Longinus' treatise to the development of literary criticism. You can add you own evaluation of Longinus essay 'On the Sublime' here. Remember that this course is a major part of preparing you to be a literary critic.

The primary contribution of Longinus to literary theorizing and criticism is in his reinterpretation and popularization of the notion of the sublime. He launched the concept of the sublime into literary theory and criticism in his seminal work 'On the Sublime'. Longinus introduced the study of artistic aestheticism in literary criticism. For this he becomes a pioneer in the fields of

"aesthetic appreciation of literature … (and) analytical criticism" (Kiran, 2010, 1). Longinus' accomplishment in both fields is quite impressive. He selects and examines passages from literary works created by writers like Homer, Sophocles and Sappho's, in a bid to evaluate the use of language and employment of images and symbols in his search for excellence in arts. By this Longinus equally calls attention to certain classic texts and thus places such in the consciousness of the reading public.

Furthermore, 'On the Sublime' wields a lot of influence on later critics and scholars. The extensive influence of the essay started with Boileau 1674 French translation of the Greek document *Peri hupsous* "On the Sublime." Longinus concept of sublimity has been reinterpreted and redeployed into other prominent critical writings best represented by Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) *and* Immanuel Kant's in *Critique of Judgment* (1790). It has also heavily influenced the Romantics of the 19th century including William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley and found expression in literary theorizing, practice and criticism of the 20th century. Longinus thesis is very functional in the codification of the expressive approach of literary criticism adopted mostly by Romantics.

Related to the last point is that Longinus functions as a bridge between historical periods and critical approaches in literary criticism. Many renowned critical examinations find in him a perfect blend of classical control and romantic freedom. He anticipates the romantic period in his overt and recurrent interest in imagination and ecstasy. In this way, he speaks for the past and anticipates the future. Longinus scatters seeds into every age between the classical and romantic periods. In addition, he beamed his light into the modern and postmodern periods. Let us conclude this segment with Bhatt's apt and succinct remark: 'On The Sublime' is "a small treatise of great significance" (2012, p. 1). In that "small treatise" is embossed a skillful synthesis of several critical inclinations. Longinus thus demonstrates the competence of an accomplished scholar. Nevertheless, his writing cannot be described as perfect.

4. 5   LIMITATION

Longinus almost elevated the concept of the sublime to the supernatural level. This spiritual character makes the idea incapable of lending itself to an objective examination. Longinus over-emphasized ecstasy, imagination and transport. So the dominant psychological and emotional bent makes the concept indeterminate and varied. It makes his view a bit subjective.

Furthermore, Longinus fails to pay adequate attention to the concept of emotion, one of his five sources of sublimity. This omission creates some noticeable gaps in the context of the essay as it diminishes the meaning essence of his theory. Apart from the above, Longinus hardly elucidates the function of the reader. His major interest is in the dignity of the writers thoughts; his high spirit. This reduces the important contributions of the audience within the scheme of literary creativity and consumption.

Moreover Longinus tends to be attracted by violence in its repulsiveness. This could be glimpsed in his enjoyment of the "violent effects" of Demosthenes "rhetorical inversions." In addition, he identifies the effect of the writer's expressive prowess in terms of "vehemence" produced by transportation. His lexical choices in that portion (Page 67 section XXII) include strikes, hazards, fear and collapse. All these connote violence and infuses his work with a repugnant ambiance lacking in both Plato's and Aristotle's discourses.

In addition Longinus' discussions on the six types of figures tends to be tedious and thus boring, in comparison to the other portions. Perhaps this accounts for why that aspect is usually ignored by most analyses of his concept of sublimity.

4. 6 APPLICATION

Based on Longinus concept, criticism of a literary text will:

1. Seek for factors of sublimity; that is dignity, grandeur, excellence, etc. in a text and assess the degree of idea to ensure greatness and passion.
2. Identify universal elements that makes a given text perennially appealing.

3. Consider the impact of a text on the reader in terms of its ability to lift the soul and investigate how a writer excludes anti-sublime emotions of fear, pity and worry.

4. Classify a text as good in relation to how the writer employs figures of speech and other language and literary resources to achieve rhythm and create meaning.

5. Examine how a writer works to achieve coordination and coherence of different aspects of a text.

Based on the critic's standard, English and African novels like William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* contain anti-sublime elements.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 6

Choose two classic texts (African and English) and using Longinus precepts attempt an investigation of both bearing in mind the elements of sublimity.

5.0   CONCLUSION

Longinus is one of the four notable critics of antiquity. His concept of sublimity in arts makes a deep impression on literary construction, consumption and criticism. He advances factors that facilitate the achievement of sublimity in literature. Longinus five sources of sublimity in arts is insightful and represents his means of achieving excellence in literature. Again, by identifying three pitfalls in poetic construction, Longinus advances what should be avoided in order to produce a great work of fiction. His creative process entails both skill and talent and that makes his theory inclusive and realistic. He is interested in the treatment of profound themes and use of appropriate language in a way that emphasises the function of language in literary communication. Moreover, Longinus' essay exhibits interest in the effect of literature on the audience and that brings him closer to Plato. His view also implies the capacity of an excellent literature to elicit strong emotions. Longinus employment of the epistolary and comparative method makes his essay friendly and broad-based. Did you observe how passionate his arguments are? All these make his essay accessible and comprehensible. The essay has made a lot of impact on literary scholars even when it cannot be described as perfect. Finally, it represents one of the loudest voices of the classical period of literary criticism.

6.0   SUMMARY

Module 2 Unit 3 works to help you identify and examine the:

Historical background a very important classical theorists – Longinus.

Nature, features and forms of literature as conceived by the scholar of antiquity.

Basic assumptions of Longinus, especially the doctrine of sublimity.

Contributions and limitations of the literary principles of Longinus.

Indices for an objective analysis of literary texts on the basis of Longinus' concepts of literature.

As we conclude this unit, please be informed that several examinations of Longinus' theory of arts are still waiting to be found and explored. This means that you are expected to read beyond this module. As a post-graduate student, you must be conversant with the rudiments of independent and collaborative academic research. That is the best way to do well in this course, and in other courses.

7.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the nature, features and forms of poetry as conceived by Longinus.
2. Longinus identified five principal sources of sublimity in creativity. Classify these into their proper categories and discuss each without ignoring the relationship between all the five.
3. Bearing in mind, the three pitfalls identified by Longinus, discuss what a writer must avoid in order to produce an excellent literature.
4. Examine the impact of Longinus's method in the communication of his theory of literature.
5. How does Longinus' essay echo Plato's thoughts on the impact of literature on the audience?

8.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2 UNIT 4   HORACE'S THEORY OF LITERATURE

25.0   Introduction

26.0   Objectives

27.0   Main Content

2.0   INTRODUCTION

Unit four is the last unit of module 2. It is interested in the assumptions of Longinus and Horace on literature. The unit examines Horace's 'Epistle to the Pisones' which encapsulates his concepts of arts. In addition to the background, unit 4 identifies the basic assumptions of the essay, key passages and methods of presentation. Moreover, this unit analyses the merits/contributions and inadequacies of Horace's thesis in relation to literary criticism. Included in this unit are guidelines for analysis of literary texts based on Horace's principles.

You already know from what is discussed above and from our previous units that you need to closely study, comprehend and interpret the conceptual views expressed in Horace's 'Epistle to the Pisones' and their implications on literary creativity, consumption and criticism. You also have the obligation of identifying the main contributions of Horace to the extension and sustenance the on-going literary debate. Another task you have at hand is to note areas of convergences and divergences in the theoretical stances of Plato, Aristotle, Longinus and

Horace. Furthermore, as you study Horace's essay, you must note his approach in order to identify his theoretical persuasion. These are all necessary elements of ENG815.

Now, remember that this course encapsulates both abstract ideas (theories) and practical analysis of texts (criticism). The implication is that the theories you are examining are to be employed in the analysis of literary texts from given perspectives. These conceptual ideas help you to make deeper meanings out of fiction. In other words, this unit equips you to deploy Horace's thoughts in reading literature.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of Unit Four, you should be able to:

Understand the basis of Horace's theory and establish its critical attitude.

Explain the concept of decorum as conceived by Horace.

Discuss the qualities and functions of a good creative writer and a critic as stipulated by Horace.

Examine Horace's methods of presentation and determine how they facilitate and/or obstruct an effective expression his position.

Employ the primary concepts of Horace's theory in analysis of selected literary texts.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Historical Background

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (**8 Dec 65 B. C. – 27 Nov. 8 B. C.**) was a poet-critic born of a former slave and known as Horace. He is described as "the foremost Latin critic" and "the greatest of the Roman critics" (William Thrall, 1960, p. 116; Anyadike, 2001, p. 309). This is because, politically and intellectually, Horace was exposed to both Latin and Roman cultures. He first studied in Rome where he was exposed to Latin poets and later in Athens where he learnt Greek Literature and Philosophy. He returned to Rome and was there during the murder of Julius

Ceaser in March 44 B. C. In Rome he had practical experience of soldiering in the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. under Marcus Brutus' army. Horace, as a recognised poet in his period, mingled with important political and literary figures in Rome. He is believed to be very close to the Roman emperor Augustus and the poets Varius and Virgil who are his contemporaries with Ovid. His exposure influenced his theoretical discourses especially 'Art of Poetry'. Horace's theoretical view represents an articulate account of Rome with all the political passion of one of the most prominent civilisations in the history of the ancient world. These observations provide the background to Horace's concept of literature. Horace's principle of arts is encapsulated in his most celebrated essay, 'Art of Poetry' (Ars Poetica), initially titled 'Epistle to the Pisos' (Epistula ad Pisones). However, the accurate date of "Arts of Poetry" still remains controversial as it has been randomly put at between 20 B. C. to 10 B. C. by different researchers. Nevertheless, Horace's conceptual treatise discusses definite issues germane to literary creativity. 'Art of Poetry' was addressed to a Roman nobleman, Piso and his sons.

3. 2   Basic Assumptions

Horace principal interest in the essay revolves around poetic unity, essence of decorum and the need for a writer to possess inborn capacity and sufficient skill, the later more. These are organised in three parts. First, the theoretical essay examines poetry in general. Secondly, it discusses poetic forms and thirdly the poet. His criticism of poetry focuses on two major issues: Initially, it identifies qualities of a good poem and furthermore examines how a poem, its contemporaries and progenitors live up to that quality.

3.2.1   Poetry in General

Horace's requirements of a good poetic text are explicitly stated in his principle of arts. In his calculation literature includes art. The concept of literary decorum is fundamental to his principle

of arts. Decorum, as defined by Horace, entails compatibility of all the constituting elements of a fiction to the work as a unit. In his words "let the work of art be whatever you want, as long as it is simple and has unity" (85). In his view, the choice of a genre should be a conscious one and guided by the subject matter. His perception of decorum in creativity is that a work should adopt a language and technique fitting to its subject matter. In other words, constituents of a literary piece must be consistent with the nature of such a work. He also advocates for realistic characterisation. In his view characters should be consistent with real people they represent fictionally. Therefore, for Horace, "we shall always insist upon the qualities of character joined and fitted to the proper age of man" (89). Furthermore, Horace postulates that characters in dramatic and narrative texts must be apposite to the selected genre and the same goes for the expressive elements, typified by tone and style. For him, fiction needs to exhibit consistency with real life. He advocates for appropriateness and aptness of the structure and technique of a literary work to its theme and subject matter. So there should be a concordance of manner and matter in a work. Horace believes that a poetic text should elicit proper emotions. It should not only delight but also teach the audience. His content includes morality. He proposes that instruction should be passed in adequate terms. He stands against the employment of superfluous expressions and knowledge which for him amounts to wastage in creativity. This articulates the concept of literary decorum as postulated by Horace.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Identify Horace's standard for a good creative work.

3.2.2 Poetic Forms

Horace's theory exhibits interest in different forms of poetry though he gives special attention to drama. The text for him comes in different literary forms – prose, verse, tragedy, comedy and lyric poetry. In identifying the last, lyric, he acknowledges the muse as the inspirer of poetry. Each genre, for him, is an independent variety and as such amalgamation of genres is totally unacceptable in artistic creation. Thus, the scholar observes "the standard distinction and overtones of poetic forms" and insists that "each form of poetry occupy the proper place allotted to it" (87). He holds that good poetry is not made out of verse alone but some prose can turn out as good poetries. In his conclusion, the content and form of epic, as a literary genre, have been

successfully instituted for all periods by Homer. He notes the different purposes and characters of these genres of literature.

In addition, Horace's concept pays attention to content and form of a work of art. Thematically, heroes and gods should not be characterised as degenerate in satyr plays. Structurally, Horace's interest is more on drama which origin and development it traces. His rule states that a play should have five acts – nothing more no less. Moreover, it should not include undue divine intervention. He also expects the chorus, in Greek drama, to support that which is right and the good. Again, drama performance should exclude gory scenes and communicate such messages through the narrative mode. In Horace's account, to go against these rules makes a play faulty.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Using 'our text', identify the different focus and qualities of different genres of literature as

established by Horace.

3.2.3   The Poet

Horace's essay also caters for both the writer and his/her audience. In Horace's calculation a great writer has two primary responsibilities to the audience – to entertain and to instruct. He notes that "poets aim to either to help or to amuse the reader" and he posits that writers should combine "the pleasant with the useful" (92). He further recommends that   lessons of a work should be made "short" as "unnecessary word(s)" hampers comprehension (92). Horace identifies what it takes to be an accomplished writer. Artistry, in his terms, requires innate capacity and skill acquisition, the later more. "Nature (and) training ... requires the help" of each other" (94). In other words, a writer must first possess the artistic talent which must be refined through a rigorous process of training. For him training is very essential in literary creativity.

On the choice of theme and subject, Horace recommends that:

> If you plan to write, adopt a material to match your talents, and
> think over carefully what burdens your shoulders will not carry and
> how strong they really are. When a writer's chosen material
> matches his powers, the flow of words will not fail nor clarity and

orderly arrangement. (86)

In other words, a writer should write on a subject he is knowledgeable about and possess the appropriate skill to handle. He must match his writing with proper skills. The requisite skill as recognised by Horace is in organisation – language, text, tone, rhythmic effect, etc. are all involved. It also includes streams of ideas, accurate management of such ideas, cohesion and coherence as displayed in a piece of work. In summary, a writer has to utilise language and form in a way that corresponds with his subject. In his postulation, idea and dialogue must agree with the characters. Good writing, in his terms, is a reflection of good thinking.

Furthermore, Horace points out what he considers true models for writers and makes a statement on criticism. According to him, an accomplished poet is an imitative artist who employs real life and Greek classical writers as his models. In his view, Homer and Greek classical tragedians represent such models. On the Greeks, Horace holds that the muse blesses them with the gift of pleasing expressions. For him, the Greeks hunger for approval while Romans engage in business calculations. Still on creativity, he holds that experimentation must go with caution. Horace avers that imitation does not entail servile copying. It rather includes some measure of originality which must be guided to avoid obscurity and discrepancy. He advises poets to study great works, engage in careful artistic construction and expose their works to objective criticism in the hands of honest critics. He further insists that "a true critic and a wise one will scold you for weak lines, blame you for rough ones, he'll indicate unpolished lines … mark things to be changed" (95). For Horace, a good poet should avoid hasty publication of a new poem. These are avoidable faults in creativity as conceived by Horace.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

What roles does Horace assign to the writer and the critic?

4.0   Additional Notes

4.1   Analysis

If you have followed Horace's argument, you must have observed two principal issues. First, he underscores the importance of decorum in a work of art. Secondly, he delineates the significance of Greek models to a poet. Horace's work is concerned with forms and character of imaginative creativity. The concept of literature as an imitation is given a diminished status in Horace's theory. He concentrates more on art in creativity. Horace's concept is an intensified form of Aristotle's protest. Again like Aristotle, he gives the greatest attention to the dramatic genre.

Remember that in Horace's consideration, the muse supplies lyric poets their artistic materials and excellent expressions to Greeks. Horace therefore implies that certain kinds of subjects and poems are given by the divine for the benefit of mortals. He additionally acknowledges the role of the muse as defined by the classical Greek society. Nevertheless, he emphasises skills and underscores this against inspiration as an expressive mode. He marks the first classicist to believe in solid skills. For his emphasis on skills and organisation, Horace is regarded as the father of the Augustans. In his view of art in literature, the scholar joins Aristotle and Longinus in opposing Plato's position. Remember that for Longinus creativity demands both talent and skill. In Longinus, skill and imagination, the later more, are considered important in creativity. Plato view marks the end of possession. Subsequent theorists deal with different levels of inspiration.

Horace's concept of imitation consists of imitating real life and the Greek writers. That is his mimetic theory. However, he assigns a place for originality. In other words, we can safely assume that for Horace, writers should do novel things using old standards. This extends the scope of Plato and Aristotle's respective theories in which imitation consists of looking up to nature as the model of creativity.

Horace's repeated concern with balance is an aspect of his concept you cannot avoid. On one hand, innate capacity and skill acquisition and on the other, imitation and originality represent Horace's consistent attempt at advocating for essential balance in creativity. All these are connected to his insistence on artistic decorum. In Anyadike's interpretation, Horace underscores "etiquette, decorum and the middle path; no extremes" and this could be attributed to his existence in a very stable period of the Roman Empire (2001, p. 309). His concept of decorum illustrates his consideration for harmony and finesse in arts. His view on the recreational and instructive functions of literature is in tandem with Philip Sydney's theory which we shall study

in the next unit. Consequently, a piece of poetry that delights but does not instruct has not satisfied the poetic theory of Horace. This aspect of Horace's principle injects a moral fragrance into his literary theory. Included in the last point is Horace's attention to the writer as well as the audience. Do you notice these? Literature to Horace is a means to an end – for entertainment and education of the audience. Therefore, arts is, in his view, audience-oriented. That makes his approach pragmatic.

A careful reading of Aristotle and Horace's respective concepts exhibits correspondences and departures of ideas. First, Aristotle advocates for appropriateness of form and style, especially in tragedy, but Horace makes it into a rule as he did the use of narration in relating disturbing events. Again, where Aristotle notes Homer's contribution to the Epic form, Horace projects Homers' works as the model. In addition, Aristotle emphasises the role of Homer in shaping and popularising the epic tradition but Horace insists that Homer has outlined its subject matter and form. Moreover, Aristotle suggests that a play should be long enough and possess the proper qualities to discuss its subject using a suitable style, Horace insists that a play must have five acts. Furthermore, under Aristotle's concept, tragedy is a superior form while in Horace's it assumes the status of a genre with a distinguishing method that must maintain decorum. For him mixture of genres is totally unacceptable. Thus, a tragic-comic text like *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett repudiates Horace's theoretical position which demands that tragedy and comedy must each adhere to its tradition.

Another area where you may find correspondence between Aristotle's theory and Horace's is in principle of credibility in characterisation. In advocating that action and characterisation be realistic, Horace articulates a key principle of characterisation which is credibility and votes for realism in literature. This principle of realism has a lot of influence on subsequent periods. An observant student should take cognisance of how Horace's view reechoes the Aristotelian position on the possibility of actions and events in the plot. In the words of ***Encyclopedia Britannica***, Horace's theory "is an urbane, unsystematic amplification of Aristotle's discussion of the decorum or internal propriety of each literary genre, which at Horace's time included lyric, pastoral, satire, elegy, and epigram, as well as Aristotle's epic, tragedy, and comedy."

Based on Horace's views, magical or science fiction is not breaks the rules of good literature. Thus, a novel like Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* is recommendable while Tutuola's *Palmwine Drinkard* is not (both are African fictions). The implication is that Horace insists that a piece of work should eliminate all elements that have the capacity to confuse the reader. You will be right if you conclude that for Horace literature should rather strive to enlighten the audience. In a nut shell, for Horace, the creative process entails knowledge, skill and inspiration. In addition, a good poet imitates what is true to life and the Greeks. In content, he also notes that literary texts appear in different genres – tragedy and comedy – and serve different purposes. Themes should correspond with subject and represented in appropriate language to elicit proper emotion as it delights and also teaches. Therefore, a text should have a moral content in a simple lyrical style that could be sung. On the aspect of the impact, for Horace, poetry should instruct and charm the audience. Here his view is in tandem with that of Longinus.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the concept of decorum as advanced by Horace.

Key passages

1. Page 85 – simplicity and unity as the basic features of a good work of arts.
2. Page 86 – choice of materials a writer could handle in creative writing.
3. Page 87 – the role of the muse in creativity.
4. Page 87 – literary forms.
5. Page 88 – imitation and originality.
6. Page 89 – consistence and credibility in characterization, narration and action in drama, the principle of five acts, undue divine intervention, role of the chorus, etc.
7. Page 91 – Greek models and morality in creativity.
8. Page 92 – dual functions of literature.
9. Page 93 – the essence of objective criticism.

10. Page 91 and 94 – talent and skill.

Please note that it is your responsibility to seek out other necessary passages of Horace's theory of literature. Remember to incorporate these into your writing. Now, let us examine Horace's method of delivery.

Methods

Horace's presentation method is multi-dimensional. The theoretical essay 'Art of Poetry':

1. Delivers its argument in a letter form.
2. Is written in verse and adopts an informal tone.
3. Manifests a seeming lack of coherence.
4. Has a pragmatic rather than a theoretical orientation.
5. Assumes a doctrinaire approach that bespeaks fanaticism.
6. Makes use of the comparative method and examples.
7. Inculcates humour and satire as expressive modes.
8. Employs a lot of older writings and writers to illustrate his points.
9. Uses figurative language.

'Arts of Poetry' is delivered in an epistolary form addressed to a prospective poet, Pisones and his sons. He employs the first and third person pronouns 'I' and 'you'. This style makes it an informal correspondence delivered in verse and confers upon the writing a casual, free and private tone. ***Encyclopedia Britannica*** avers that the essay acquires "a loose conversational frame" typical of Horace's writing of that period. This aspect of Horace's essay is similar to that of Longinus 'On the Sublime'. However, while Longinus' essay is communicated in a very logical and analytical manner, Horace's exhibits a seeming lack of coherence. For instance, he discusses the concept of talent and skill in creativity in pages 91 and 94 of our text. In between the two pages, other separate issues are discussed. This must have informed the judgment of Kaplan and Anderson that his essay manifests an "apparent lack of organization …" and from

beginning to the end appears like "the sketch of a mad painter and … a mad poet" (84). That says it all!

Horace's propositions exhibits a practical approach and is therefore pragmatic. Perhaps, this is due to his profession as a poet, unlike other classical literary theorists. In page 90 of our text, he identifies himself as "a writer of satyr-plays." and is reputed to have written several Odes. You now know why Horace is known as a "poet-critic" (C. O. Brink, 2011, p. 154). These observations are important because each addresses a key aspect of Horace's style helps to identify his theoretical attitude. In addition, Horace offers a practical example of adopting past writings as models and this is consonance with his stipulation. Moreover his debt to Aristotle is again stressed without losing sight of his more dogmatic approach.

Furthermore, 'Art of Poetry' employs the comparative method and examples especially the Greeks and Romans. These function to highlight the regional differences and similarities. Lastly, Horace's essay deploys humour and satire as expressive styles in the essay under study even as he discusses the essence of decorum. Petri Liukkonen (2008, p. 2) observes that Horace discusses with "informality and humour" topics like the unity of poem and the importance of *decorum.* He had time and space to satirise the sinking mad poet in page 95 of our text. He thus introduces humour into what should have been a strict academic subject. One cannot but wonder why a theorist that totally rejects mixture of genres turns around and combines two different forms. This will serve as a good text for scholars of deconstruction; another literary concept.

Horace's essay makes lavish use of figurative and language devices, especially simile, and comparisons. For example, poetry is like "painting" (85), "like a hunter intent on his blackbirds …" (95), like a huckster, who collects a crowd to buy his wares, the poet …." (94). Again, he compares the critic to hired mourners" (94). Horace uses exclamations like "Oh how inept I am" (91)!

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify at least ten different rules established by Horace in 'Art of Poetry'.

Significance/Contributions

Horace is one of the four recognisable voices of the classical period whose views co-establish literary criticism as a discipline. He is best recognised for his concept of decorum in creativity. Horace's theoretical standpoint exhibits comprehension and extension of past views. His thematic interest and stylistic devices advance the body of theoretical thoughts on literature. His focus covers the essential factors of nature and function of literature.

Horace is one scholar whose essay proves that conceptual and creative writing can co-exist in one entity. He is a renowned poet and a remarkable theorist. In 'Art of Poetry' he "presents himself and his addressees as actively involved in writing satyr-plays" (T. P. Wiseman, 1988, p. 1). Horace was one of the very first to synthesise literary criticism and call attention to forms and character of the Greek literature.

Horace is unarguably a leading Latin critic whose opus, unlike scholarly writings, outlived the decline of the Roman Empire. His 'Art of Poetry' elicits significant influence across periods of Western literary history. Horace is considered as the most influential literary critic between 1500-1800 on the basis of 'Art of Poetry'. *Institutes of Oratory* by Quintilian takes a second position after Horace's epistle. *Encyclopedia of world Biography* posits that Horace's essay exerted a lot of influence during and after the Renaissance, particularly in the construction of the severe conventions of French classical drama. Horace's view on decorum, imitation of Greek models and teaching with pleasure inform Renaissance literary concept as you will soon observe. In Jelena Krsovic's interpretation, 'Art of Poetry' "served as a manual of style for neoclassical poets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (2000, p. 1). In addition, the 17th and 18th centuries Neoclassicists considered the treatise valuable due to its wit, practicality, regulations and intellectualism. Many scholars agree that *Ars Poetica* has achieved overwhelming influence.

Moreover, Horace is one philosopher whose terms help enlarge the terminology of criticism as his ideas clarify the role of a critic in literature. Scholars, exemplified by Thrall (1960, p. 116), note that Horace's terms/words contributes to the expansion of conceptual and critical

vocabulary. For instance, he popularized the term decorum. He invigorates terms and senses like "what is pleasant and ... what is suitable" (92) and "natural talent and technical competence" (91) in literary creativity and criticism. Furthermore, Horace draws attention to the responsibility of the writer of a new piece and the role of the critic whose function he itemizes. He thus, establishes the importance of subjecting a prospective publication under professional review. His is an advice every writer must take seriously.

Horace's conceptual proposition underscores the importance of propriety in literature. It also recognizes the contributions of both natural skill and technical training in literary production. He identifies sound judgment and hard work as key to a good artistic expression. Moreover, the essay identifies the twin function of literature – to provide pleasure and teaching for wholesome human development. In these views, he calls attention to the essence of balance and thus advocates moderation. He equally unmasks the danger of extremism in creativity. The merits of these concepts are observed by scholars who also note that Horace's suggestions have been adopted by several including those who disagree with his other positions.

In addition, Horace's treatise organises the rule of five acts of drama into law and this remained the dramatic convention for a very long period. Again, he emphasizes the importance of excluding violence from the stage and specifies the educative and entertainment roles of a literary work. Horace goes all out to propose regulations only suggested by other classical theorists, especially Aristotle. Plato's attack is acerbic and Aristotle's defence technical and descriptive. However, Horace supplies regulations for creativity for the benefit of the audience. He thus elevates suggestions to instructions and through that provides laws for literary practice and criticism. In spite all the scholar's contributions, his essay maintains flaws. Let us consider some of the limitations.

Limitations

Horace's 'Art of Poetry' cannot be termed a perfect work. The originality of that essay is perhaps questionable based on his close attention to Plato's and Aristotle's separate views. The scholar's idea differs, in no great measure, from Plato and Aristotle's. It is thus customary, especially in its adoption of the ancient Greek literary conventions. Michael Bryson (2012, p. 1) brands Horace a

"conservative, traditional literary critic." Considering the fact that Horace's essay was written in a period of intellectual transformation, Bryson's view holds some merits.

Furthermore, Horace's essay is full of rules and regulations. *Encyclopedia Britannica* identifies about 30 different maxims in the 476 lines addressed to young poets. Can you beat that? Horace's writing adopts a doctrinaire inclination that almost borders on extremism. His concept is crammed with all sorts of rules and regulations for creative writing. His essay is filled with "do not" and "you must" as observed in pages 88 and 89 (our text). In the later, for instance, he insists on five-acts in drama, rejects the concept of divine intervention and itemises the role of the chorus. Horace's views sound more like regulations than hypothetical proposals. Horace's expectations from creative writers become hard rules. That makes his principles strict and inflexible. The implication is that his concepts are mechanical and thus contravene the concept of dynamism which is a major characteristic of art. Put differently, his ordinances appear burdensome and tend to hamper the inventive spirit of creativity.

Furthermore, Horace's position on the character and meaning of poetry, as well as his focus on drama could be reconsidered. Did you observe that Horace invests most of his time to drama and to the detriment of other genres of literature? C. O. Brink submits that Horace's "view is internal and professional; it reveals his own creative one-sidedness nature. Its value and justification lies in its professional one-sidedness" and his approach is "extreme and one-sided … misleading." (2011, p. 154; 163). Do you agree with Brink's position? Horace's concept thus maintains bias and that interrogates its objectivity. Again, the essay, to some extent, lacks coherence and this could be traced to its carefree organisation. Isn't it an irony that Horace who insists on proper organization of materials tends to use materials arbitrarily? Nevertheless, though Horace's 'Art of Poetry' has been accused of being unduly dictatorial, it must be accepted that the essay includes a host of dictums developed to offer guidelines to writers.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 6

Of all the identified contributions of Horace to literary Criticism, which do you consider the most important and why?

Application

A critic who wishes to adopt Horace's theoretical standard will:

1. Pay attention to poetic unity or decorum; that is compatibility between genre, theme/subject matter and style.
2. Endorse pure forms and be more interested in tragic texts, especially in terms of action, narration, five-acts.
3. Search for evidences of imitation of real life and Greek models.
4. Examine the extent to which the text instructs and entertains.
5. Determine if the writer demonstrates natural talent, adequate technical skill, knowledge of his subject matter and good thinking.

Consequently, the African drama, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* by Ola Rotimi will satisfy Horace's expectations because it adopts the Greek drama, *Oedipus Rex*, as a model. Shakespearean tragic plays, including *Macbeth* and *Julius Ceaser,* will be endorsed by the virtue of its presentation in Five-Acts. On the other hand, the drama text *Waiting for Godot* (Samuel Beckett) repudiates Horace's principle of literature in two ways. First, it it is a mixed form – tragi-comedy. Secondly, it is presented in two acts.

CONCLUSION

Apart from the four foremost philosophers already discussed, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch and Lucian (Greek writers) and Cicero, Petronius and Macrobius (Latin writers) are, to a lesser degree, great writers of the classical period. To summarise the classical period, this unit and module 2, one can safely say that Plato was not ignorant of the activist propensity of literature especially in relation to socio-political conditions. Due to that revolutionary slant, he banned literature in his ideal republic. Aristotle advances some general principles of literature particularly the dramatic genre and these principles moderate the construction of drama and drove criticism. Longinus and Horace, the former more, systematised personal observations built on close relationship with literature of all races, ages and climes. While Longinus proposes the

doctrine of sublimity, Horace advances the notion of decorum. Both made remarkable contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism.

SUMMARY

Module 2 Unit 4 works to help you identify/understand/explain the:

Historical background of an important classical theorist – Horace.

Nature, features and forms of literature as conceived by Horace.

Basic assumptions of Horace's theory of arts, especially the concept of decorum.

Areas of convergences and divergences within the views of the four classicist philosophers.

Contributions and limitations of the literary principles of Horace.

Indices for an objective analysis of literary texts guided by the concepts of Horace.

As we conclude Module 2 with this unit please be informed that the privileged attention it receives is because it constitutes the foundation of subsequent Modules and units. All the other theories derive their bearings from these as you will soon observe in subsequent units.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the nature, features and forms of poetry as conceived by Horace.

2. One of the fundamental views of Horace covers the functions of "natural talent" and "technical competence" in literary production. Examine this view and observe its rapport with similar views of other classical theorists treated in this module.

3. Explain Horace's concept of decorum in literary construction.

4. Undertake a comparative analysis of the presentation methods of Longinus and Horace and state the value of each identified style.

5. Analyse Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are Not to Blame* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, using Horace's principle literature.

6. Scholars agree that the contributions of the four chief classicists to the development of literary criticism can never be over-emphasised. Identify these contributions with special emphasis on Longinus and Horace.

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MODULE 3 UNIT 1 Literary Theory of Philip Sydney.

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36.0   Additions

    36.1   Key Passages

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1. 0   INTRODUCTION

This unit marks the beginning of Module 3**.** It is interested in the major post-classical theories of literature. This first unit introduces you to the conceptual statements of Sir Philip Sydney in relation to the nature and functions of literature. It opens by establishing briefly the background of Sydney's ideas. Then it identifies it the major concepts of Sydney's critical essay 'Án Apology for Poetry'. The unit goes ahead to note pages that contains some of the key passages of Sydney's logic in *Criticism: Major Statements*. Afterwards, it discusses Sydney's methods of presentation and evaluates their effectiveness. Moreover, the unit attempts to establish the significance of Sydney in the field of Literary Criticism based on his essay. For the sake of objectivity, this unit equally sifts out flaws of Sydney's argument. At the end, Unit 1 of Module 3 offers some guidelines towards the analysis of literary texts from Sydney's critical perspective.

The first unit of this Module, as you already know, in concerned with Philip Sydney's concept of literature. You are invited to read, understand and examine his views contained in our text, *Criticism: Major Statements*, edited by Charles Kaplan and William David. As you read, endeavour to identify the meeting points and departures between the theories of Sydney and the four major classical theorists already studied under this course. This means that Sydney's concept can hardly be studied in isolation. Apart from that, you are expected to classify his ideas into their proper critical orientation. This enables you to keep an eye on the linking threads of different periods and persuasions. Please pay attention to the content and technique of Sydney's essay. Let me also remind you again that this course includes theory and practice. As such you have to attempt an analysis of recognized literary texts based on the Sydney's theoretical standards. In a nut-shell, I invite you to a focused reading, creative interpretation and incisive analysis. The objectives of this unit are:

2. 0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Understand the background of Sydney's aesthetic theory and explain how his exposure and period contribute to the development of his propositions.

Discuss the major ideas of Sydney's thesis in 'An Apology for Poetry' and identify how each relates to the conceptual standpoints of the classical period.

Be conversant with a number of key statements of Sydney and note their implications.

Identify the significance of Sydney within Literary Criticism.

Discuss Sydney's presentation style and asses its impact.

Investigate the limitations of Sydney's artistic concepts.

Demonstrate an understanding of major factors to consider when analyzing a literary text from Sydney's view point.

3. 0   MAIN CONTENT

3. 1   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This historical background will help you understand the underpinnings of Sydney concepts. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) was a typical Elizabethan aristocrat and a Renaissance writer. The critic enjoyed a noble background, outstanding exposure and solid reputation. Sir Henry Sidney, the governor of Ireland, the powerful Earl of Leicester and King Philip II of Spain are respectively, his father, uncle and godfather. He was trained in Oxford University. Sydney travelled extensively and held several discussions with philosophers, theologians, monarchs and poets. He was also a distinguished, principled and erudite aristocrat. Sydney was a gallant soldier and a committed Christian of the Protestant persuasion. Most importantly, he was a renowned writer. Sydney's background had a profound influence on his theoretical propositions best represented by 'An Apology for Poesy' or 'Defence of Poesy'.

Though a great poet and critic, Philip Sydney is recognised more for his theoretical thoughts especially as contained in 'An Apology for Poetry'. The essay occupies a prominent position in

the consciousness of Western literary history for its views on literature. Philip Sydney's 'Defense of Poesy' is the only major work in the 16th century English literary history (M. H. Abrams). It is "the most important contribution to Renaissance literary theory" (Ahsan, 2011, p.1). There was a shift in the religious temperament of Sydney's society as it moves from Medieval to Renaissance period. The newer inclination sought for the functional value of all human endeavors and this placed literature at a disadvantaged position. The low status of literature in the Renaissance age motivated Sydney's concepts.

Sydney's essay was directly motivated by 'The School of Abuse' (1579) written by Stephen Gosson, a puritan Anglican minister. The text opened a salvo of attacks on arts, including literature, and adjudged it immoral and thus destructive. That piece of work was dedicated to Sydney, albeit without his approval. He therefore deemed it his moral responsibility to put up a defence to counter the debilitating effect of the essay on creative literature. Sydney's intellectual reaction was published under two titles – 'An Apology for Poetry' and 'The Defense of Poetry'. The first is better received. Sydney, in the essay, advances a vigorous defence of literature in the light of Gosson's attack. In addition, he contends with all the several scathing criticisms against literature since Plato's first accusations. His defence is manifest in his basic assumptions.

3. 2   BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Sydney's conceptual propositions could be segmented into three main areas. The first part deals with poetry. The second contains his response to the four charges against poetry. The last examines selected works of literature. Here we shall discuss these in the order in which they are identified. We then start with poetry.

3. 2. 1   POETRY

Sydney's essay pays attention to poetry as a discipline. He pontificates on the nature and characteristics of poetry. Again it caters for excellence and supremacy of poetry in relation to other disciplines. Then Sydney comments on the exalted position of poets. He goes further to classify three kinds of texts and the different genres of literature.

The first part of 'An Apology to Poetry' encapsulates Sydney's perception of literature in three points. First, he considers poetry as "the first light-giver to ignorance, the first nurse" whose milk nurtures other disciplines (102). Thus, literature is the best and first teacher. Secondly, he observes the presence of poetry in all human civilizations, including Greek, Italian and Roman. Additionally, Sydney locates the importance of the poet in his name which is 'prophet', among Romans and Italians, and 'creator', among the Greeks. To further buttress his point on the value of poetry he notes that Greek and Roman philosophers adopt rhyme, which is a poetic resource, in their writings.

The essay then goes further to present Sydney's definition of poetry as "an art of imitation … a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end, to teach and delight" (106). For Sydney, literature entails representation and imitation. However, his notion of imitation relates to the excellent world of ideas rather than the blatant world of nature. Poetry, according to him, is the art of inventing new world, a world better than the human world and even prose that does so is literature. In his terms, all verses are not poetry and all poetries are not verses.

3. 2. 1. 1   Types of Texts
The second part of Sidney's 'Apology to Poetr'" organises texts and literature into divisions and classes based on their theme and style. He initially separates three kinds of texts and later identifies seven genres of poetry. For text types he identifies Religious Texts, Philosophical Texts and Imitative Poetry. The Religious texts include certain identified books of the Bible. These are Davidic Psalms, the book of Job, Solomon's Song of Songs, the Hymns of Moses, etc. These, for him, functions to express joy and grant comfort as they "imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God" (106). The next is concerned with "matters philosophical" (107). Such treat moral, astronomical and historical subjects. The third is imitative poetry which he considers true poetry. Sydney's criterion is in poetry's intrinsic ability to educate and entertain in a way no other discipline could.

3. 2. 1 .2   Poetic Text

Sydney attends to his central thesis by making a comparison between Philosophy, History and Literature. In his estimation, Philosophy is flawed by its abstract and exclusive nature. It teaches

virtue by "certain abstract considerations" (109). Though it exploits verse, it only teaches but cannot delight. History is also limited by its penchant for "particular truth of things" (110). It deals with specifics and lacks universality, creativity and is devoid of imagination and that makes its example "a less fruitful doctrine" (110). Literature, on the other hand "couplet the general notion with the particular example" and produces "a perfect picture" (110). It is "a speaking picture" which illuminates that made obscure by Philosophy (110). It dramatises universal truth in simpler, symbolic, delightful and comprehensible manner and is thus a more effective teacher of virtue. Poetry teaches virtue in its invented ideal world by combining example and percept both separately offered by Philosophy and History. In Sydney's estimation, literature is pleasing unlike Philosophy and deals with universality in a way History cannot. Furthermore, Literature has a moral purpose which Science lacks and encourages human integrity which Law fails to do. Sydney, through this logic, establishes the superiority of literature in relation to other disciplines. For him that is what makes poetry an excellent teacher and the oldest of all.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 1

Draw a link between Sydney's background and his statements on poetry, types of texts and the effectiveness of a literary piece.

Sydney further explains that poetry is distinguishable from other types of writing not on the basis of its delivery in rhyme and verse but by its content of pictures of virtues and vices in order to teach and delight. It goes beyond mirroring nature but refines, makes it "speaking picture" (110) to teach and delight better. The worth of poetry for him is a function of what it communicates and it is conceived as a more effective method of communication. For him literature alone, by its nature, has the capacity to reinvent an ideal world for the development of humanity.   It is thus didactic and a good literature elicits a didactic impact on his audience.

At this point Sydney identifies the factors that promote good poetry capable of eliciting desired impact. In this way he advances his requirements for assessing a good work of literature. For Sydney, a good literary piece should be judged on its capacity to elicit four identifiable moral effects on the audience. These are: "purifying of wit … enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit which commonly we call learning …" (108). In order to

'purify the wit', literature must offer the reader a new and different image of the world from a given perspective and serve as an exclusive medium of concise knowledge. 'Memories' acquired in these fictional texts most provide a necessary enriching universal standard between different persons in a way that literary models assume the position of benchmarks capable of being easily accessed by people. Building upon the first two works, a good literature should again supply sufficient and essential framework for considering, making, challenging and reassessing 'moral judgments' both at the personal and group levels. This third factor works on the bases of the first two factors. Furthermore, literature ought to increase the audience's language skills in relation to structure, style and form and thus 'enlarge the conceit'. It naturally introduces the reader, from one age to the next, to a novel method of expression and descriptions. In a nutshell, a good poetry exhibit adequate knowledge content and moral purpose. It also provides a universal standard and enhances the audience's language skill. Such literature, in Sydney's calculation, is realisable in different genres based on theme and style.

3.2.1.3   Genres of Literature

 In the next segment Sydney places the creative poetry into different classes based on theme and form. He identifies the most important of these genres as: heroic, lyric, tragedy, comedy, satire, iambic, elegy and pastoral. Each of these classes, for Sydney, works to achieve a definite moral effect on the audience. Each teaches and delights in a given way and is therefore useful and appeals to a class of audience. Tragic and comic texts differ in content while iambic departs from lyric in form. Epic deals with the grand and in a dignified manner. The lyric pleasantly praises that which deserves praises. The pastoral poetry functions to advance useful remarks on current occurrences of human existence. Elegy engages in gentle sympathy for human limitations. Satire pleasantly ridicules human folly while tragedy teaches the noble to moderate their desires and comedy comforts the lowly. Consequently tragedy caters for the noble and comedy for the lowly. In addition, Sydney observes that some poetries "have coupled together two or three kinds", for instance, the tragical and comical produce "tragic-comical" texts (116). In his terms, the heroical is "is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry … (which) teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth" (119). Thus, he chooses Epic as the best form because it moves the audience to be brave and patriotic in its depiction of heroic deeds.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 2

Analyse how Achebe's novel use of the English language in his creative works, especially *Things Fall Apart*, represents new method of expression and descriptions. Do this based on Sydney's concept of enlarging of conceit.

3.2.2 DEFENCE

Sydney goes further to list Gosson's specific charges and presents his defence accordingly. The first charge is that Poetry is a waste of time and corrupts the mind. In Sydney's counter view, Poetry is the best source of knowledge and a humanizing agent based on its capacity to simultaneously teach and delight. He holds up the ancient Greek society which reveres poets as a model for the exalted position of poets arising from their responsibility. The second charge states that Poetry is the mother of lies. Sidney responds that poets never lay claim to truth as literature is fiction and as such cannot be accused of telling lies. He adds that poetry rather deals with poetic truths which are ideal and universal and cannot be described as lies.

The third allegation holds that Poetry is the nurse of abuse. Sidney's rebuttal hinges on his idea that poetry, like all human construction, holds the good and the bad. He adds that poetry does not abuse people rather people abuse poetry. He notes that other disciplines like Philosophy and History are greater sources of abuse than poetry because they recount violence, bloodshed battles, and so on. Poetry evades all these and thus sustains decency and harmony even as it disseminates knowledge.

The last of the indictment is that Plato banishes poets from his republic. Sydney corrects this view by noting that Plato advocates that mediocre poets, whose works could not effectively promote good education for the youth, be banished from his ideal republic. He calls attention to Plato's poetic rendition of his philosophical dialogues. Sydney interprets Plato's exploitation of literary resources as an evidence of his support for poetry.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 3

Which of the Gosson's charges do you consider the most damaging to literature and why?

3. 2. 3   CRITICISM

Sydney engages in a critical interpretation on the state of the literature of his period. He deals with language, figures of speech, figures of sound and vernacular using identified works. Sydney's criticism observes the violation of the rules of tragedy, as instituted by Aristotle in the 4[th] century BC, by playwrights of his 16[th] century. These are the rules of the three unities of time, place and action commonly ignored by writers including Shakespeare, the major artist of that period. The three unities of time, place and action, purity of forms (tragedy and comedy), according to Sydney, should remain the standard in creativity**.** The then recently innovated tragic-comedy does not in any way satisfy his poetic taste. Meanwhile, the non-rhyme classical metre verse meets his creative requirements.

In addition, he flays works that lack lucid significance and praises those that meet his standard. He pontificates on Knowledge and focuses on the utility of poetry in relation to other subjects. That poetry which encapsulates knowledge and advances good is the excellent poetry. In this he identifies a particular ingredient that must be present for a writing to be considered good poetry.

3.2.4   Language

Moreover, Sydney's hypothesis includes his insistence that the indigenous language (English), though "a mingled language", be used in literature as it is "capable of any exercising of it" (133). He adds that for effective communication, the English language, in its simplicity, is comparable to any other, including Greek and Latin. In relation to Italian, Dutch, French and Spanish, Sydney finds his English language free from blemishes. He submits that "our tongue (English) is most fit to honour Poesy and to be honoured by Poesy" (134).

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 4

How will you asses Sydney' insistence on the classical conventions of drama?

4.0   Additional Points

4.1   KEY PASSAGES

Listed below are some key passages that encapsulate the major statements of Sydney's 'A Defence of Poetry' already discussed above.

1. Page 102 and 120 – fundamental position of Literature.
2. Page 104 and 105 – venerable names of the poet.
3. Page 105 – the concept of creative imitation.
4. Page 106 – definition of Poetry and three kinds of texts.
5. Page 107 – nature and functions of literature and genres of literature
6. Page 107 – features of a poetic text.
7. Pages 109-111 – the excellent teaching capacity of literature in comparison to other disciplines.
8. Page 116 – themes and styles of different genres of poetry.
9. Page 121 – charges against literature and Sydney's defence.
10. Page 129 – literary criticism.
11. Page 133 – indigenous language in creativity.

There are still other passages which include major views and memorable statements but are not included in this lecture note. You need to identify them for a more objective and comprehensive analysis of 'A Defence of Poesy'.

4. 2.   INTERPRETATION

This part examines Sydney's theoretical statements. The comments will be more beneficial if you have already read the text of the essay giving special attention to the key passages. Of course you already know that the essay under study represents Sydney's intellectual attempt at positioning literature within the central structures of his aristocratic milieu. This is in the face of rising antagonism against literature represented by Gosson's acerbic attack on literature. His position exhibits his interest in both creative and national characters of his period as manifest in

all the sections of the essay. This segment is equally divided into three major parts – Poetry, Defence and Criticism.

POETRY

Here we analyse Sydney's views on nature and function of literature, texts and literary genres and scholarly disciplines. We also explore Sydney's relationship with the major classical theorists. The scholar's definition of literature as "a speaking picture" illustrates his idea of literature as imitation but that which involves creativity. In other words, literature, in Sydney's term, is an art of imitation with a definite educational and entertainment purpose. Sydney's dominant interest is the moral value of a literary text on the audience. Thematic concern is for him more important than structural aspects of a work. His logic is thus mainly burdened with the impact of literature on the reader. According to Stephen Conway "the argument Sidney presents and develops is built around the assumption that literature has the capacity to teach most effectively and to demonstrate virtue" (1995, p. 1).

For Sydney, literature goes beyond verse and embraces prose but that prose is the type that creates novel things. Under Sydney's concept, creative imitation functions by the employment of the poet's imaginative capacity and poetic resources. He perceives poets as 'makers' and 'creators'. His position thus provides for the concept of poetic justice in creative writing. His argument advocates for the representation of ideal situations which demonstrates punishment of evil and reward for good. It is therefore moralistic in its advocacy that literature should exhibit universal terms of reference for human edification.

You must have noted that aspects of the classical thoughts of Plato, Aristotle and Horace are reflected in Sydney's statements. You still remember Aristotle's concept of imitation. Sydney's definition reaffirms Aristotle's view that poetry is an act of imitation. There are therefore points of convergences between the Sydney and Aristotle's concepts of literatures. However, scholars like Paul reminds us that Sydney's concept of poetry "is different" from Aristotle's whom he professes to trail (1). In Sydney's idea, poetry is an art of imitation conceived for a definite aim – to teach and delight. It involves originality and construction of an ideal world for the purpose of

instruction and entertainment. While Aristotle considers human action more vital, Sydney sees nature as more essential. Do you observe how Sydney extends Aristotle's view? Nevertheless, "the reference to Aristotle shows that this man was still influential" (Khamis, 2012, p. 1). In fact, earlier critical opinions hold that Sydney's work is an imitation of Aristotle's and as such is devoid of originality. However, later critical comments observe some differences in the theoretical ideas of both scholars. Thus, Strozier observes that "the uniqueness of the *Apology* was often … recognized by critics" (1972, p. 49). Please bear in mind that under Sydney's theory, the ultimate aim of literature, as an art form, is to teach and to delight. His identification of the twin function of literature is a very central idea expressed in this essay. It communicates the functional and entertainment values of literature. The concept of art as educative and entertaining is in tandem with the Renaissance inclination.

Sydney's classification of literature as an art with a function to teach and delight reechoes not only Aristotle's but also Horace's aesthetic principle. Kaplan and Anderson observe that his "formal definition of poetry … echoes Horace's" (2000, p. 101). In addition, Ahsan reminds us that the view of literature as a teaching and entertaining art "dates back to Horace" (2011, p. 1). However, Sydney accords more importance to the didactic essence of literature than the Horatian concept in his insistence that poetry must work for human civilization. His theory thus "reflects a humanistic worldview" (Lyndsays Scouthen, 1). Sydney and Horace are the kingpins of pragmatic theory. Horace, on the other hand, appears more pragmatic than Sydney who is idealistic.

Sydney's view is a Neo-Platonic principle. For him the ideal image displayed by poetry should ultimately work towards refinement and perfection of the degenerate human soul. Literature should work towards inculcating virtue (Paul, 2010, p. 1). For both Plato and Sidney, close communion with the ideal world advanced by literature facilitates virtuous living. The attention to virtue brings a Christian dimension to scholarship. Plato's chief objection to poetry is in Sydney's scholarship answered in full. Sydney again departs from Plato on the concept of imitation. Sydney assigns the role of a maker to the poet as against Plato's view of the artist as a servile copier of nature. For Sydney, poetry is thrice removed from the ideal, for Sydney poetry exploits the world of form and ideal in the creation of utopia for the promotion of virtue. The

implication is that Sydney's thesis on imitation is a revision and regeneration of Plato's stance. Please observe that imitation begins with Plato and ends with Sydney.

You can say the same about Plato and Horace. Have you observed how Sydney exploits the respective ideas of Plato, Aristotle and to a lesser degree, Horace, albeit differently? Aristotle provides a compatible foundation for his logic while Plato supplies a dissenting point of view. You cannot but agree that both exert noticeable influences on Sydney. Again, following Aristotle, Sydney compares literature with other disciplines – History and Philosophy. Both scholars respectively hold that poetry deals with universality rather than particularity. In the words of Conway, Sidney positions literature in "a hierarchical relationship with all other forms of learning; literature inhabits the highest and most influential tier" (1995, p. 1). The implication is that compared to both Philosophy and History, literature is a more excellent teacher. In this comparison Sidney establishes a key aspect of his defense, which is his idea of the position of literature within the scholarship of his periods.

In addition, Sydney, following Ariostotle, Longinus and Horace, classify as poetry all works realizable through linguistic artistry. In instituting standards for the construction of good poetry, Sydney pontificates on the nature of literature to exploit language in new ways. His view that Literature stretches the borders of language demanding it to cater for wider and abstract investigations for the wellbeing of man is very perceptive. Use of language is a dominant factor in literatures of regions, like Africa, where English is used as a second language. Nigerian literatures like *Death and the King's Horseman* (drama), *Roses and Bullets* (fiction) and 'A Song for Ajegunle' (poetry) by Soyinka, Adimora-Ezeigbo and Osundare, individually, demonstrate Sydney's thesis in their adroit manipulation of the English language. You should observe that language constitutes a major area of concern for the Renaissance critic, Sydney, in relation to use of Latin or vernacular in literary creativity. Renaissance is a typical aristocratic age and thus emphasised decorum. The period was chiefly characterised by individualism and worldliness as it witnessed the revitalization of classical Greek civilization.

Sydney's descriptions of literary genres and classification of texts also bear the identity of his age and exposure. In that society, each genre of literature attended to a particular class of people. Tragedy was considered the best genre because it features noble characters while epic was usually employed in the treatment of national concerns. Tragedy was reserved to teach rulers

moderation while comedy comforted the commons and epic is deployed to teach patriotism, mostly for warriors. Lyric poetry praised patrons of literature. His classification of different texts illustrates his knowledge of the Bible, Philosophy and Literature. Sydney was a Christian who wrote for a Christian audience. Sydney's in-depth knowledge serves as a lucid testimony of his background and exposure and prepared him to offer a potent defence against incessant attacks on literature.

DEFENCE

Sydney's contribution to the development of English Literary Criticism derives mainly from his defence of literature as it battles against several scholarly attacks beginning from Plato's. Sidney's direct refutation of the accusations against poetry is the core of "A Defence of Poetry" (Khamis, 2012, p. 5). If you study the accusation against poetry, as listed in Sydney's essay, you will discover that the first criticism interrogates the functional and moral benefits of poetry. Did you observe how Sydney invalidates that argument? He first projects the utilitarian essence of poetry as a pleasant instructor. Secondly, he displays poetry as a civilizing agent and this caters for its moral content. Sydney, in addition, drags the revered name of the poet into his logic to buttress his points. One thing this defence underscores is the didactic dimension of literature as an art form.

The second criticism is described by Richard Clark as "an epistemological attack" (2005, p. 2). You still remember that poetry is termed 'mother of all lies' under this accusation. The implication is that the veracity of poetic content is questioned again after Plato's first assault. Sydney's defence stresses the nature of poetry as fiction. For him it deals with universal truths; probability rather than actuality. It never seeks to record facts. You should observe how this response illustrates the nature of literature as well as the mimetic approach in creative writing. The third accusation is considered by some critics as "the most serious." Sydney did not totally refute this claim rather he admits that it has some merits. Sidney agrees that literature, like any other discipline, can and has undergone some forms of abuses. However, he insists that literature is a medium with the maximum prospect for the good. It is pragmatic and didactic and has some

moral benefits in relation to promoting value and eliminating the repulsive. Sydney's position exhibits objectivity and a comprehension of man's capacity for both evil and good.

In his answer to the fourth charge that Plato banishes poetry from his Republic, Sydney employs two streams of logic. The first is the didactic function of literature and the second is its primacy in relation to Philosophy and History as an effective instructor. To set the distorted records right, Sydney identifies a particular class of poets who Plato seeks to banish based on the impact of their poetry on the Athenian youth. He equally presents Plato as a practical supporter of poetry in his extensive exploitation of poetic resources in his Socratic dialogue.

CRITICISM

'An Apology of Poetry' ends with literary criticism. It exhibits Sydney's examination of selected writings available to his period. Sydney's analysis displays an unmasked approval of Renaissance Italian writers personified by Boccaccio, Dante and Petrarch, all renowned creative writers. He illustrates aversion for the then recently developed tragi-comedy. Sidney insists on the observance of the unities of time, place and action in English drama. His submission is influenced by the dearth of great dramatic works in English before his time. Elizabethan playwrights like Ben Jonson wrote Romantic tragedies that exhibit incongruent elements. Such plays exhibit the tendency to disregard unities and mix sadness and joy after the medieval convention. In addition, Abram notes that Shakespeare's tragedies, in conformity with other Elizabethan tragedies, "depart radically from Aristotle's paradigm" by injecting comic relief which results in a "mixed mode" – tragic-comedy (1999, p. 333). Sydney posits that Renaissance plays should conform to classical conventions and his view reopens the ancient dispute on the character of tragedy and comedy. He obviously admires the classical and considers the ancient tradition a veritable standard of literary creativity.

Note that Sydney's creative process entails imitation of nature but involves creativity. The impact of literature for him should stretch across the pleasurable and educational. Then a good poetic text must inculcate pictures of virtues and vices to encourage the audience choose the good and reject the not-so-good for the humanization of the society.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 5

Undertake your own analysis of the key ideas of Sydney's argument guided by what you have learnt so far.

4.3   METHOD

Philip Sydney in 'An Apology for Poetry' employs a number of methods to present his argument. The essay (is):

1. Presented in the structure of oratory and rhetorics and in sections.
2.   Delivered in a practical, ardent and animated style.
3. Develops a number of classifications and divisions.
4. Exploits the comparative method.
5. Employs a lot of examples.
6. Uses several repetitions and elaborations.
7. Delivered in an ironic tone.
8. Adopts a hyperbolic approach.
9. Employs figurative language

Sidney's argument is presented in many sections and subsections. For instance his defence against Cossen's four count charges appears in section two of the essay. This method helps the reader to follow the different parts of his logic and thus his focus. In addition, the essay ignore "the methodical order of a treatise" … and rather adopts "the structure of a classical oration" (Ahsan, 2011, p. 1). That is why it has a standard seven parts: exordium (The poet, poetry), proposition (Three kinds of poet), division (Poetry, philosophy, history), examination (Poetic types), refutation (Answers to charges against poetry), digression (Poetry in England) and peroration (Conclusion). Sydney's style of oratory and rhetorics is the defining factor of the Renaissance perfect gentleman.

Sydney's logic is encapsulated in a personal practical, ardent and animated style. He avoids the abstract method which characterizes intellectual exercise of this sort. For instance, he writes: "it is, I say again, not the fault of the art…"; "certainly, even our savior Christ …" (111); the

philosopher showeth you the way ...” (114). Sydney's argument aims beyond an esoteric scholarly logic. Moreover, he draws a lot of materials from Greek and Roman literary principles and combines these to express his view.   He also exploits biblical characters, incidents and parables, including the account of Abraham sacrificing his son, Isaac, David killing Goliath and Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, (123 and 111), to validate his position. Sydney proves his points in a very passionate and energetic style. All these make it easier for the reader, including you, to comprehend his thoughts.

Another method exploited by Sydney is division and classification. This enables him to place different items into appropriate categories in order to draw out their respective essential features. In this essay, he organizes texts and literature by their themes and forms to discuss each adequately. In discussing the various forms, "Sidney develops a series of stylistic, structural, and thematic categories … arranged hierarchically" (Conway, 1995, p. 3). For instance, he first classifies texts into three kinds of texts (Religious Texts, Philosophical Texts and Imitative Poetry). Again, Sydney identifies seven genres of poetry (heroic, lyric, tragedy, comedy, satire, iambic, elegy and pastoral). This style enables him to move from general to specific and organize his thoughts in a way that makes his essay coherent and his ideas easy to comprehend. Thus, Sidney does not write randomly. He presents his arguments in a very organized manner and his logic displays erudition and the essay is well written. This method is effective because it allows you to identify what he holds more important and why and thus facilitates an objective analysis of his views.

One method you cannot fail to observe in Sydney's essay is the comparative method. Observe his comparative analysis of English, Greek, Latin, Italian, Dutch French and Spanish languages, in an attempt to establish the value of the English language as the best language for literary creativity. Again, I guess you find his comparison of disciplines very insightful. He draws out the focus of the different disciplines in a manner that illustrates the specific area of concentration of each within scholarship. This helps him to establish his thesis on the supremacy and thus the significance of literature. Again, he employs the technique of contrast to drive home his point. For example, to call attention to the essence of literature he defines it as: "Not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminate, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing

man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished but honoured by Plato" (127). In these lines Sydney relays what literature is not as well as what it is by juxtaposing what is and what is not. This technique enables the reader to understand his meaning.

Furthermore, 'An Apology of Poetry' makes extensive use of examples, repetitions and elaborations. For example, Sydney repeats the Greek idea of the poet as a maker in pages 120 and 105. Then he gives much time and space to elaborate his submission that literature is superior to philosophy and History. Khamis notes that Sydney "repeats himself" and employs the technique of "rementioning the ideas" to connect different aspects of his rather long essay (2012, p. 1; 4). He also observes the entertaining value of this style. I hope you also consider the treatise entertaining even as you interpret Sydney's thoughts. Again, each idea he advances, Sydney elaborates and offers several examples to explicate the idea. These twin-method functions to place emphasis on important aspects of his work and they facilitate a better comprehension of his ideas.

Moreover, Sydney's literary concept is couched in figurative language. He uses a lot images, symbols, hyperbolic statements, personifications, ironies and so on to communicate his thoughts. For instance the two following sentences exhibit the use of personification. Plautarch "trimmeth both (Philosophy and History) their garments with guards of Poesy" (127). Poecy must not be drawn by the ears, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead" (128). He defines literature in hyperbolic terms as the "first light-giver of ignorance, and the first nurse, whose milk enables them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledge" (102). The symbol of light illustrates his perception of literature as an illuminating art. The images of nurse and milk again depict his assignment of a motherly role to creative writing in relation to other fields. Sydney's notion appears a bit exaggerated. Thus, Adepitan (1991, p. 142) submits that Sydney's "pronouncements are underlined, in the main, by an unmistakable hyperbolic tone …" He also exploits a lot of rhetoric questions to illustrate his position. For instance he asks: "Do we not see the skill of Physic … being abused …? Does not knowledge of law … grow the crooked fosterer of horrible injuries?

Again, Sydney engages in practical criticism. He examines selected texts from the writings of Chaucer, Dante, Virgil in a bid to display what makes a good literature. In all, Sydney supplies necessary facts and figures, exhibits erudition, is illustrative and organiSed. His ideas are deep and insightful and his use of language is effective. He adopts the method of nationalism, sentimentality and subjectivity. His idea is couched in rigorous argument in a bid to prove the importance of poetry in relation to other disciplines.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 6

Do you consider Sydney's method effective? If so, why? If not, why?

4.4   SIGNIFICANCE

Philip Sydney's significance derives from his contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism on the strength of the essay, "An Apology for Poetry." In the words of Ahsan (2011, p. 1) a great deal of Sidney's "literary fame" revolves around "An Apology for Poetry" which is recognized as one of the most significant early conceptual essays in literary criticism present in English literary history. "An Apology for Poetry" has consequently gained a very important place for Sydney amid scholars and critics. This tells you that Sydney's theoretical essay we have been discussing under this unit represents a very important development in literary criticism. Sydney's conceptual treatise is necessary for two major reasons. First it defends poetry against puritan attacks and secondly it responds to Plato's earlier charges. You must understand that the relevance of the essay lies in its call for the improvement of poetry through the adoption of the right approach to literary creativity. His attempt goes beyond underscoring the importance of poetry into establishing the universal essence of the art. These are broad dynamics which make 'An Apology for Poesy' significant.

Sydney's essay is very significant because it serves as a sole factor in the reinstitution of literary criticism in the Renaissance period. Sydney is identified as the 'single voice' that regenerated

literary criticism in the Renaissance period. I am sure you still recollect that the medieval period was not so kind to literary criticism. That will enable you appreciate the worth of Sydney's essay. Adepitan stresses this point further in his observation that Sydney's treatise marked "a crucial bridge between literary thought, antiquity and the beginning of literary criticism in Renaissance England" (1991, p. 142-3). In addition, another scholar, Tarvin, notes that with 'An Apology for Poesy', Sydney practically "inaugurated modern English literary criticism" (N. D. 1). Do we need to add anything else here? Of course not!

Moreover, Sydney's conceptual work, 'An Apology for Poesy', presents and documents for posterity the character of Renaissance literary thoughts, standards of practice and criticism. In addition, his adoption of the typical seven part classical oration method preserves that scholarly method in practice. Furthermore, in the essay under study, Sydney provides new insights to the ancient Greek critical tendencies, especially on the nature and functions of literature. He exploits the views of Plato, Aristotle and Horace but breathes some fresh air into these views. By so doing, Sydney supplies novel perspectives to literary production and consumption. His idea of imitation buttresses this point sufficiently. You may examine that part again so as to discover the validity of this point.

 Philip Sidney's concept exercises a lot of influence across the different periods of the history of English literary criticism. Sydney's treatise has a noticeable influence on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, the former more. In addition, Percy Bysshe Shelley's essay, 'The Defence of Poetry', also bears deep marks of Sydney's theoretical thoughts.

Sidney's responses to Cosson's allegations, you must have noted, underscore nature and functions of literature, especially its ennobling role, in human society. The essay thus locates the legitimacy and necessity of literature, and indeed arts. On this basis, it serves as a motivation, not just for creative writers, but equally for its consumers and even patrons. It is for this reason that Conway (1995, p. 4) observe that the essay has developed into the "mainstay of the supporters of a liberal arts education." Furthermore, Sidney's essay, by its critical examination of a number of texts based on classical literary convention, provides a major example of literary analysis. Thus, apology represents the "first serious attempt to apply the classical rules to English poetry", according to Paul (2010, p. 1). This illustrates the significance of the last section of the work, which deals in criticism of literary texts.

Let us not forget that Sydney was the first theorist to advocate the use of indigenous language in literary production. This is a very important contribution especially in this century when many Nigerian languages face the danger of extinction. Language is preserved and developed by its use in literary production. For the above reasons and more, 'An Apology for Poetry' is truly a very important essay. It has made significant contributions to the development of literary theorising and criticism in English literary history. It is an essay any serious student cannot afford to ignore. Nevertheless, this treatise is not without flaws.

4.5   LIMITATION

Have you noticed that Sydney's argument contains a number of blemishes in substance and style? In content, the flaws emanate from his attempt to elucidate the functions and status of literature in order to counter the negative portrayal of literature. First, his view that literature creates a perfect world for the eventual redemption of the human soul is idealistic. It also shifts his argument into the metaphysical unobservable realm.

Next, Sydney seems to exaggerate the position of literature in relation to other disciplines. However, his conscious exaggeration is a necessary and appropriate conceptual approach for tackling the very poor image of literature in the Renaissance period. Sydney's defence exhibits a high level of sentimentality which tends to make his conclusions less objective and detracts a lot of force from his arguments.

On the part of method, Sydney tends to engage in a lot of unnecessarily repetition which contributes little to the intensity of his argument. He strives a little too much to express his position and his classifications hardly advance his overall logic. What do you have to say about his examination of English literature? Lengthy and somehow tiresome! You are not alone. It appears long and somehow boring. As if that is not enough, Sydney, in that part, appears to be more interested in identifying flaws contained in English literature. This makes him seem like a typical faultfinder. Related to the last is his insistence on the observance of classical rules in poetic construction. His approach here could be classified as rigid and detrimental to innovation. His view is thus anathema to the inquisitive and radical spirit of artistic creativity.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

The flaws maintained by Sydney's logic reduce the potency of 'An Apology for Poetry'. Validate or refute this statement. Ensure that you include copious evidence to validate your position.

4.6   APPLICATION

For you to utilize Sydney's aesthetic principles in your textual analyses you must be conscious of certain factors. You have to:

Identify indicators of imitation without ignoring the inclusion of creativity in terms of originality. This entails literary realization of an idyllic world.

Evaluate the accomplishment of work based on its impact on the audience. Here the issue revolves around how a text employs universal examples and precepts in order to teach and delight and ultimately move men to choose virtue and shun vice. In other words, the moral purpose and didacticism are to be considered.

Appraise a text under examination on the basis of four identifiable moral effects propagated by Sydney. That is how the text purifies the wit, enriches memory, enables judgment and enlarges conceit.

Generally interrogate the text in relation to how it recapitulates knowledge and advances good.

Determine the genre of the text under analysis and show preference for epic texts.

Consider a dramatic text in terms of how it adapts to classical stipulations, especially of Five-Acts and purity of Tragic and Comic forms. From this perspective, a critic should note that the Elizabethan tragi-comedy, *Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare) violates dramatic principles of purity of genre. In the same manner, Chris Anyokwu's *Homecoming*, a contemporary African drama presented in ten movements, repudiates the 5-Acts dramatic prescription.

5.0   CONCLUSION

In Module 3 Unit 1 of ENG815, Philip Sydney's definition, classification, defence, critique of literary texts and suggestions are discussed in details. Please do not forget that the treatise is a defence against moralistic or theoretical assaults on poetry. Sydney's argument, as such, manifests epistemological, philosophical and moralistic tendencies. It deals with the nature, character, status and genres of poetry. Lastly, the essay engages in analysis of literary texts. Sydney's central thesis revolves around the essential pragmatic and didactic functions of literature. Sydney's significance relies more on his intellectual accomplishment through 'An Apology for Poetry' which is not however devoid of recognisable defects. Philip Sydney's theoretical essay is indeed a traditional extrinsic form which adopts a mimetic and pragmatic approach of criticism. In substance and style, 'An Apology for Poetry' constitutes an intellectual gesture of great significance in English literary history.

6.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The background of Philip Sydney's 'An Apology for Poetry' as a veritable representative of Renaissance literary theorizing and criticism.

Basic Assumptions of Sydney's philosophical treatise in relation to literary production and consumption.

Some of the most important passages in Sydney's argument and his methods of presentation.

Contributions and inadequacies of Sydney's conceptual ideas.

Suggestions towards an application of Sydney's principles in textual analysis.

7.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGINMENT

1. Account for the contributions of Philip Sydney's exposure and demands of his period to 'An Apology for Poetry'.

2. "Poesy therefore is an art of imitation … that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and to delight." Examine this statement as major aspect of Sydney's basic assumption in 'An Apology for Poetry'.

3. The essay we have studied in this unit is alternatively titled 'A Defence of Poesy'. Discuss this essay as a direct and remote defence against various attacks on literature.

4. Stephen Cowen holds that in discussing the various forms, "Sidney develops a series of stylistic, structural, and thematic categories … arranged hierarchically" (3). Bearing this in mind, comment on Sydney's method of presentation.

5. Undertake a critical analysis of Sydney's significance within the scope of English literary History.

8.0   BIBLIOGRAPHY/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 3 Unit 2   JOHN DRYDEN'S ARTISTIC CONCEPTS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Module 3 Unit 2 speaks for the Neo-classical literary principles through the conceptual statements of John Dryden in 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy'. The choice of Dryden, in this context, is based on his remarkable contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism from the perspective of drama. In this unit, you shall study in details Dryden's concept of the nature and functions of literature. The first part of this unit exposes you to the backdrop of Dryden's essay and this serves as a base for the main discussions. Under the Main Content, you will study Dryden's basic assumptions in relation to the content and form of literature as presented from regional and epochal dimensions. So his views on English and French as well as Ancient and Modern conventions in drama will engage our attention here. Some of the passages in which Dryden's key ideas are expressed are also noted. This helps you pay special attention to certain aspects of the essay. The passages are drawn from the recommended text; *Criticism*: *Major Statements*. Next on our agenda will be to interpret Dryden's postulations already identified and summarized under the previous sub-topics. Here scholarly analyses are utilized to aid understanding. Furthermore, you will have to study Dryden's method of presentation in order to objectively appraise its appropriateness and efficacy. Then the significance of the theorist within the scope of literary studies shall be examined as well as the inadequacies of his concepts. Both will facilitate your conclusions. Before the end of this unit, you are presented with a number of suggestions that will help you critique a literary text on the basis of Dryden's artistic principles.

Can you identify your role in all these? Certainly, you have to devote adequate attention to Dryden's treatise, 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy'. This is because apart from reading and understanding the essay, you also need to analyze and evaluate its content. That is not all. As a literary student, you should also be concerned with his style. Secondly, you have to identify convergences and divergences of ideas between this essay and others you have studied previously in this course. Moreover, you should establish the critical approaches adopted by this essay. Lastly, because ENG815 is interested in both theory and practice, it is important that you attempt a critical analysis of given classic texts guided by Dryden's theoretical compass. You

will also meet a number of self-assessment exercises in the body of this unit and a tutor-marked assignment towards the end. Please do not ignore these. They are designed to help you test your understanding of the essay. All these are geared towards helping you achieve the objectives of this unit.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you will:

Become familiar with the defining characteristics of the Neo-classical period of English literary history.

Understand the philosophy of John Dryden on the content and form of drama as propagated in 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy'.

Identify essential points of relationships between Dryden's essay and previously-studied conceptual treatises.

Effectively discuss Dryden's presentation technique without ignoring how they facilitate his advancement of his conceptual thoughts.

Evaluate the significance of John Dryden in Literary Studies on the basis of 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy'.

Engage in a critical study of at least two dramatic texts of different ages and regions guided by Dryden's concept.

3. 0   MAIN CONTENT

3. 1   BACKGROUND

The Neo-classical period of Dryden was interested in "correctness" rather than "effectiveness" of a literary work unlike the Renaissance period which contends with language use. The Newtonian scholarship and Mathematics which positions knowledge and reason are largely responsible for this tendency. That is why that period is called the age of reason because then intellect and

didactism became more attractive than emotions. The age celebrated restraint, conventions, order, and logic. In criticism decorum, polish, elegance and accuracy of form represent the basic factors of consideration. Boileau, the French critic, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson and John Dryden occupy "the centre of the European neo-classical criticism" (Anyadike, 2001, p. 311). However, the period is alternatively known as the Age of Dryden and that establishes the influence of the theorist in literary history. Dryden's critical work, 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' (1668), epitomizes the Neo-classical criticism according to Nwahunanya (1988, p. 193). Dilip Barad calls it "Dryden's mature thoughts of literary criticism" (2012, p. 1). 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' is the most recognised critical essay of John Dryden. You can now understand why Dryden's conceptual idea as postulated in that essay is selected here to represent the Neo-classical age.

John Dryden (1631 – 1700) was a Cambridge Scholar whose sympathy was with the puritans in their anti-monarchical stance. He was a prominent English dramatist, a poet writer and most importantly a reputable critic. Most of his critical works, including 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy', appear as prefaces in his creative publications. This particular essay is specifically interested in the dramatic genre of literature. In it Dryden makes an attempt at establishing drama as a crucial and dynamic aspect of literature as is observable in his basic assumptions.

3. 2   BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' exhibits four critical perspectives presented by four characters – Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius and Neander. The four critical perspectives represent Ancient versus Modern drama and French versus English varieties. The issues on the front burner are nature and functions of drama as well as conformity or otherwise to established regulations. Hence the three unities, action and narrative, tragi-comedy, rhyme and blank verse are all given unequal considerations in each of the four aspects of Dryden's theory of drama.

Dryden's essay is expressly interested in the drama. The stated primary aim is "to vindicate the honour of our English writers" from the unfair attacks of those who prefer their French counterparts (137). This illustrates Dryden's chief concern in the essay under study in this unit. Dryden further postulates, through Lisideius, that drama should be a "just and lively image of

human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind" (141). In this Dryden advances a definition of drama, as a literary genre. Each of the four debaters advance an interpretation of this definition thereby suggesting the way in which drama should imitate nature. Crites sets the ball rolling and speaks for Ancient drama.

3. 2. 1 Ancient Drama

The argument of the essay is initiated by Crites who "spoke on behalf of the Ancients" (141). He thus represents the classical perspective of Dryden's literary theory. Crites central thesis is the merits of the ancients and inadequacies of the moderns. He argues on bad writing, imitation, artistic promotion, the three unities and language. He initially expresses his unmasked aversion for two poets. His judgment is based on the homogeneity of style and content, lack of passion and imagination as well as ineffective use of language.

The focal point of Crites argument is that the ancient drama possesses universal and eternal reality that is yet to be matched by the modern practitioners. Crites starts by tracing the invention and development of the drama to Thepsis in the ancient Greece. To establish the superiority of the ancients, Crites identifies their achievements. The establishment of the fundamental conventions and models for dramatic construction both in content and form is one of such. For him the classical dramatists were "faithful imitators and wise observers" of nature and their works are "perfect resemblance" of that nature (142). That makes the ancient plots more faithful to nature. On the other hand, Crites finds that their modern successors lack this spirit of patient observation and so thus they render "monstrous and disfigured" images of nature (142). For this, Crites terms them "ill copiers" of nature (142). The Ancients, in Crites estimation, exhibit exceptional ability, excellence, brilliance and perfection in their works. He posits that the modern world has advanced significantly in Science but authentic literature belongs to the classical age. He then argues that the vitality of the ancient Greek and Roman theatres revolved around healthy competitions and objective criticism. Crites submits that the literary efforts of ancient

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playwrights like Sophocles, Euripides, Eschylus and Lycophron were rewarded with prizes and recorded by historians. He observes that all those factors led to the development of drama and playwrights in the classical period. In comparison, he finds the modern period bereft of such incentives and honours. He concludes thus: "This is the reason why you have now so few poets, and so many severe judges" (142). He thus holds this shift responsible for the dearth of drama.

He reminds the other debaters, and by extension, you, that Aristotle has laid down dramatic conventions in 'The Poetics'. Crites also recognized Horace's 'Art of Poetry' as "an excellent comment" on artistic creativity. He observes that the modern dramatists advance no new rules but violate the stipulated rules. One of the basic dramatic regulations flaunted by the moderns, in Crites observation, is the rule of the three unities of time, place and action. Crites points out the destructive impacts of these violations on drama. For instance, the several subplots present in modern drama deal hard blows on the unity of action and maintains diversionary impact on drama. In his conclusion, if the modern writers were to be judged by the rules of the three unities, "it is probable that few of them would endure the trial" (144). However, Crites identifies Ben Jonson "as the greatest man of the last age" (145) and that makes him Crites' exemplar of the best of English drama. His justification is that Jonson imitates Horace and completely adhered to the standard of the ancients. He regards the ancient playwrights as "those great men … masters" who must be dignified and their memory honoured (152).

On the basis of accessibility of language, Crites admits that the diction employed by the ancient drama is not as satisfactory as the Moderns'. He however explains to his listeners that this is because the modern reader cannot relate to some of the customs and narratives the ancient writers represent in cultures and languages "so long dead" to the modern reader (145). In spite of the language question, Crites assigns a superior status to the ancient against the modern.

3. 2. 2 Modern Drama

The next speaker is Eugenius and he speaks for the modern against Crites' position. Eugenius derives his logic from the concept of imitation, the three unities, narration and action, content, functions of drama and language use. His proposal functions to unmask the flaws of the ancient and, conversely, the accomplishments of the modern. Eugenius' speech opens by noting that "the

moderns have profited" from the ancient conventions (145). Nevertheless, he departs from Crites' stance in his submission that moderns have made remarkable improvement on the ancient rules they inherited and "have excelled them" (145). The moderns, in his thinking, have mastered the art and act of division of plays not only into acts but also into scenes. In response to Crites position that the plot of ancient drama is more faithful, Eugenuis holds that modern drama demonstrates more activity in their variety. Imitation, in modern drama, demonstrates robustness and conclusion while the typical classical plays portray contraction and incompleteness, Eugenius posits. He observes that the scientific advancement that characterizes the modern period is also evident in the domain of arts.

To advance his logic, Eugenius lashes out against the ancients who, in his conclusion, failed to observe the rules the dramatic rules of their age, especially as it relates to the three unities. He notes that Euripides' plays exhibit several irregularities though it sticks to unity of time. For him, Aristotle and Horace fail to deal with the unity of place. Moreover, Eugenius' erudition avers that the ancient drama employs much narration and monologue to the detriment of action and dialogue which are natural to drama. These, for him, make their drama tedious and boring.

On the basis of content, Eugenius holds that the classical plays usually elicit horror and terror at the detriment of pity and admiration. This is as a result of inclusion of murder, death, bloodshed, cruelty, etc. and deficiency of love and pleasant passions. He holds up Shakespeare and Fletcher for recommendation in this aspect. He also accuses the ancient Greek dramatic plots of producing predictable actions because they borrow from communal mythic repertoires "already known to all the audience" (147). For the Romans, Eugenius finds them guilty of adopting Greek plots and constructing repetitive tales. Again, he considers the deus ex machine convention, used regularly by the Roman drama, as an unconvincing technique. In his submission, these plots are porous and the characters are "imitators of nature; but so narrow" as they only imitate a small aspect of that nature (148).

On the functional element, the ancient plays, in Eugenius' terms, hardly provide delight and instruction and thus are incapable of achieving the goals of drama. He adds that in the ancient plays there is hardly any evidence of poetic justice which is the moral essence of drama. In his

view, the modern caters for this yawning gap. In language use, Eugenius endorses Crites view on the state of ancient language but still holds that the ancients display unbridled ambition in their use of images and coinages thereby violating the Horatian artistic demands on language use. Based on his observations, Eugenius concludes that the ancient do not offer a just and lively image of life which defines drama.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Attempt a detailed summary of Crites' and Eugenius respective arguments.

3. 2. 3 Neo-classical French Drama

The third voice employed by Dryden is Lisideius. Remember that he advances the definition of drama adopted by the group, at the beginning of the debate. Lisideius shifts the argument from periodic to regional perspective in his stance that the French drama is superior to its English counterpart. His thesis is justified on the basis of content and form. Lisidieus' judgment is based on French playwrights' approach to the three unities, purity of forms, narration and action, plot construction, concern etc. On the position of the French theatre in relation to the English, he endorses Eugenius' position that the most excellent dramas of the past period were created by the English. Lisidieus recognises Fletcher, Johnson and Beaumont as the great dramatists of that past age. However, he argues that Corneille and other French playwrights "reformed their theater which before was as much below ours, as it now surpasses it and the rest of Europe" (153). He holds that the French Corneille is unrivalled and thus superior to any English dramatists. For him, the best drama of the contemporary period emanates from the French. He attributes this shift to the relocation of "the muse, whoever follow peace", to France, away from the "so much horror" present in the debaters' English society (153).

Furthermore, Lisideius supports his preference for the French drama on the basis of the three unities. He submits that the French drama is the ideal variety because it observes the rules of the three unities in its tendency to utilize limited space and time. On the unity of time, Lisideuis observes that the French dramatists are "so scrupulous" and hardly extend the time beyond what

is specified (153). In relation to the unity of space, he observes that the actions of their drama take place within a limited space as "none of them exceed the compass of the same town or city" (153). Again, he notes that the French presents a single manageable plot and so adheres to the requirement of the unity of action. He adds that their drama eliminates unnecessary congestions and is thus more attractive as "they do not burden them with underplots" found in the English drama (153). The English plot permits a lot of actions and events that are not in consonance with the principal action. The debater uses Shakespeare's play to show that the inclusion of such sub-plots detracts from drama's aim of representing nature objectively. It is therefore disruptive and diversionary and "instead of making a play delightful renders it ridiculous" (155). On the other, he insists that the French drama possesses variety which is not presented in an incongruous manner that marks the English brand. He concludes that the restructured and simplified French plot, achieves the desired believability. Lisideius further attacks the English tendency to mix genres. His view considers the English-invented tragi-comedy a true definition of artistic absurdism which the French drama avoids in its maintenance of the classical purity of forms.

On content, Lisideus states that French plays undertake an in-depth analysis of human existence in all its passions and so exhibit verisimilitude which its English equivalent lacks. For him, both groups exploit historical materials for dramatic construction. However, while French plays adjust and convert these facts to fiction to instruct and delight, English plays represented by Shakespeare's offerings, hardly engages in this form of imaginative modification. For this they are inferior to French drama and the ancients, are not exempted from this blunder.

In characterisation, Lisideuis criticises the practice of giving attention to a single character to the detriment of all others. He observes that French drama gives all characters in a text some measure of attention as seen in real life. Again, character appearances are justifiable in French plays, a dramatic virtue English plays could not develop. Again, he observes that English drama has deteriorated as a result of invoking violence and blood on stage in defiance to the fundamental motive of drama which spells serenity. French drama properly controls the use of action and narration and eliminates gory scenes like "duels, battles" and death on stage (156). The English represent occasions like death which "by their cruelty cause aversion in us, or by reason of their impossibility, unbelief" (158). Lisideus identifies certain scenes in the works of

renowned playwrights like Ben Johnson, Terence and Fletcher where events are related instead of acted. He notes that French plays avoid such flaws by employing narration for the same purpose and this guarantees verisimilitude. On a closing note, Lisideius identifies charm in rhyme as exploited by French drama and finds in it a linguistic quality that has the capacity to improve English drama.

3. 2. 4 Elizabethan English

Neander's speech in the debate stands for English drama and also recognises the strengths of the ancient. He opens his logic by acknowledging the correctness of some of Lisideius' observations. However, he insists that neither the imperfections of the English drama nor the merits of its French counterpart are "considered enough to place them (French) against us (English) (160). He points out what he considers the weaknesses of the French drama as he spells out the excellences of English plays to buttress his point. His argument draws its bearing from mixture of dramatic forms, plot construction, the three unities, use of rhyme, etc.

Neander finds nothing wrong in the mixture of tragedy and comedy as invented on the English stage. For him, it is an accurate representation of life in its mixture of pain and pleasure; an "imitation of humour and passions" which is "the soul" of literature (160). In his interpretation, the juxtaposition of both contraries creates distinction and aids attainment of desired dramatic effect. The insertion of comic incidences and actions, for him, creates a refreshing and relieving effect and does not in any way minimize the grave impact of tragedy. Dryden considers the invention of tragic-comedy an advancement and perfection of what had existed on stage. Dryden again noted the different tastes of Classical Greek and Modern English audiences in their different preferences for separation and unification of forms in drama presentation. He notes that Aristotle would have endorsed tragic-comedy if he had witnessed it.

Dryden goes ahead to criticise the single plot of French drama on the ground that it is restrictive. He compares "the barrenness of the French plots to the variety and copiousness of the English" (161). A well-constructed sub-plot, for him, facilitates the main plot. It also energizes a play by injecting diversity that gives more room for a lively and just representation. Due to this the

English plots include the much needed surprise component lacking in ancient and French dramas. The sub-plots are rather harmless and indeed beneficial. In his view, the sub-plots are essential aspect of a play and functions to enhance a piece of drama. English drama, based on these, delight and entertain more effectively, he argues.

On the argument on characterization, Neander insists that giving more attention to the chief character does not eliminate other "shining characters … of a second magnitude" (162). He goes further to give examples in which characters of different degrees of importance are employed to achieve of the dramatic intension, which is "the punishment of vice, and the reward of virtue" (162). On the subject of action and narration, Neander invalidates Lisidieus' objection to the presentation of violence and death on stage by invoking the concept of suspension of disbelief in artistic consumption. He submits that if the English were to flayed for displaying too much action, the French should also be criticised for demonstrating too little of action. Neander concludes that "a mean betwixt both should be observed by every judicious writer, so as the audience may neither be left unsatisfied by not seeing what is beautiful, or shocked by beholding what is either incredible or undecent" (163).

In Neander's terms, inordinate conformity to rules makes French drama inflexible, homogeneous and predictable, and thus less lively and just. Conversely, violation of the three unities, by the English drama, is permissible as it gives rise to diversity in English drama. Secondly, the tendency facilitates a production of a better and true image of human passions, which is what drama sets out to achieve. He presents Shakespeare as an example here. For him, English playwrights demonstrate superior dexterity and creativity in their observation of dramatic conventions than French dramatists. Jonson is his English model of such faithfulness to dramatic regulations. In his conclusion, a playwright's skill and genius are the deciding factor in dramatic construction. His submission is that English plays exhibit supremacy over the French because they are better at presenting a just and lively imitation of nature which is what drama sets out to achieve.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

The sub-plot constitutes a major concern in Lisideus' and Neander's logic. Undertake a brief analysis of both positions on the issue.

3. 2. 5   Rhyme versus Blank Verse

Crites and Neander take the centre stage in the last part of the treatise to argue on the appropriate language of drama. Crites advocates for the elimination of rhyme and adoption of blank verse because "rhyme is unnatural in a play … improper in drama" (172). He insists that since drama is "imitation of Nature" dramatic dialogue should speak in the natural language rather than in a constrained tongue. For him, the adoption of rhyme is counter-productive. This is because its artificiality obstructs dramatic imitation from being faithful to nature in which prose or blank verse is the norm. On the suggestion that rhyme enhances self-restrain of artist's imagination, Crites observes that creative discipline arises out of decision and does not depend on poetic language. He backs up his stand with Aristotle's suggestion that tragedy be delivered in prose-like diction and uses the works of Ben Johnson and Corneille to support his stance.

Neander's position, contradicts Crite's. He argues that "rhyme might be made as natural as blank verse, by the well placing of words" (175). He observes that Aristotle subscribes to creative imitation which connotes artistry and accomplished by the deployment of rhyme in dramatic construction. He wonders why verse should not be eradicated in drama for the same justification presented by Crites. For Neander, heroic tragedy cannot but be delivered in rhyme but it is "improper" in comedy (175). He explains that tragedy, as a serious drama, deals with the noble, and is "exalted above" above the ordinary level. As such rhyme, which is not an ordinary language, is natural to tragedy while blank verse is beneath the spirit of tragedy but is suitable to comedy in its attention to the lowly (177-8). Again, rhyme functions to moderate artistic imagination, he observes. He notes "a universal consent" of the suitability of rhyme in tragedy by the drama of "the most civilized" countries like French, Italy and Spain (176). Moreover, the debater holds that the fundamental essence of drama is to provide delight and rhyme enhances the pleasure value of drama and thus helps it to accomplish its primary assignment. For Neander, the most important consideration has little to do with how an artist writes best "but which is most proper for the subject" he treats (180). Thus, Neander concludes that the important issue should

be appropriateness of language usage to achieve the best effect in drama. For him both blank verse and rhyme are suitable for different kinds of play.

The most important aspects of Dryden's views are contained in the passages identified below.

4.0   Further Analysis

4.1   KEY PASSAGES

1. Page 137 – purpose, setting, characters of the debate.
2. Page 138-139 – literary criticism.
3. Page 140 – scope of poetry and focus on drama.
4. Page 141 – definition of drama.
5. Page 142 and 144 – the merits of the ancients and flaws of the modern.
6. Page 146 – the excellencies of modern drama.
7. Page 153 – French superiority over English.
8. Page 160 – supremacy of English drama over French.
9. Page 172 –180 – appropriateness of rhyme or blank verse to form and subject.
10. Page 181 – the place of judgment in a work of art.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

There are other major ideas expressed in some of the passages in the essay. Identify at least three more and state why you consider each very important.

4.2.   IMPLICATIONS

It should be obvious to you from our discussion so far that 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' demonstrates Dryden's attempt to project four critical stances on the principal conceptual subjects of the Neo-classical criticism. I am sure you have also followed the dialogue of the four characters described by Dryden himself as possessing "wit and quality." You need to know that those discussants have been identified as Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law and a

colleague, (Crites), Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (Eugenius), Sir Charles Sedley (Lisideius) and Neander (Dryden himself).

It is important that you first understand two crucial points. First, Dryden engages in a comparative examination of alternative provisions and sensibilities in dramatic production. He however works to elevate the English drama and that confers a nationalistic character on the essay. Kain (1999, p. 4) explains that Dryden was among the British loyal to King Charles 11 and the restoration period witnessed an improved patriotism. We can therefore conclude that Dryden's essay is an intellectual act of patriotism. Second, the heart of the critical debate is arts versus nature. His argument holds that art must capture the complexities and grandeur of nature. In other words, a high dose of imagination should be infused into artistic creativity. You must have observed that the relevant periods, regions and writers are judged on the basis of how each has been able to faithfully depict nature in drama.

Now we examine the implications of the respective logics of the four debaters starting from the relatively informal but fundamental prelude. These include criticism of bad poetries, scope of Dryden's thesis, definition of drama, function and impact of drama and the position of each debater. Dryden's criticism of bad poetries and suggestions of formal punishment for such "seditious preachers" is very telling. First it identifies elements of bad poetry, in content and form, and the consequences of bad poetry. Next, Dryden's view here recalls Longinus' identification of creative pitfalls and Plato's position on what he considers corruptive poetry. Furthermore, Dryden's choice of drama and defence of its English variety tend to be an effort at conferring legitimacy and supremacy on that genre and region. This could be in response to Philip Sydney's argument for Epic and complaint against English drama in 'Defence of Poesy'.

Next, Dryden defines drama. You must have noted the pragmatic undertone of that classification and the similarity between Dryden's definition and Aristotle's. Scholars observe the relationship between both theorists, especially in the concept of imitation of life. Barad (2012, 4; 9), for example, holds that Dryden "has to add some qualifiers" to Aristotle's definition. He also observes that Dryden's employment of the terms 'just' and 'lively' implies that literature is an imitative art which dynamically approximates life. For that reason, the essay acquires a mimetic orientation. In fact, the discussants are all primarily interested in elements that qualify a play as a

just and lively image of human life, depicting its emotions, absurdities and vicissitudes for entertainment and education. On this basis, Dryden's idea represents an expressive criticism.

On the utilitarian value of poetry, Dryden's essay reiterates the pleasure principle that governs literature. For Dryden the ultimate aim of poetry is pleasure rather than instruction. This position reflects the views of his predecessors in varying dimensions, especially Longinus and Aristotle. For Horace, both are necessary, but for Plato instruction takes precedence. For Dryden, a poet is not a teacher or a photographer rather he is a creator of something new but similar to the original. In doing this the creative writer exploits nature and life as his materials of creativity. This contradicts the position of Wordsworth (to be discussed in the next unit) who regards the poet as basically a teacher.

Dryden has his eyes on a number of issues. These are the three unities, tragi-comedy, action and narrative, rhyme and blank verse. His essay is interested in an examination of that which is appropriate as against that which is accurate in dramatic production. The major concern of Dryden's essay appears to be "a valuation of becoming (the striving, nature-imitating, large scope of tragicomedy and Shakespeare) over being (the static perfection of the ideal-imitating Classical/French/Jonsonian drama)" (Bryson, N. D. p. 2). This interpretation also draws our attention to Dryden's use of Shakespeare and Jonson as respective models of departure and conformity to classical norms in drama.

The Neo-classical criticism is concerned with questions of morality and structure in drama. Literature should demonstrate faithfulness to reality and that defines the concept of verisimilitude in arts as defined by that age. Dryden's position however permits more elasticity and freedom in creative construction. For instance, the theorist's principle of arts rationalizes the tendency for the modern English drama to violate the conventions of the three unities and purity of forms (in tragi-comedy). Tragi-comedy, in his terms, represents a more faithful image of life in its combination of sadness and joy, the two inevitable faces of life. This view portrays Dryden as a critic who refuses to be tied down to classical rules and regulations of unities. He also seems less interested in the concept of the correct character in drama. His profound reliance on Corneille situates the theorist within the pragmatic persuasion. Based on these, you can describe Dryden as a broadminded neo-classicist with a pragmatic orientation. In summary, Dryden's

concept advocates deviation from norm. In the face of the defined standard and classifications of the Neo-classical criticism, Dryden's position on rules and advocacy for employment of personal preferences demonstrates a spirit of liberty and audacity. His essay displays conformity to the theory of the golden mean which advocates moderation and shuns extremism.

'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' manifests a spirit of defiance against the strict adherence to dramatic rules as manifest in the ideas of French theorists. However, Dryden is influenced by his position as a playwright and theorist. His dramatic works are known to have been influenced by French *classical tragedies* of Racine. Dryden tends to promote classical conventions which he partly exploits in *All For Love*, a converse of *Anthony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare's romantic tragedy. Dryden's employment of Jonson's drama, as an evidence that English plays possess what it takes to adopt classical standards in creativity, expresses the theorist's commitment to the neoclassical convention. Dryden's debate therefore looks in two opposing directions.

In discussing the influences on English drama, Dryden depends on Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, tagged "the Homer and Virgil of English play-writing respectively" by Kain (1999, p. 4). Dryden's preference for Shakespeare is made apparent in Neander's views. In spite of his inconsistencies and flaws, Shakespeare's works, for Dryden, exhibits greater scope and greater faithfulness to life. This is in comparison to Jonson's relatively slim scope and French/Classical tendency to pander the stationary instead of the elastic which spells human condition. If you have read Jonson's work like *Catiline and Sejanus* you will understand this aspect very well. Ben Johnson's tragedies, mostly rooted on Roman themes, consciously abide by the rules of composition of tragedy as stipulated by Aristotle and Horace. Johnson, both as a playwright and critic, according to Thrall, is "a self-proclaimed advocate" of classicism but his classical tragedies sport elements of non-classical standard, including comic relief and contravention of the unities (1960, p. 89). Same goes for the Neo-classist Pope.

Another factor you should give attention is Dryden's view of language use. Crites admission that the diction of ancient drama is relatively inaccessibility due to the diminished status of the language is very instructive. It brings to front burner the fate of many Nigerian languages which have been declared endangered by language experts.

In the last part of the argument, the crux of the matter is rhyme and blank verse. The question is: Which is more appropriate in a given circumstance? Do you know that Dryden was known to have engaged Sir Robert Howard (Crites) in a heated debate on the issue of rhyme? Thus, there is a relationship between that disputation and his critical essay in review. Though Elizabethan playwrights worked with blank verse, the major poetic language in the Restoration period was heroic couplet or rhymed verse. Poetic use of language in high stylistic manner is what made the neo-classicists great. Dryden took the personae of Neander to argue for the application of poetic language – rhyme – in writing. For Dryden, verse is majestic and grand while prose is pedantic. His argument is that English language must not be debased to describe common or simple situations. Eventually Dryden submits that one type of writing is not better than the other. It all depends on two factors. First, how the writer employs such and secondly, how appropriate that is to the subject matter. Dryden considers judgment very essential in a work of art. Judgment for him means balance and that is the ability to know just how much within the context. Here, Dryden's thoughts are in tandem with the Horatian concept of decorum.

As we round off this segment please note that the whole essay is geared towards the development of English drama. 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' theorises on literature but on the basis of one genre – the Dramatic genre. It therefore functions to legitimise drama as an essential and functional aspect of Literature. Dryden presents his logic as a debate between four intellectuals. The broad position of his creative principle is that rules can be employed to inject perfection into drama. Nevertheless, he cautions that a play which fails to attain adequate measure of excellence cannot be developed by mere application of conventions. In summary, Dryden's suggestion is that the dramatic text should be a faithful and dynamic depiction of nature. The creative process entails imitation of life. For him a playwright ought to demonstrate judgment and that entails balance and pragmatism. On impact, he believes that a drama piece should first offer pleasure and then instruction. It must be said that Dryden's essay remains one of the most remarkable statements on drama in the history of English literary history and that is why it should be important to you.

4.3   METHOD

'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' adopts a number of styles. It (is):

10. Opens by stating its agenda and scope.

11. Chooses a telling setting.

12. Presented in the structure of dialogue.

13. Employs a scholarly and formal approach.

14. Uses the comparative method.

15. Employs a lot of practical references and examples.

16. Delivered in a passionate and optimistic style/tone.

17. Adopts an accessible language and advances a coherent logic.

First, Dryden initially states his agenda and delimits his scope. The theorist explicitly states his purpose in the first line of the essay and that is to defend the English drama against the assault of those who prefer its French counterpart. Secondly, Dryden elects to profess on one genre and thus "limits their (the debaters) dispute to dramatic poesy" (140). He justifies his choice by observing that literature is "so large" a subject to deal with (140). By this technique, he explicitly reveals his intension and interest from the beginning and this enables the reader to grasp his central concern and area of concentration.

Furthermore, the setting of Dryden's discourse in a base carrier vessel during a war between the English and the Dutch is a telling technique. It invokes the military victory of the English over the Dutch. This background functions to establish the supremacy of the English over their European neighbours, including French and Dutch. The setting therefore foreshadows the accomplishment of the English drama and this reinforces the theme of the superiority of English drama over its French counterpart.

Moreover, Dryden's argument is mainly presented in the structure of dialogue but it also employs narrative. The background to the debate is presented like a fictional narrative: "it was a memorable day, in the first summer of the late war …" (137). Then he shifts to the drama mode. Dryden's essay recruits four renowned Restoration scholars, under "borrowed names" (137), in a debate which principal intention is to ennoble the English drama. The theorist thus postulates on the nature and functions of literature by deploying four characters in a four-perspective debate.

His dialogue style invokes Plato's. You will note that the style adds drama to Dryden's thesis and blends with his choice of genre.

In addition, Dryden's essay adopts formal style but that which maintains familiarity built on an employment of friendly expressions. It presents formal logic and definitions. Dryden confines each debater's arguments to a given "part of poesy" (140). The participants argue the comparative merits and flaws of Ancient and Modern as well as French and English theatrical conventions. For instance, Eugenius speaks for the modern against Crites who stands for the ancient. This method enables Dryden "to provide some insight on the prevailing notions of the day", posits Kain (1999, p. 1). Again, his notion of drama is exhibited early in the essay by the generally acceptable definition provided by Lisideius. Using that definition Dryden postulates on the imitative tendency of drama as well as its entertainment and educative functions and establishes a guide for all the four dimensions of his arguments. All these contribute to the scholarly ambience of the essay.

Again, the essay is built upon the comparative method. It engages epochal and regional perspectives and contrasts different writers and writings. For instance, Lisidieus compares English dramatists Fletcher, Johnson and Beaumont against the French Corneille to prove the supremacy of French drama. Dryden's use of the comparative method facilitates his discussion of the strengths and limitations of each region and period which constitute his focus. This method eschews extremity and enhances objectivity. Dryden, through this means, refuses to make any conclusive statements. In another connected essay 'Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy' (1688), he reveals the skepticism inherent in 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy' and his intension to allow the reader draw a conclusion by him/herself. He therefore invites his audience to make choices from the various options he presents. By presenting antithetical positions, Dryden's essay operates at the level of speculation. However, Dryden's thesis is decipherable in all these. For him, the good drama gives adequate attention to conventional requirements but is not too rigid to make necessary adjustments.

In addition, 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' employs a lot of practical references and examples, especially of dramatists and theorists. Dryden summons the intellectual contributions of Aristotle and Horace in his explication of dramatic conventions, including the three unities and use of rhyme and verse. Again, he drags both Shakespeare and Jonson across several pages of his discourse as references and examples of conformism and radicalism in dramatic construction. In his initial criticism anchored by Crites, he gives an indirect example of bad writers without leaving out the impact of such works. Again, using Neander, he "produce(s) for example many" English plays, including "*The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*" (162), to establish the excellence of the English drama. These methods functions to make his work practical and demonstrates his firm grip on his chosen field.

Moreover, the essay is delivered in an optimistic style, in relation to the English drama and the dramatic genre. Dryden's passionate note is perhaps a conscious style that works to demonstrate his profound knowledge of his subject and his patriotic zeal. This method enables him to present his logic in a very incisive manner that aids comprehension. It also adopts an accessible language and advances a coherent logic. For instance, to illustrate the contributions of the ancient, Dryden, through Crites, posits that the writers of his period "not only build upon their foundation, but by their models" (142). This simple sentence encapsulates the position of ancient creative writers even in the modern arts and in a very logical manner.

Additionally, Dryden's essay adopts a composed and moderate approach that eschews extremity. The theorist advances a theoretical logic in which different stances are given due attention. This method enables him present paradoxical critical view-points which respectively highlight the accomplishment of each period, region, writers and writings. Through those exposures, the audience is empowered to make personal choices. Lastly, many critics observe the value of the styles adopted by Dryden in 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy'. For example, Barad (2012 p. 20; 3) notes that in Dryden you encounter "wit and shrewd analysis … a liberal" neo-classicist", although like a typical classicist "he is most coherent" in discussing rules." Thomas Arnold (2006, p. 1) submits that "Dryden's special advantages were "a strong, clear, common-sense judgment and a very remarkable faculty of arguing the point." In addition, Writework (2005, p. 1) concludes that the essay is "spirited, graceful, and confident." I am sure you have something to add to these comments. Go ahead! Add your voice; remember you are a critic in the making.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Which of these methods do you consider the most effective and why?

4. 4   SIGNIFICANCE

Let us begin this segment by reiterating the status of John Dryden in the history of literary criticism. Together with Alexander pope and Joseph Addison, Dryden rules the Neo- classical literary production and criticism. Dryden's 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' is a textual account of Neo-classical criticism and serves as the scholar's major donation to literary criticism. It represents a milestone in the domain of English criticism. This is so largely because Dryden had no established corpus of criticism to stand upon. His essay thus becomes a trail-blazer for later English critics. Writework (2005 1) notes that the essay contributes extensively to Dryden's title as the "Father of English criticism", serves as a motivation for newer writings and "creates the school of English criticism." Kain (1999, p. 4) explains that Dryden's "real strengths" includes "the solidifying of a base for continuing British criticism" (4). The essay is hence a very significant piece in literary criticism.

In addition, Dryden is the first recognised theorist to pay total attention to a genre of literature in which he operates and this marks another trend in the history of literary criticism. His attention to a manageable area illustrates the concept of specialization in academics. With the essay, Dryden makes two essential statements. First he draws attention to drama as a genre of literature with independent features and needs. Secondly, he models specialization in literary criticism. In addition, Dryden's use of dialogue represents a new approach to presentation of conceptual ideas in a dramatic format within literary studies.

Furthermore, Dryden's selection and examination of distinguished writers and writings represents another approach to literary criticism. He evaluates conceptual and creative works to prove his thesis. For instance, he considers Horace's "Art of Poetry" "an excellent comment" (143) and identifies what he considers flaws in Jonson's drama, *Sejanus and Catiline.* His close examination of single texts introduces a novel approach to literary analysis. What makes

Dryden's attempt different from other philosophers as Sydney is that it manifests a regional and epochal breath. For this his analysis tends to be more mature.

'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' establishes a clear line between art and nature. For Dryden, art is cultivated and the nature is untutored and so primitive. This concept has a huge and lasting impact on critical ideas across periods and regions. Again, his central thesis on the importance of rules and necessity of deviations speaks for both tradition and innovation. This aspect has also influenced critics and writers over the ages.

By now you must have observed that there is no perfect work. So Dryden's theory maintains a number of inadequacies.

4.5   LIMITATION

Did you notice that Dryden tends to shy away from making definite statements that characterize previous essays studied in this context? This attitude can be considered an attempt to evade responsibility. It makes it a bit difficult to pin down Dryden's stand as he tends to speak for all and against all. By expressing a collection of opinions, Dryden's essay becomes a bit complicated and equivocal. 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy' hardly makes any conclusions. Perhaps this approach is an effort to avoid the 17th century dogmatism in criticism. The question is: Did he succeed? The next paragraph answers this.

Dryden's essay, flexible as it seems, is interested in the preservation of laid down rules in dramatic production as revealed in the attention given to the three unities and tragi-comedy. Its interest in the preservation of rules makes Dryden's position rigid and prescriptive. Consequently, Dryden's theory still bears the mark of the 17th century rigidity in criticism.

Moreover, Dryden tends to take his defence of English Modern drama a little too far. This is despite his clearly stated purpose of defending the English against the French drama. He readily and willingly forgives and justifies all that could be considered irregular in English drama. Though he preaches conformity to rules, he permits English drama's tendency to repudiate such rules. This could be termed subjective. In his interpretation, for example, tragic-comedy offers a true image of life and sub-plots enriches drama.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

There could still be more flaws in 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy'. Please locate and discuss at least two more.

4. 6   APPLICATION

To employ Dryden's standard in criticism, you have to:

Be primarily interested in dramatic texts which Dryden adjudicates on.

Identify a good work based on its ability to present a just and lively image of life in all its passions and complexities. Again, observe an infusion of imagination in artistic creativity.

Determine the degree at which a piece of drama provides pleasure and then education for the benefit of the audience.

Evaluate a work on the basis of how far it conforms to dramatic conventions and still allows necessary innovations.

 Examine the appropriateness of language to a dramatic form under study.

Determine if a dramatic text is good by how it exhibits sufficient ideas expressed in appropriate language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

Undertake a comparative analysis of any Shakespeare and Jonson's dramatic texts, based on what you have learnt in this unit.

5. 0   CONCLUSION

Dryden's overt intention is to speak for modern English drama. This he does by identifying and analysing what he considers their achievements and contributions to the development of drama. His essay, unlike the previous ones, exhibits what could be termed a revision of existing artistic standards in relation to their acceptance and relevance to the English drama. He engages the

voices of contemporary writers/critics of his period to illustrate divergent perspectives. The discussants also offer in-depth comprehension of the dramatic productions of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Molière. That tells you that Dryden, as a critic, is familiar with the literature of his age. You should also be familiar with the literature of your period and region.

6.0   SUMMARY

This unit functions to discuss:

The background to Dryden's work 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy', especially in relation to his period, the Neo-classical period of the English literary history.

Basic concepts of Dryden's nationalistic scholarship, including his views on nature and functions of literature and his attitude to rules of dramatic production and use of language.

The most critical ideas in Dryden's essay.

Implications of Dryden's major statements, including his motives.

Significances and inadequacies of Dryden's essay.

Guidelines for using Dryden's principle of arts in textual examination.

48.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss Dryden's concept of drama in relation to his definition. Making references to other theorists will give you a lot of advantages.

 Dryden stipulates elements which can stain a piece of writing. Identify these and articulate their impact using any dramatic text(s) of your choice.

Account for the role and position of Aristotle, Horace, Shakespeare and Jonson in Dryden's 'An essay of Dramatic Poesy'.

Dryden has been acknowledged as a very significant voice in literary theory and criticism. Ascertain the major factors that contribute to his enviable status in English literary history.

Dryden's methods of presentation are quite unique. Critically examine Dryden's technique and determine its effectiveness.

8.0   BIBLIOGRAPHY/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 3 UNIT 3   WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S LITERARY THEORY

1.0   Introduction

2.0   Objectives

3.0   Main Content

  3.1   Historical Background

  3.2   Basic Assumptions

    3.2.1   Subject

    3.2.2   Style

    3.2.3   Poet

    3.2.4   Poetry

    3.2.5   Criticism

1.0   Introduction

The third unit of module three is concerned with the theoretical statements of William Wordsworth. Wordsworth is arguably the most prominent literary theorist of the Romantic period and that is why his ideas are studied in this course. We shall here examine, in details, Wordsworth's postulations on the nature and purpose of literature through his essay 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'.

This unit starts with a brief background to 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. It is mainly interested in the temperament of the Romantic period which the essay represents. However, it also pays some attention to Wordsworth as a writer. The background provides you with the underpinnings of Wordsworth ideas to help you understanding his position on literature. Following the background is a discussion on the content, form and functions of literature as expressed in Wordsworth's essay. In addition, the theorist's requirements from a good poet, on one hand and a good poetry on the other, are equally observed. Moreover, key passages of the essay are identified to in order to call your attention to defining segments of the essay as you read.

The implications of Wordsworth's assumptions are also discussed under this unit using relevant scholarly views. You will find the views very insightful in decoding Wordsworth's hypothesis in 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. Under this segment, the critical approaches adopted by

Wordsworth's ideas are established. I hope you still remember the clues to critical approaches as discussed in the first unit of Module 1. Furthermore, his methods of presentation are not ignored. This implies that you have the responsibility to determine how effective Wordsworth's style is in the explication of his theme. In addition, the significance of Wordsworth's theory within literary studies and the limitations of the essay are parts of this unit. The last leg of Module 3 Unit 3 provides you with some guidelines for an analysis of literary texts from Wordsworth's perspective.

In this unit, you will meet a number of self-assessment exercises. Please attempt the exercises. They are included to help you assess your understanding of the different sections of Module 3 Unit 3. Moreover, a tutor-marked assignment is included at the end. It is your responsibility to do that assignment and submit as directed. If you pay attention to every part of this unit you will achieve the objectives.

2.0   Objectives

At the end of Module 3 Unit 3, you are expected to:

Be acquainted with the conceptual temperament of the Romantic period of the English Literary History.

Comprehend Wordsworth's concepts of the nature and functions of literature and relate them to other views already examined in previous units.

Identify the essential qualities of a good poetry and a good poet as itemised in 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'.

Determine Wordsworth's contributions to the development of literary criticism through the essay under examination.

Discern the methods employed by Wordsworth in the essay and evaluate their effectiveness.

Analyse at least two literary texts guided by Wordsworth's principles of literature.

3.0   Main Content

3.1   Historical Background

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' is a quintessential Romantic text. The Romantic imaginative and intellectual temper started in the late 18[th] century and into 19[th] century, after the Neo-Classical period. The neo-classical view of poetry becomes inadequate with the continued evolution of society and thus could no longer satisfy the interest of English readers. Influenced by the French Revolution (1789-1799) and its quest for individualism and freedom, the need arose for the development of a distinguishable form of poetry both in substance and style. Romanticism evolved to cater for that need. The literary revolution of Romanticism is evident in language and subject. Lyric and blank verses as well as common subjects entered into poetry to replace rhyming couplet which governed the Neo-classical poetry. This deviation took cognisance of the severe competition presented by the prose genre rendered in accessible language and which shows interest in concrete subjects as against abstract ideas, historical and mythic realities of the previous periods. Pointing out the thematic and stylistic departures, Anyadike observes that Romanticism exhibits "essential belief in the freedom of artist or writer to express his or her unique feelings without the imposition of formal rules" (311). That is why Romanticism is the governing idea of democratic temper. Romantic ideas are best articulated in the critical works of Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was an Englishman and a Cambridge scholar. After his education, he visited different places in Europe including France. He was in France in 1791 and that was during the period of the French Revolution, which lasted between 1789 and 1799. In France he became a passionate democrat. In 1792 Wordsworth returned to England published his first poetry collections, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, in 1793. In 1795 Wordsworth met another poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he had a very long and close personal and professional relationship. Both poets published *Lyrical Ballads* which is regarded as a very significant work of the Romantic era of the English literature. The second edition of the poetry collection appeared in 1800 with a preface which was enlarged in 1802. Thus, William Wordsworth's essay is presented as a prefix to his collection of poems *Lyrical*

Ballads. He classifies the essay as "a systematic defense of the theory" which guides the writing of his poems. Wordsworth describes the poems as "an experiment" because they are different especially in terms of poetic language. 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' therefore provides a justification for the content and style of a class of poems. Dilip Barad (2012, p. 1) holds that Wordsworth is probably the only Romantic critic who "made his poetic experiences the locus of his critical discourse." In that preface, the poet postulates on the nature, language and subject of literature. 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' is Wordsworth's most popular critical work.

3.2   Basic Assumptions

Wordsworth's conceptual essay is interested in different aspects of literature. Wordsworth's thesis advocates a departure from traditional subjects of poetry and the language of delivery. He proposes the employment of the natural in poetic construction. The theorist identifies the duty of a poet and suggests the best ways to carry out that duty. In addition, Wordsworth identifies the functions of poetry and its place in human existence. In a nutshell Wordsworth's essay discusses the nature, subject, style and aims of poetry. It goes further to classify the poet and poetry without ignoring the concept of criticism. Wordsworth's ideas are discussed below beginning with his postulation on the subject of poetry.

3.2.1   Subject

Wordsworth's offer on the subject of poetry covers both content and delivery. In his view subjects should be selected from "incidents and situations from common life" (242). Wordsworth's ideal poetic subjects include aspects of observable universe and human emotions like storm, sunshine, seasons, bereavement, human loses, hope, fear and resentment. He locates in these subjects human feelings and matters which interest the human person. For him the subject of literature must be significant. Wordsworth suggests that these events and conditions should be made appealing by locating in them the universal laws of human nature. He holds that it is in the rural and lowly that the most important passions of man's heart experience freedom

and attains maturity. In Wordsworth's perception, it is in ordinary and rural life that the basic emotions of man are better reflected and understood. For him, the process of rural and humble life originates from basic human emotions. As such human passions are integrated into the universal and pleasant elements of nature. Therefore, life is best understood in the rural and lowly.

3.2.2   Style

Wordsworth proposes that the style of literature should be manly. He gives attention to different aspects of style in writing but is mainly concerned with the language of literature. Wordsworth discusses figurative language, poetic diction, literary genres and modes of representation and relationship between subject and language of literature.

On the language of literature, Wordsworth promotes the adoption of common tongue. For him literature should, as much as possible, select from "language really used by men" (242). However, that language must be distilled of all seeming vulgarities characteristic of the language of the lower class. He justifies his position by stating that the common language is employed in daily communication by the lowly who interact with the common things of nature from which the most essential aspects of language is initially derived. The critic adds that language use among commoners excludes complex expressions because feelings and ideas are communicated in simple language. Wordsworth concludes that because such simple language develops out of natural feelings and recurring events it becomes a more enduring, universal and philosophical mode of expression. He warns that writers who substitute this natural language with artificial modes of expression put a barrier between themselves and the audience. In his view, "poets do not write for poets alone but for men … he must express himself as other men express themselves" in order to elicit sympathy (251). For him, the reader's interest is best elicited when such a reader is kept among human beings by the use of common language.

Wordsworth prefers that poetic ideas be draped in colourful artistic language in order that common subjects may be represented in an uncommon manner. In his reasoning, the employment of artistic language functions to provide pleasure for the reader. Nevertheless, he advocates for a cautious use of clichés existing in the communal literary repertoire which, though

appropriate, had become unfit for poetic expression. Wordsworth stands against personification of abstract ideas as a technique of achieving elevated style in poetic construction. He further considers 'poetic diction' an arbitrary system which is subject to various impulses. For him, the consequence of such diction is that the audience is left at the mercy of the poet as he tries to associate the literary imageries and language to the passion represented. However, when a poet works with ordinary language, he is naturally connected with his reader who shares the same meaning with him and this eliminates undue interference. Wordsworth then advises poets to descend from their lofty heights and embrace the simple in language use so they can connect with their audience.

In addition, Wordsworth, speaking on use of language by different genres of literature, posits that "the language of Prose may yet be well adapted in Poetry" (246). The writer concludes that there is hardly any important difference between the language of poetry and that of prose. For him poetry, drama and prose are closely related in several ways. The three genres, in his interpretation, use the same agency of communication, similar materials and have equivalent concern and all three are addressed to man. For these reasons he believes that the similarities of the three genres of literature, rather than their differences, should be emphasised.

On the relationship between subject and language, Wordsworth believes that a judicious choice of subject naturally leads to accurate and perceptive selection of language that could dignify and energise the work. The theorist suggests that the poet avoids the use of unfamiliar expressions apart from that naturally consistent with the emotions represented by the work. He explains that such unnatural insertions will obstruct the audience's comprehension of a poet's ideas. For him, the employment of metaphors and figures of speech should be guided by the circumstances represented in a work of literature for that is the only way the proper effect could be elicited. His process of poetic construction includes persistent observation of his subjects in order to achieve an accurate representation of such "in language fitted to their respective importance" (245).

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 1

What do you consider the most fundamental suggestion of Wordsworth from his views on content and style of literature?

2.2.3 The Poet

Wordsworth suggests the qualities and functions of a poet in "Preface". He also evaluates works of writers of his period. First, he conceives the poet as "a man speaking to men" (247). Wordsworth goes ahead to itemise the qualities of a poet. First, a poet is bequeathed with a more active consciousness and a more comprehensive soul. Secondly, he is unusually passionate and enthusiastic and possesses a better knowledge of the human nature. In addition, the poet exhibits a more personal satisfaction of his feelings and preferences. Furthermore, he contemplates, with pleasure, the choices and passion of affairs of the world. For Wordsworth, if a poet does not observe such feelings and choices, he is under obligation to construct them. To create those absent emotions, the poet in Wordsworth's calculation, must have the capacity to imagine passions which are absent as if they are present. Lastly, a poet, "from practice" has developed a greater enthusiasm and faculty "in expressing what he thinks and feels", more so those personal ideas and passions which are not dependent on external stimulus (247). For Wordsworth, a poet is a man who possesses an unusual natural capacity for long and deep thoughts. He notes that a poet is not different from other men but only departs from them in the degree to which he can think quickly and deeply without any external stimulus. Again, the poet has a greater potency to express those ideas and feelings which are usually in line with human passions and so is best expressed in the language of men.

On the functions of a poet, Wordsworth holds that a poet describes and imitates nature and human passion for the pleasure of his audience. To do this effectively, the poet has the responsibility to exclude the "painful or disgusting" in passions by applying "the principle of selection" (248). The poet's role, as identified by the theorist, is to elevate human nature. The writer, for him, is an upholder and preserver of human relationships and love. The theorist adds that using his knowledge and passion, the poet unites the huge human society located in different places and at different times.

Wordsworth further takes a swipe at writers of his period. He objects to what he describes as "the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language" exhibited by some works of his period (243). He finds the language employed by many writers of his period is gaudy and ridiculous. In his view, the works of such writers show unpleasantness and immaturity and do mortal damage to the integrity of their writers.

3.2.4 Poetry

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' defines poetry and gives it a prominent position among human disciplines. In the essay, Wordsworth holds that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility" (243, 253). In Wordsworth's view, good poetry is a function of the impulsive feelings of the poet. In addition, good poetry requires long meditation over those feelings before it is expressed. Poetry, for Wordsworth, is a depiction of man and nature for the pleasure of man. He notes that the aim of poetry is universal and valuable truth. Furthermore, he considers poetry "the first and last of all human knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man" (250). Quoting Aristotle, Wordsworth classifies poetry as the most philosophical writings of all disciplines. Poetry, according to him, speaks better than History, Law and Philosophy because nothing stands between the poet and his representation. On the other hand, so many things stand between historians and biographers and their objects. He concludes that poetry is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" and the passionate depiction of the face of all sciences (249).

Wordsworth identifies the ultimate aim of all literature, irrespective of genre, as the universal passion of man and nature in its entirety. Genuine poetry, for him, is tailored to "interest mankind permanently" and is also significant in the diversity and merit of its "moral relations" (265). For him, the primary purpose of poetry is to give excitement and pleasure.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 2

Identify the position of the audience in Wordsworth's concept of the poet and poetry.

3.2.5 Criticism

Wordsworth has something to say on the nature and style of criticism. On taste and morality, he notes that different categories of critics and standards of criticism guide reader's attitude towards a particular work. He believes that the reader should be left to determine his own feelings towards a piece of writing as critical assumptions could obstruct his pleasure. Wordsworth believes that a good critic chooses his terms cautiously. To buttress his point, the theorist examines Johnson's poem and finds it limited. He however cautions that to describe such a poem as bad represents destructive criticism which he considers obstructive. He advises that it is better to describe the work as one which lacks sense, in terms of the matter discussed. Using the same poem, he warns against a type of "false criticism" which elaborately states the obvious (254). Wordsworth reminds critics that they are perhaps even more "exposed to the same errors as the poet" (254). He finally states that his principle, if accepted, will cause a shift in methods of criticism in relation to both past and present works. He adds that this development will facilitate a refined moral feeling towards works of literature.

4.0 **Further Analysis**

4.1   Key Passages

1. Page 241 – purpose of 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'.
2. Pages 242, 243 and 245 – bad poetry.
3. Pages 242 and 251 – Subject and language of good poetry.
4. Page 244 – style and language.
5. Page 243 – definition of good poetry.
6. Pages 247 and 250 – nature & qualities of a poet.
7. Pages 243 and 252 – purpose of literature.
8. Page 249 - 250 – position of poetry
9. Pages 252 and 247 – purpose/function of poetry.
10. Pages 254 and 255 – criticism.

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 3

There are still passages which are very central to Wordsworth's theory of literature in 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. Identify at least three of such.

4.2   Implications

If you have followed Wordsworth's argument very well you would have observed that he is basically interested in the nature and functions of literature. His proposal rests on content, style and language of literature. Wordsworth also speaks on the poet and poetry. His writing therefore covers the writer, the text and the audience and literature revolves around the three.

Wordsworth's position on the nature of poetry is very clear in his postulations on content and style. His view on content of literature illustrates his interest in nature and the marginalised. His insistence that a writer should imitate nature and human passions places his theory under the mimetic approach. Wordsworth's choice of subjects is radical because prior to the Romantic period, common natural elements and human emotions like seasons, sunshine, resentment and pain hardly receive any attention from writers. Again, the lowly is the traditional subject of comedy and is hardly assigned any noble role in serious literary works. Wordsworth elevates the lower class to a more dignified position by involving them in poetry. He thus shares the same interest with Marxism. Wordsworth's class sympathy obviously lies with the alienated. Oswald Mtshali, a South African poet, is interested in the alienated in his poem 'Boy on the Swing'.

The theorist's justification for his subject is that man and nature are better reflected in the lowly. Richard Clark (2006, p. 1) notes that for Wordsworth "the fundamental features of human consciousness … are easier to glimpse in simpler, less sophisticated sorts, that is, those who are untainted by wealth and city life." You must understand that Wordsworth's position is a validation of the motto of French revolution anchored in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Based on the new artistic consciousness, previously 'unpoetic' ideas were, for the first time, disciplined into the poetic structures and from different perspectives. For instance, while Wordsworth is concerned with the usual elements of life depicted in 'The World is Too Much With Us', Coleridge is interested in the unusual as represented in 'Kubla Khan'. Wordsworth's theory thus extends the scope of literature from the perspective of content.

Wordsworth's justification of his choice of subject illustrates Romantic writers' attempt to seek relevance for poetry by showing interest in different aspects human passion and the close

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relationship between man and his environment. For example, Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and Keats 'Ode to a Nightingale' exhibit the ambivalence of human experience – the mixture of pleasure and pain in their highest intensities. 'Preface to Lyrical Ballad' expresses the Romantic maxim "return to nature". Let us bring it a bit closer. The relationship between man and nature is largely explored by contemporary African poets like the Nigerian Niyi Osundare. Osundare's collections, exemplified by *The Eye of the Earth* (1986), pay attention to the lowly and nature. A poem like 'Ours to Plough not to Plunder' thematises the common and nature. Why not study the poem to ascertain the veracity of this observation.

Furthermore, Wordsworth's concern with the language of poetry is manifest in his discussion on styles. You can easily observe that he identifies not only what should be included but also what should be excluded in language use. He also covers both the linguistic and literary aspects of language use in literature. First, Wordsworth considers the Neo-Classical language as unnatural and sophisticated and thus obstructive. Again, his view expresses loyalty to the natural and common which he considers the most effective means of communication between the poet, in all genres, and his audience. Wordsworth's view that "poets do not write for poets alone but for men (251) expands the audience base of creative writing. His position negates Christopher Okigbo's who insists that "I write my poems for other poets; I don't write for non-poets!" (Biodun Jeyifo, 2008, p. 13). However, it is in tandem with Osundare's position that: "Poetry is not the exoteric whisper of an excluding tongue not claptrap for a wandering audience … Poetry is no oracle's kernel for a sole philosopher's stone Poetry is man meaning to man" in his poem 'Poetry Is' *Songs of a Market Place*, 1983, p. 3). Wordsworth stance that a writer "must express himself as other men express themselves" in order to elicit sympathy (251) considers the reader's interest. On the other hand, many previous critics including Longinus, Horace, Sidney, Dryden, and Pope postulate that good writers ought to employ lofty language, different from that of daily conversation. Standing with these critics, Coleridge counsels that the notion of common language is better applied to specific category of literature to maintain credibility and eschew prescriptivism. He also disagrees with Wordsworth's reading of Gray's sonnet. It must be added that in some of his works, including 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' and 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth goes against his own linguistic principle. This demonstrates the gap between theory and practice. Nevertheless, his view on language exhibits an objective approach to criticism.

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Wordsworth's position, you must know, display certain moderations. The first is his insistence that the common language of poetry be purified of inherent defects. Wordsworth's view here reechoes Dryden's position on language. Based on this moderation of language, can you now say that poetry still uses daily conversational language? Read Tarvin's answer below.

> Poetry becomes not the real language of people, but a selection from this real language . … in practice the verse of Wordsworth does not reproduce the dialect or illiterate jargon of his humble characters, but it does employ a vocabulary and phrasing much closer to standard English speech than the "poetic diction" used by many 18th-century English poets. (N.D p. 4).

Wordsworth's concept underscores the principle of selection in imaginative writing. Again, his view on figurative devices, poetic diction, synthetic expressions and clichés dislodges previous literary practice. The revolutionary tendencies could also be observed in Contemporary African Poetry. The poetic approach revises Christopher Okigbo's concept of the audience expressed in his declaration that: "I write my poems for other poets; I don't write for non-poets!" (Biodun Jeyifo, *Postcolonial Lamp*, 13). Wordsworth's position could be considered a conscious reaction against the attempt to elevate poetry beyond the ordinary in order to keep it apart from other forms of literary expression and normal conversation. Thus, his rejection of archaisms, artificial metaphors and images represents an establishment of a novel class of poems whose appeals are easily deducible. Hence, by Wordsworth standard, Anglophone pioneer poets like Gladys Casey Hayford, whose works "sound patently archaic" (Senanu and Vincent, 1976, p. 9) can hardly be counted among good poets.

The symbiotic relationship between content and style is encapsulated in Wordsworth's stand on engagement of metre according to passion represented in a work of literature. In that he advocates for different styles based on the subject. By now you must have observed that Wordsworth's idea of content and style is practical and novel. Clark (2006, p. 4) describes it as "a materialist, earth-bound model of poetry that differs considerably from the idealist, other-worldly model …" The difference lies in Wordsworth's interest in the natural and human emotions expressed in ordinary tongue.

Moreover, Wordsworth's theory of literature provides a definition of a creative writer as it identifies his/her qualities and functions. Wordsworth's classification of the creative writer as a man speaking to men underscores the role of the writer as a mouthpiece of his/her world. Based on this view, a creative writer becomes a close observer rather than moralist. The implication is that Wordsworth theory expects the writer to function as an intermediary between nature and people. This defines the relationship between the writer and his/her audience as conceived by Wordsworth. Again, under this theory, a writer is perceived an unusually sensitive person with sufficient expressive skill for the pleasure of the audience. In other words, by Wordsworth's standard, a writer requires both talent and skill to provide pleasure for his/her audience.

Wordsworth's specification of the qualities of a poet is very telling. It illustrates his interpretation of the writer as a passionate, disciplined, observant, imaginative, knowledgeable and creative person with effective communication skills. Wordsworth's idea of the capacity of a poet to internally conjure up real and imagined passions depict the Romantics' believe in imagination as the basic faculty for creativity. By the creative faculty, the writer produces new reality by incorporating diverse elements. Wordsworth's theory as such expresses the interrelated functions of both imagination and expression in literary creativity. Another prominent Romantic scholar, Percy Bysshe Shelly, shares Wordsworth's position by postulating that literary artists "imagine and express" ('English Essays: From Sidney to Macaulay', 2001, p. 4). Shelly adds that:

> The function of poetical faculty are twofold: by one it creates new
> materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it
> engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them
> according to certain rhythm and order which may be called the
> beautiful and the good. (2001, p. 38)

Have you noticed the correspondence of ideas between Wordsworth and Shelly's respective theories of literature? Observe that in Wordsworth's view the creative writer, though placed among men, is outstanding and esteemed and this corresponds with Sydney's view. Consequently, in the Romantic period the mind of the creative writer becomes a central consideration in creativity and this perspective conveys the expressive approach to criticism.

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' initiates this approach in criticism. The implication is that the Expressive function becomes the primary feature of the poetic process from Wordsworth. Remember that the creative essence is not part of the Neo-classical concept of imagination. Note that Wordsworth demands so much from a writer. This is because he conceives the writer as a defender of humanity and that is a tasking role. That gives the writer a legislative function, albeit informally, within his society. You already know that in the early periods literary writers are classified "legislators, or prophets". A creative writer seems to be both based on his/her concern with the present in order to propose a better future.

Furthermore, the definition, position and functions Wordsworth assigns to poetry communicates his view of literature. His definition locates the source of poetry in the writer's inner feelings. Literature is therefore a function of emotion, feeling and temperament rather than regulations. However, the expression of such feelings requires practice. Thus, his creative method suggests that skill is internally generated. Wordsworth thus eliminates the divine and unconscious perspective promoted by Plato as well as the Neo-classicists' rules. He introduces psychology and subjectivity into criticism and thus revolts against the Neo-classical inclination for objectivity in literature. Wordsworth's definition establishes the platform for the development of the expressive theory which is a major characteristic of the Romantics. John Keats, for instance, likens poets to spiders spinning words from its entrails. For him the poet imagines himself into every situation and he uses the term 'empathy'.

Wordsworth's definition caters for the two important aspects of literature – matter and manner. The first part entails direct expression marked by spontaneity while the second involves indirect expression illustrated in recollection. This simply means that good poetry does not involve an abrupt expression of that powerful emotion. This brings us to the second leg of that definition, "recollected in tranquility" which underscores the creative process. The second segment illustrates the process and condition that must take place for the powerful emotion to transmute into ideas. Adepitan (1991, p. 148) provides us with sufficient insight of that process. He notes that contemplation, which is "rational, critical and selective" mediates as a process to produce the final piece which is similar but different from the original emotion which produces it. The implication is that it is only in tranquility that chaotic emotion can be tamed into art. However, T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and Individual Talent" disagrees with Wordsworth and insists that poetry

is not "emotion, nor recollection nor tranquility, nor spontaneity" but could be likened to concentration which implies "a deliberate process." It is important that you identify the merits in both arguments because this will aid your conclusions on Wordsworth theory of literature.

Based on Wordsworth's conception, creativity is a process. Have you taken note of the stages? There are four stages of observation, recollection, sifting and composition. In other words, the creative process starts with perception and moves to serene reflection, after which comes sifting of irrelevancies and terminates in real composition. In addition, Wordsworth's concept of imitation entails creativity like Aristotle's and unlike Plato's. Wordsworth permits the poet to represent his subjects using certain "colourings of Imagination." Imagination is therefore an inevitable aspect of his creative process and this is in tandem with Romanticism which negates Neo-Classical emphasis on intellect. However, there are some meeting points between the two schools. Let us identify these. Emotion is given a central place in literature but it is recollected in tranquility. The second arm goes back to reason and creates a convergence of ideas between the Neo-classical and the Romantics. Please note how Wordsworth's definition delivers poetry from the Neo-classical separation of reason and feeling. Wordsworth thus advances a new framework for the practice of poetry in his period.

Moreover, Wordsworth's theory illustrates the dual function of literature in his identification of the aim of poetry which is to provide immediate pleasure and depict universal truth. Pleasure principle is the first consideration in Wordsworth concept of functions of a poet and poetry. Wordsworth's view represents Dryden's position but reinterprets Plato's. To his credit, Wordsworth does not ignore the moral value of poetry in making the reader a better person and on that note he becomes one with Plato. Additionally, Wordsworth postulation on the appealing capacity of the universal truth which poetry reflects joins him to Samuel Johnson. Moreover, in placing poetry above all knowledge Wordsworth underscores its capacity to teach better than all other disciplines. This exhibits a didactic view of literature also expressed by Aristotle, Sydney and Keats. Sydney, for instance, considers poetry as "the first light-giver to ignorance …" (*Criticism: Major Statements*, p. 102).

In addition, Wordsworth's concept of criticism involves the critic, the reader and the critical text.

His views raised very important issues. First, is the function of a critic as an objective guide to the reader as well as his obligation to either endorse or disapprove a literary piece. Next is the reader's right to personal evaluation of literary works. Wordsworth thus makes the reader a critic, even if at an amateurish level. Again is the duty of criticism to add a fresh perspective to a literary work and employ terms cautiously and judiciously. Additionally, the vulnerability of the critic is another important issue raised within this concept. Lastly, Wordsworth anticipates the revolutionary potentials of his theoretical essay and its refining effect shows his interest in the moral value of literature. You will find Laxmana Murthy's conclusion on Wordsworth concept of criticism very incisive. Read it carefully.

> In his criticism of the limitations of the past and in his plan for the present and concern for the future, he has in his mind the undeniable obligation of criticism as part of a literary revolution. It has to establish the literary values in a world that sets a high premium on power and scientific methodicity. The critic must discover the avenues for existence and assert the unique validity of humanity. This critical principle has prompted Wordsworth to state his thoughts on poetry and its function clearly and cogently in his famous *Preface* to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 (N.D. 1).

It should be clear to you at this point that Wordsworth's creative process involves imitation of nature and human passions as it includes creativity. His creative process emphasizes the poet and imagination. For him, poetic impact is pleasure-centered but does not completely ignore human edification. A good literary text, in Wordsworth's view, should be presented in an ordinary language divested of all vulgarities. Again, it should exhibit pleasantness and maturity and be free from irrelevances, cruelty, the ugly and the painful. This means that the Nigerian Odia Ofeimun's poem 'How Can I Sing' (*The Poet Lied*) which presents an ugly "landscape of putrefying carcasses" intensified by an image of "giant vultures" hardly meets Wordsworth's approval. As we come to the end of this analysis, there are two points you must also observe. One is Wordsworth's insistence that bad poetry injures poets' reputation. The other is his

disappointment with the writers of his period.

Which other literary theorist pays attention to criticism and how is his view different from Wordsworth's?

4.3 Method

'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' uses a number of styles in its argument. It is/uses

1. Presented as a preface.
2. Simple but formal definitions and justifications of ideas.
3. Repetition.
4. Questions.
5. Examples
6. References to authorities.
7. Figurative devices.
8. Presented in a coherent, lucid and passionate manner.

The essay is presented as a preface to a collection of poems written on the advice of unidentified friends. Wordsworth's theory of poetry is therefore derived from his attempt to clarify certain novel attributes of his poems. Another method employed by the writer is justification of concepts and focus. Initially, he stated his reason for writing a preface and continuously justifies his choices of subject and style in creativity. This technique injects some measure of scholarship into the essay which is intensified by references to past theorists and critics including Aristotle and Reynolds. In addition, Wordsworth employs formal definitions and this is usually supported by elaborate illustrations. The definition helps the reader to capture the meanings of terms as conceived by Wordsworth. For example, he formally defines poetry and the poet. Moreover, the essay uses the question and answer method, especially in its attempt to define the poet and identify his functions. For instance, in defining the poet, it asks: "what is meant by the word poet? What is a poet? To whom does he address himself" (247). The questions work to emphasize different aspects of his interest in the poet. Wordsworth then proceeds to answer the

questions serially. The question and answer style makes it easy for the reader to identify his concern and follow his argument.

Furthermore, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' employs repetition. Wordsworth's definition of good poetry in page 243 is repeated in page 253 again his proposal on the impact of literature in page 252 is repeated in page 253. Again, Wordsworth uses examples to communicate his theory. For instance, he draws his examples from poets of different periods and regions including Terence, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Dryden, Pope, in his discussion on verse. Again, he uses Gray's Sonnet to discuss use of language in prose and poetic representations as he illustrates the abiding relationship between different genres of literature. The use of examples functions to concretize Wordsworth's ideas and thus facilitates effective communication.

Wordsworth's thesis is partly cast in figurative language. For instance, prose and poetry are personified to illustrate the similarity between both. Thus, "the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be the same substance, their affections are kindred" (246). Moreover, in describing the nature and functions of poetry and poets, he uses a lot of natural images and agricultural metaphors – soil, climate, rock, breath, earth (249, 250). This style appears like a deliberate attempt to keep his theory within his preferred subjects – the lowly and natural.

Again, Wordsworth's thesis is coherently presented and thus easy to follow. He discusses content and form in an orderly but passionate manner. The theory is exhibits originality and erudition. Again, the essay adopts simple but striking terms best exemplified in Wordsworth's perception of a poet as "a man speaking to men." This makes his work clear and facilitates comprehension. In Richard Dover's summary, 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' is "a masterpiece of English prose, exemplary in its lucid yet passionate defence of a literary style that could be popular without compromising artistic and poetic standards" (1995, p. 1).

SELF ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify other methods used in 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. Which of the methods do you consider more effective and why?

4.4 Significance/Contributions

The significance of 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' mainly lies in its advocacy for the use of the lowly and ordinary in poetic construction. Wordsworth's theory widens the literary scope, revolutionalises the content and form of literature, reinterprets the author and his environment, initiates a new critical approach and exerts a lot of influence on writers.

First, the theoretical essay functions to maintain and enlarge the critical continuum of the English literature. It does this by playing a representational role for Romanticism. Because it encapsulates the Romantic critical values, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' becomes, perhaps, the best articulation of the Romantic literary tradition. The essay bridges the gap between Neo-classical and Victorian periods and reinterprets the construction and consumption of literature. Hence, the theoretical treatise gains a lot of respect within English literary criticism. For achieving such a feat, Wordsworth's literary concept is counted among the most significant and seminal conceptual essays in the English Literary history and criticism.

In addition, Wordsworth's essay is very significant because it promotes the democratization of content and style of literature in his stand against lofty subject and formal style. The interest in the ordinary and lowly is indeed a major departure from existing literary norm. By inviting the humble and the daily into arts, he widens the scope of literature and makes it more accommodating. Wordsworth's interest in the humble and everyday represents one of the earliest and most important pronouncements on realism in literature. Realism characterizes the nineteenth century known as 'golden age of the novel'. Based on the identified factors, we can term Wordsworth's essay a radical piece. According to Clark, Wordsworth postulates what was "for the time and place a revolutionary perspective" on literature and which exerts a huge influence on literature making his assumptions ordinary and conventional (2006, p. 2). Several of Wordsworth's concepts have become widely accepted across ages and regions, even to this period. I guess that as a literary student, one of the first formal definitions of poetry you are introduced to is Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings …" (243).

Wordsworth's essay is again essential because it represents one of the initial philosophical studies of the literary artist. His perception of the creative writer is very unique because it considers both internal and external factors. Wordsworth is one of the earliest theorists to make efforts to perceive the creative writer in relation his physical and social spaces. This is where the work mainly derives its psychological and social characters. Have you noticed how Wordsworth's views assume the status of a pace-setter in many ways?

Furthermore, Wordsworth's theoretical essay initiates the expressive approach to criticism without rejecting mimetic and objective persuasions. This it achieves by its emphasis on the creative writer's passion and imagination. Wordsworth is also one writer who initially interprets the relationship between the author and his physical and social surroundings. His interpretations have had a lot of influence on critics. It is expedient to reemphasize the fact that 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' is one of the most important critical writings in the history of English Criticism and it has a lot of influence on subsequent critical ideas and positions. For Thrall et al., the work is "of prime importance in the history of English literature and criticism" (1960, p. 120). 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' is indeed a very important theoretical work in the English literary history in spite of its limitations.

4.5 Limitations

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' maintains a number of flaws and elicits scholarly attacks, especially on its view on language. Many critics consider his view on metre unclear, imprecise and indefensible. Moreover, his advocacy for contemplation as a major process of poetic construction seems to repudiate his position on the employment of everyday speech. This is because the factor of selectivity makes it difficult for a literary artist to employ the natural language of everyday conversation. Therefore, Wordsworth "contradicts himself" because the creative writer selects his words cautiously at the level of contemplation and this makes it hardly possible for him to, use the language "really used by men" (Barad, 2012, p. 13). In addition, Wordsworth's avoidance of his approved poetic language and style in his poems seems like a rejection of his own theory in practice. This tends to validate the positions of his critics like Eliot and Coleridge.

4.6 Application

If you need to critique a literary text based on Wordsworth's literary principles, you have to watch out for how much the writer is able to:

Represent the lowly and marginalised.

 Depict rural settings.

Imitate nature and human emotions.

Use literary devices cautiously and judiciously and avoid clichés, poetic diction, synthetic expression and archaisms, as well as irrelevancies and cruelty.

Employ everyday conversational language but that which is divested of all vulgarities.

Primarily provide pleasure and still edify the reader.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 6

Study the poems 'The World is Too Much With Us' and 'Tintern Abbey' and determine if and to what extent Wordsworth adheres to his literary principles in poetic construction.

5.0 Conclusion

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' is intended to introduce the reader to the 'different' poems written by Wordsworth. Wordsworth, in that theoretical essay, propounded radical ideas in terms of subject and style of literature. The revolutionary slant of the theory is located in his advocacy for the use of lowly and rural subjects as well as ordinary language as against the traditional lofty subjects and formal language. He thus became one of the major voices of the voiceless in English literary history. Wordsworth's concept of the poet and poetry is also very incisive and gives the theory an expressive perspective. Wordsworth's view is lucidly and coherently delivered but exhibits certain limitations. However, those flaws hardly detract from the merits and influence of his literary principles.

6.0 Summary

The third unit of the third module of our study guide discusses the literary theory of William Wordsworth as contained in 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. In this unit you have been introduced to:

The major characteristics of the Romantic period which the essay represents.

Basic concepts of Wordsworth's view on the nature and functions of literature; his pronouncements on subject, style, poet, poetry and criticism as well as the critical approaches of his views.

The key passages of the preface.

Analysis of Wordsworth's views.

Contributions of the essay to criticism and its flaws.

Considerations for textual analysis from Wordsworth's perspective.

7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

Considering Wordsworth's view on style of poetry, what is his idea of a good literary text?

Wordsworth is described as "a voice of the voiceless" in the concluding part of this unit. Justify this title in relation to his literary theory.

Wordsworth's definition of poet and poetry is quite telling. Based on both definitions, analyse his views on the qualities and responsibilities of a poet as well as the functions of literature.

'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' has identifiable relationships with other literary principles previously discussed in this study guide. In what ways does Wordsworth's ideas reflect Plato's Aristotle's and Sydney's.

Wordsworth's essay is generally acknowledged as a revolutionary theoretical piece. Discuss how the essay has impacted upon the development of English literary theory, despite its limitations.

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MODULE 3 UNIT 4   MATHEW ARNOLD'S LITERARY PRINCIPLE

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Module 3 Unit 4 discusses the conceptual postulations of Mathew Arnold contained in the seminal essay, 'The Study of Poetry' (1880). Arnold is one of the most recognised literary theorists of the Victorian period of the English literary history, together with 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time'. He therefore represents a landmark in Western literary criticism. It is therefore important that we study Arnold's ideas on literature because that will enable us acquire an insight into the critical temperament of a major period of literary criticism.

The first part of this unit supplies a brief background to Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry' and discusses the major characteristics of the Victorian period of the English literature. This backdrop functions to give you a glimpse into the foundation of Arnold's philosophy of literature. After the background comes the main content. The main content encloses a summary of Arnold's literary principle including his primary ideas on the nature and functions of literature. Furthermore, his statements on the role and method of criticism are also identified in that part. You need to pay very close attention to this section as it constitutes a very important part of this unit. The following segments – Analysis and Implications – are respectively concerned with the most fundamental ideas expressed by Arnold's essay as well as their implications. Thus, both enable you to closely follow Arnold's argument. The Analysis sub-section employs scholarly views on 'The Study of Poetry' to discern the corollary of Arnold's theory of arts and establish his approach to literary analysis. You also need to pay attention to this part for it will aid your understanding of the essay under discussion.

Furthermore, your understanding of Arnold's essay can hardly be described as comprehensive if you cannot discuss his method of presentation and its impact on his theme. Included in this unit is therefore a section on his method. Again, the contributions of 'The Study of Poetry' to literary development and perceivable flaws of the essay are also included to provide a wholesome view of Arnold's literary theory. Moreover, a list of procedure for analysis of literary texts from Wordsworth's perspective is also supplied at the end of Module 3 Unit 4. Before you get out of this unit, you should be able to assess yourself on your understanding of Arnold's literary principle encapsulated in 'The Study of Poetry'. That is the essence of the self-assessment exercises placed at the different sections of this unit. Please make sure you deal with them all. That is not all; at the end of this unit a tutor-marked assignment is included. You are required to do that assignment as directed by your tutor for us to achieve our objective in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of Module 3 Unit 4, you should be able to:

Identify the influence of the Neo-classical period on Arnold's critical essay, 'The Study of Poetry'.

Discuss Arnold's expectation from a good literary text in terms of quality and function.

Note points of intersections between Arnold's view and literary principles of previous periods.

Analyze Arnold's principle of criticism and comment on his application of such in his reading of texts.

Evaluate Arnold's presentation method, the significance and limitations of 'The Study of Poetry'.

Examine literary texts using Arnold's touchstone theory.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Arnold sets his criticism against the background of the crisis of religion, human traditions and philosophies of the Victorian era. The Victorian period is marked by unusual rapid socio-economic and political developments with intense consequences. Technological and intellectual developments like industrialization and attendant urbanization, Darwin's theory of evolution and the theory of Positivism facilitated class distinction, sectional disputes, interrogation of religious truths, and so on. The consequence of all these is socio-economic crises and political conflicts. Arnold seeks to proffer solutions to all these anomalies in his several writings. His oeuvre is made up of his poems (1850s), the first volume of his literary criticisms (1860s), his social criticisms (1870s) and the second volume of his critical writings (1880s). Arnold's critical essays are contained in *Essays in Criticism* (1865-1888). 'The Study of Poetry' appeared in the later

volume and his statements. The essays are heavily influenced by Victorian realities and sensibilities as evident in his basic assumptions.

3.2   BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Arnold's theoretical essay, 'The Study of Poetry', postulates on the features and functions of literature as well as the role and standards of criticism. He thus makes statements on both literature and criticism.

3.2.1   Features and Functions of Poetry

'The Study of Poetry' displays Arnold's concept of literature in his view of the nature and functions of literature. Arnold starts his conceptual thesis by declaring a glorious future for literature through his conviction that "the future of poetry is immense" (334). According to him, literature, in its excellent form, holds that which is needed to sustain his society across different ages. He observes the vulnerability of creeds and traditions especially religion in his age. In Arnold's view, those structures, like religion, connect emotionally to assumed facts which are fallible while literature emotionally connects to ideas which is infallible. In his judgment, literature should be more valued than it was in his period and should be assigned a higher status and called upon to take up more functions in its society. In his ladder of disciplines, literature occupies the uppermost echelon and is as such superior to Science, Religion and Philosophy. He supports Aristotle's concept that Literature is superior to History because unlike History, it encapsulates "a higher truth and a higher seriousness" (341). Again, Arnold employs Wordsworth's position that literature is the best of all disciplines to validate his view. Consequently, Arnold reasons that the standard for literature must be set high as only an excellent literature can respond effectively to the elevated position literature occupies and the functions it is called to perform. Readers in his thinking, must get used to "a high standard and to a strict judgment" (334). For him charlatanism has no place in arts which should be kept uncontaminated and sacred.

Arnold defines literature as "a criticism of life" regulated by poetic truth and poetic beauty and which preserves the essence of a people when all other structures collapse (335). In his estimation, literature has the ability to interpret life, console and sustain humanity. The theorist postulates that the best poetry is that which has formative, sustaining, invigorative and pleasing

capacity in a manner nothing else does. He adds that "the most precious benefit" of literature to humanity is the strength and joy derivable from a literary collection (335). For him readers should be constantly conscious of this value so they can benefit from it. Drawing from Aristotle's postulation, Arnold states that the greatness of a literary piece derives from two essential qualities which it must possess in an exceptional degree. The first is truth and seriousness, in relation to substance and matter. The second is and diction and movement in relation to style and manner. He adds that "the two superiorities are closely related … inseparable", hence one can hardly be achieved without the other (341).

Arnold posits that his concepts are "dry generalities" (341) whose complete potency lies solely in its application. The theorist believes that a student of literature, like you, will understand his abstract statements better if he/she applies them to literary criticism than if he – Arnold – applies them himself. This is a challenge you should take up immediately.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 1

In one foolscap page, summarise Arnold's view on the status and qualities of literature.

3.2.2   Standard and Role of Criticism

Arnold's critical essay includes a proposed standard for textual analysis. Arnold posits that a literary work should be evaluated on the basis of its excellence and the value it offers to the reader. He advances three types of estimates based on how a literary piece relates to the reader. These are: Real estimate, Historic estimate and Personal estimate (335). Arnold states that the reader should be conscious of the excellence as well as the power and pleasure the work elicits. According to Arnold, this awareness should guide a reader's estimate and that represents his real estimate. He further describes both the historic and personal estimates as natural but "fallacious" (335). He goes on to explain that the fallacy of historical estimate occurs when a writer is rated above his worth due to his central position in the constitution of a given national literary tradition. On the other hand, when a piece of work is rated higher than it should because of personal preferences rooted in affiliations, fondness and conditions, the fallacy of personal estimate occurs. Arnold posits that while the historic estimate usually comes to play in the course

of analyzing works of earliest writers, personal estimate rears its head when readers evaluate modern and contemporary writers. Arnold identifies the real estimate as "the only true one" but that which is prone to being replaced by the other two (335). Applying the real estimate, for him, is the sole means of deriving optimal benefit from literature.

For Arnold, the best approach to identifying excellent work in literary analysis is to select and use passages from "line and expressions of great writes and apply them as a touchstone to other poetry" (339). In his view, long and short passages; even a single line, can function adequately as a touchstone. He hypothesises that a tactful and judicious recognition, retention and employment of excellent lines delivered by the literary masters will help a reader avoid fallacious estimates because such passages will guide him/her towards real estimate in literary analysis. Arnold demonstrates his concept of touchstone with excerpts from respective works of Homer, Dante, Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton. Putting his touchstone theory to work, Arnold dislodges M. Vitet's examination of Turoldis' *Chanson de Roland*. In his view, Vitet's criticism exemplifies a historic estimate and as such is fallacious because it attaches more importance to the work than it really deserves. For him Vitet accords to that literary piece an excellent evaluation only due to excellent works exemplified by Homeric epic poetries like *Iliad*. In Arnold's opinion, critics belabor themselves unnecessarily in a bid to identify abstract qualities which define an excellent literature when all they need do is use "concrete examples" by taking specimens of the finest quality in literary examination (340).

Furthermore, Arnold traces the development of the English literature from the 12th and 13th centuries to the Romantic period. He examines on the relationship between different European regional varieties including English, French Italy and the contributions of different writers to that development. Arnold also evaluates the writings of authors of different periods of English literature including Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden and Shakespeare and Wordsworth in a bid to identify classics and non-classics. In his estimation, Chaucer's significance in English literary tradition is real and not based on historic estimate. Arnold adds that Chaucer's departure from the romance tradition is evident in the substance and style of his literature. He classifies Chaucer's point of view as truly human, from the perspective of *The Canterbury Tales*. In his analysis, Chaucer's work "has truth and substance" (343) and his style possesses fluidity of language and movement. However, for Arnold, his work is not a classic because it lacks "the

high and excellent seriousness" which is one of the fundamental qualities of good literature observed in the works of Homer Dante and Shakespeare (345). He classifies Shakespeare and Milton as classical writers using the real estimate which has "universal currency" (345) and Dryden and Pope he assigns the position of classics of English prose rather than poetry. In Gray's scanty body of works, Arnold discovers poetic classic based on the potency of his criticism of life. In addition, he considers the estimates of Wordsworth's and Shelly's works passionately personal. In his real estimate of Burns, Arnold finds his work lacking the high poetic virtue of classic writers though it exhibits truth of matter and manner. He goes further to itemise the differences between Burns and Chaucer in manner and method of writing.

In his evaluation of Dryden and Pope, Arnold postulates on the development of the prose genre after the restoration period. He identifies the "needful qualities for a fit prose" (347). These he identifies as regularity, uniformity, precision and balance. Arnold insists that prose writers must achieve these. However, he adds that writers' attempt at solely achieving these qualities introduces a form of suppression which stifles the literary work.

Moreover Arnold holds that displaying great writers, especially through those who value them, puts such writers in positions where they are validated and accorded the prominence they deserve. Arnold believes that in spite of abundance of texts and readers in his period, the relevance and preeminence of classics will be sustained, not by the world's conscious and calculated choice but by man's self-preservation instinct. This is because such works contain very deep ideas with universal value. In the end, the literary theorist notes that he has worked to advance and employ a method that will facilitate a realistic analysis of literature using classic writers and works. This, according to him, is to provide guidance for any critic who wishes to use his method of criticism.

SELF-ASSSMENT EXERCISE 2

Why do you think Arnold describes historic and personal estimates as "fallacious?"

4.0   FURTHER ANALYSIS

4.1   Key Passages

If you have read Arnold' essay closely, you will identify some passages that hold the key to his ideas. Some of those are listed below.

1. Page 333 – subject, purpose and focus of Arnold's criticism and status, nature and functions of literature.
2. Page 335 – definition, end and aim of literature and standard for criticism.
3. Page 336 – definition and nature of classics and approach to reading a classic.
4. Page 339 – concept of touchstone.
5. Page 340 – suggestion for easier, practical and effective textual criticism.
6. Page 341 – qualities of an excellent work of art and Arnold's invitation to students of literature.
7. Page 345 – the source of greatness of great writers and power of great writings.
8. Page 347 – qualities of a good prose.
9. Page 353 – the essence of Arnold's method

4.2   Implications

From our conversation so far you must have observed that 'The Study of Literature' theorises on status, meaning and quality of literature as well as standard and method of criticism. Arnold therefore acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between literary texts and criticism. Right from the beginning, it is obvious that Arnold's essay is conscious of the diminished influence of religion, which was relegated to a secondary position in the Victorian period. According to Kaplan and Anderson, he considers "crisis of faith" the central issue of his period (333). The essay displays his intellectual attempt at providing solutions to the crisis of religion, culture and traditions and this he does by transferring the hitherto moral function of religion to literature. However, Arnold's statement on the quality of good literature clarifies his position, demonstrates his cautiousness and interest in a particular type of literature.

4.2.1   Quality and Function of Literature

Arnold's view that superior truth and high significance rendered in vigorous and lucid style are the most important quality of an excellent literature contradicts the Romantic idea which promotes the lowly. Nevertheless, Arnold's writing shows influences of Wordsworth's scholarship, especially with the concern for religion. Nevertheless, the styles of both theorists differ.

Furthermore, Arnold's advancement of two essential qualities of good literature validates the inevitable relationship between content and form and this is intensified by his view on the literary role of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Arnold's insistence that these qualities must be possessed in no mean measure illustrates his expectations from a good literary text. His position is invigorated by his view that charlatanism must be excluded from literature to maintain its wholesomeness. Have you noted that Arnold is primarily concerned with that which is true and high? Thus, his idea of an excellent literature is clearly stated and connotes his concept of a good writer. In M. H. Abrams' interpretation, Arnold believes that "the poet must be a serious thinker who could offer guidance for his readers" (1987, p. 2113). We can therefore conclude that Arnold is basically a moralist. Again, Arnold's placement of literature at the highest rank in the hierarchy of disciplines expresses his thoughts on the status of literature and his position aligns with Aristotle's, Sydney's and Wordsworth's. For instance, his view that Literature provides better knowledge for humanity than science corresponds with Wordsworth's.

It is also important that you understand the implication of Arnold's concept of the nature and functions of literature. His definition of literature as "a criticism of life" underscores the interpretative role of literature within human existence. Furthermore, Arnold's statement on the aims of literature represents a functional view without totally ignoring the entertainment value of arts. You remember that Dryden's concept emphasizes the pleasure principle over the utilitarian value but for Arnold the reverse is the case. Arnold's essay is at sync with Sydney's 'An Apology for Poetry' and Shelley's 'A Defence of Poetry'. Both underscore the moral essence of poetry and thus justify the importance and position of poetry in human development. Arnold's

inclusion of the entertainment value of literature pitches him against Plato's position which totally advocates the functional value of arts.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 3

What can you make out of Arnold's definition of poetry as "a criticism of life" especially in relation to Wordsworth's definition previously discussed in the previous unit?

4.2.2   Criticism

Furthermore, Arnold's insistence that the ability of the reader to benefit from a literary work depends on his/her awareness of the value of such piece displays his expectations from a reader and his interest in the impact of a literary text. He expects readers to recognise excellent writings and engage in stringent evaluation of literary works. Did you notice that Arnold, unlike Wordsworth, pays less attention to authors? Arnold's essay dedicates more attention to criticism than it did to the literary text and the author. Radhika Lakshmi (N. D., p. 1) notes this penchant for critical matters as advanced by another scholar. According to him:

> Where Aristotle analyses the work of art, Arnold analyses the role
> of the critic. The one gives us the principles which govern the
> making of a poem, the other the principles by which the best
> poems should be selected and made known. Aristotle's critic owes
> allegiance to the artist, but Arnold's critic has a duty to society.

Remember that Arnold equally makes some significant statements on criticism and these have a lot of implications especially within the realm of Literary Studies. Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry' suggests that the socio-political anomalies of the Victorian period could be remedied by employing a new perspective to criticism in the development of a healthy society. In other words, Arnold's criticism is interested in how criticism can improve the cultural wellbeing of its society. Therefore, he assigns to criticism the function of helping man sanitise his cultural

environment. In his view art cannot be separated from morality. This interpretation illustrates Arnold's demands on criticism and critics and his discontent with the prevalent critical pattern of his period. With Arnold the critic assumes the responsibility of an advocate of excellent ideas instructor and custodian of public view. For him critical practice does not exclude cultural value. He therefore postulates that the role of the literary critic goes beyond pointing out the excellences and flaws of a literary.

You can now perceive why Arnold goes further to set a standard for evaluating literature after his statement on the importance of poetry in human existence. Arnold's critical standard is expressed in his touchstone theory. The concept of touchstone remains one of the most important contributions of Arnold to literary criticism. The concept is intended to assist a critic in differentiating between excellent and mediocre literatures. He conceives literature as an instrument of man's salvation and for that reason insists that great literatures must be distinguished and acknowledged. In fact, his essay ends in stating his intension to facilitate an objective textual analysis. In its dependence on specimens from great works of literature, the touchstone concept manifests an objective and comparative approach to criticism. Again, Arnold's touchstone idea expressly votes for concrete instances as against abstract illustrations in criticism. In addition it reveals Arnold's admiration and preference for certain writers and texts.

It should be obvious to you that the principle of the three estimates identifies factors that affect criticism as it points out what critics, including you, must avoid or consider in order to engage in an objective evaluation of a text. Arnold's classification of the historic and personal estimates as "fallacious" describes his impression that both are misleading unlike the real estimate which, alone, facilitates an accurate and effective criticism. Henry James (1908, p. 3) summarises Arnold's specification of "the actual duty of criticism" as "simply to get at the best thought which is current,— to see things in themselves as they are,— to be disinterested." Arnold's search for the best, which underlies his touchstone concept, is here articulated. In addition, his attempt at avoiding all forms of biases underlines his objective inclination towards criticism.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 4

Arnold's standard of criticism is articulated in the touchstone concept. Describe this concept as you understand it and state how it works.

There is something you must not ignore in Arnold's essay. That is his rejection of criticism which shows absolute allegiance to national literature or given age. His demand is that literary critics should significantly and objectively examine ideas explicated in foreign literatures and different periods. Arnold therefore expands the horizon of criticism giving it an international and inter-period character also observed in Dryden's theory. He endorses his own theory in his examination of literary texts and writers of different European nations and various literary eras.

Arnold's essay provides you with a concise analysis of English writers, from Chaucer to Burns. The conceptual treatise exhibits an unusual familiarity with literatures of different regions – Italian, Greek, French, and so on. Different authors of different ages supply the virtues Arnold searches for in literary texts. These include Homer's *Iliad*, Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *Hamlet*, John Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. According to Lakshmi**,** "Chaucer, in Arnold's view, in spite of his virtues such as benignity, largeness, and spontaneity, lacks seriousness. Burns too lacks sufficient seriousness, because he was hypocritical in that while he adopted a moral stance in some of his poems, in his private life he flouted morality (2). Arnold's preference for the classical is obvious just like his censure of the Romantic "suggestive" style is. His dependence on classics indicates the value he places on classical works and the reverence he has for classic writers like Dante, Homer, Milton and Shakespeare. In his analysis of Chaucer's works, he also critiques Johnson's position on Dryden's analysis of Chaucer's style. In addition, his analysis, based on his touchstone concept, disagrees with the French critic Vitet's comparison of *Chanson de Roland, an epic poem* by Turoldus and *Iliad* by Homer. He therefore engages in meta-criticism.

Arnold is conversant with not just the literature and writers of his world but also with the critical trend. For instance, he invokes the theoretical thoughts expressed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' and Dryden's postscript in the translation of Virgil. This makes him a consummate literary scholar. What does this tell you? Simple! It speaks of Arnold's acute perceptive ability and familiarity with a wide-range of literary works.

4.2.3   General

In summary, 'The Study of Poetry', illustrates Arnold's assumption on the essential considerations of literary analysis and these are the creative process, poetic text and reception of literature. His thesis considers knowledge as an essential element of the creative process. Moreover, his proposition is that a poetic text ought to be sound and realistic in its depiction of knowledge of the human nature and noble image of humanity in a fluid and natural style. On reception, Arnold's treatise demonstrates a functional approach by his concept of poetry as a consoling, sustaining and pleasure agent with formative and invigorative functions.

Before we end this section, there is a very important issue raised by Arnold which you must keep in mind as a literary student and a potential critic. That issue is his invitation to literary students, like you, to test the strength of his abstract statements by applying them in textual examination. That part of his essay highlights two crucial points. First, Arnold emphasises the need for you to realize that the best way to understand conceptual ideas advanced by different theorists of various periods is to personally apply them in textual analysis. In addition, he highlights the bond between theory and criticism and the role of critics, like you, within that relationship. Please take his word seriously if you must succeed in this course.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 5

Arnold recognises Chaucer's input to the development of English literature. Identify three Nigerian authors who have contributed most in establishing the canon of African literature?

4.3   METHOD

In the 'The Study of Poetry', Arnold adopts a number of styles to project his conceptual ideas. The essay is a coherent well organised argument presented in a conversational style. Again, Arnold's thoughts are delivered in an accessible language and at times uttered in figurative terms. Additionally, he uses references, concrete examples, question and answer and comparative method.

Arnold's conceptual essay, 'The Study of Poetry', is presented in a conversational method using the personal pronouns – 'I, we, you, our'. This creates an ambience of familiarity and affinity that makes his readers easily identify with his ideas and positions. For James, it is "a striking

example of the intelligent amiability which animates his style" (1908, p. 2). Moreover, Arnold expresses some of his thoughts in figurative terms. For instance, in his explication of the perennial appeal of classics, he employs Biblical allusion thus: "if we lived as long as Methuselah …" (337). Again, He describes poetry as "the mighty river" made of "several streams" and Pope as "the splendid high priest an age of prose and reason" (334 and 347). His vivid images and universal symbols infuse clarity into his essay and this style reveals his creative competence.

One of the most observable styles employed by Arnold is references to creative and critical writings. Thus he refers to Wordsworth's definition of poetry as he invokes other renowned scholars including Aristotle, Napoleon, Saint-Beuve, and M. Charles d'Hericault. You need to take special interest in the manner he quotes copiously from the "lively and accomplished critic" d'Hericault in order to dislodge his position on the effect of classic on contemporary literature (336). Arnold therefore draws from other sources not only to validate but also to repudiate certain ideas. This method makes the essay erudite.

In addition, Arnold uses several literary evidences to put his hypothesis to test. His analysis of Vitet's examination of the *Chanson de Roland* in comparison to Homer's *Iliad*, represents one of the best examples of employing his own touchstone theory in criticism. Arnold's essay, from this perspective, covers both theory and practice. This style shifts Arnold's literary principle from abstract to practical. As a literary student, you have a lot to learn from Arnold's style of placing both theory and practice side by side.

 Arnold's language is simple, lucid, coherent and thus accessible. Please go back to page 335 and read his expression of literature as the criticism of life and his view on charlatanism. Observe his use of language in that passage! Can't you feel the pulse and potency of his ideas? Note how he communicates his principles of literature. His success as a theorist and critic does not only derive from his ideas but also from his capacity to express such ideas in clear, logical and energetic terms. No wonder Thrall et al. (1960, p. 122) submit that "his vigorous and lucid style and his high ideals of life and literature have made him an extremely powerful figure in the history of criticism." Indeed Arnold is a potent force in the sphere of literary theory and criticism.

Arnold's ideas are properly organised. The essay started by identifying the subject of discussion and this identifies the theorist's focus from the beginning. It then proceeds to discuss the status, qualities and functions of good poetry. Based on his view on poetry, Arnold goes further to suggest the best approach to reading literature in order to optimize its benefits. Furthermore, he uses practical literary and critical examples to buttress his points in details. In the end, he reiterates his intention of postulating his theory. Arnold's ideas are all effectively linked. For instance in page 335, he notes the function of poetry in human development and skillfully brings in the need for the reading of a literary text to be guided by that purpose. The connection provides an excellent basis for him to introduce and discuss the three estimates and the touchstone principle which are the most central aspects of 'The Study of Poetry'. The impact of this method is that the reader easily connects with different parts of Arnold's essay and so follows his thoughts almost effortlessly.

Moreover, the essay deploys the question and answer method as well as the comparative methods in advancing its thesis. The question and answer method is extensively utilized in his evaluation of Dryden's prose (347). This method helps the reader to pay attention to issues that are important to Arnold and assess his attitude towards such issues. Again, the comparative method is extensively used in his illustration of the differences between poets, poetries, regions and periods. This method enables him to underscore distinctive merits and flaws of literary works. In other words, this style offers you the opportunity of observing the relationship between writers and writings and as a critic, you need the knowledge. In theory and by practice, Arnold advocates the use of comparative method in criticism. Additionally, the essay employs repetition. For example, his view that "Chaucer is not one of the great classics" is repeated two times in page 334. Finally one cannot but agree with James that "the manner of his (Arnold's) Essays is a model of what criticisms should be. … Mr. Arnold's Essays in Criticism come to … readers with a reputation already made,— the reputation of a charming style, a great deal of excellent feeling …" (1908, p. 1; 5). Thus, Arnold's insightful essay is a delight to a reader like you. It is a very significant treatise in the history of literary criticism.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 6

Arnold, like Plato, presented his essay in a conversational manner. How does this method, together with the others discussed above, facilitate your understanding of Arnold's concept of literature?

4.4   Significance/Contribution

'The Study of Poetry' is a very significant conceptual essay in literary criticism where it serves as a representative of a major critical period. However, its significance draws largely from Arnold's conjectural statements on poetic qualities and critical standards. Arnold's statements in the essay widen the influential scope of literature and criticism. Furthermore, the essay redirects critical approach and calls attention to classics. Due to all these contributions, Arnold's essay wields a huge influence on writers and critics.

First, the essay under study is significant because it functions as a veritable voice of the Victorian period and passion in its interpretation of literary production and consumption. The essay forms a connection between the Romantic period and the Modern periods. It helps to end the post-classical period and prepares the way for modern criticism and so participates in sustaining the English critical corpus. Another factor that makes Arnold's essay very significant is his interpretation of the qualities and role of good literature and writer. In discussing the qualities of excellent literature, Arnold expands and elevates literature and presents literary writers as interpreters of life. Again, his idea of "truth and seriousness" and "diction and movement", as features of a good text, enlarges the critical register. Adepitan (1991, p. 154) describes both as "new nomenclatures for the not-so-new notion of content and form." Related to the above is Arnold's view on the role of criticism and the critic and that is one of his major contributions to literary criticism. He makes criticism play a constructive role at the societal level. He thus ennobles the critic by making him/her a monitor of societal values. Consequently, Arnold identifies the social function of both literature and the criticism. He assigns to both a moral role and that adds to the significance of his essay.

Though it appears scientific, Arnold's touchstone principle has become a major register in literary theory and criticism. The concept relies on texts as the standard for criticism and this makes Arnold's theory less abstract and distant. Hence, his essay is important in its capacity to go beyond abstract concepts to real examination of literary texts. This introduces practicality into criticism. Additionally, Arnold's attention to text illustrates an objective approach to criticism and this is recognized as his key contribution to the field of literary study. Apart from promoting the objective approach, Arnold also employs an international and a cross-epochal method. This confers a comparative slant on 'The Study of Poetry'. One of Arnold's contributions which cannot be diminished is his recognition of the perennial excellence of classic literatures in criticism. His achievement is intensified by the fact that the acknowledgment appears in an age when the mission to cast away the old for the new is at its peak as championed by the Romantic tradition. The import of Arnold's multiple approach is articulated by several critics. Listen to some of them and as you do get ready to make you own submissions and conclusions. Arthur Clough and James Thomson (2000, p. 2) hold that:

> Criticism in England was altogether too provincial. Nothing quite like this had been stated in English before, and no critic, in his practice, made so sedulous an effort as Arnold to convince his countrymen of their insularity and to persuade them to acquire a European outlook in literature and art.

Abrams posits that 'The Study of Poetry' has been extraordinarily potent in shaping literary tastes in England and in America" (1987, p. 2171; foot note). Lakshmi's rather long statement further expands Abrams' concise observation in his submission that:

> 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 … and 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 the two primary tools of criticism. … Arnold's evaluations of the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats are landmarks in descriptive criticism, and as a poet-critic he occupies an eminent position in the rich galaxy of poet-critics of English literature. **(N. D. p. 1)**

That says it all! His insight into the functions of literature and criticism reinterpreted both and advanced the course of literary studies. Arnold's ideas have exerted a huge influence on later critics like Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater who preach the aesthetic gospel and advocate a divorce between textual accounts and the social and moral implications. Nevertheless, his essays are not without blemishes.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 7

Which of Arnold's contributions do you find most remarkable and why?

4.5   Limitations

'The Study of Poetry' maintains perceivable flaws based on Arnold's ideas on the nature and function of literature and standard of criticism. Arnold's view and expectations assigns to literature a little more burden that it could comfortably bear. Note that he expects literature to take over the moral role of religion in his crises-ridden society. The implication is that he tends to expect a little too much from literature and that is where his critical work maintains a conspicuous error. Again, his approach to religion is almost dismissive and that could be interpreted as a theoretical undermining of one of the most important social institution of any human society.

Remember that we identified the objective tendency of Arnold's principle. His leaning insists on the primacy of text in criticism and as such treats a text as an independent entity. However, Arnold defines literature as a criticism of life. This implies that literature and life are intertwined and so human society cannot be separated from literature. Have you noticed the inconsistency

maintained in Arnold's essay? There is a demarcation between literature and the world it is called to probe. This stands his perception of literature as a criticism of life on its head.

Again, Arnold's touchstone theory suggests that literature cannot be criticized without recourse to specimens from other works and this is debatable. In addition, his choice of classics appears a little too sentimental and subjective. His criticism seems at times faulty. For instance, he considers Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as lacking in high seriousness which is one of the two qualities he stipulates for literature. Thus, Arnold tends to allow "his personal values" interfere in his evaluation of Chaucer's and Burns poetries (Kaplan and Anderson, 2000, p. 333-4). His examination of Chaucer fails to acknowledge the full significance of comic literature.

Arnold's essay appears a little subjective and exhibits elements of egotism and for a critic that advocates objectivity; the noted bias represents a major flaw. In addition, his position takes little notice of positive qualities of the Romantic writings like love of nature and humanitarianism and displays a note of cynicism. Again, Arnold hardly recognizes the significance and focus of lyrical poetry which projects the individuality of the writer. These criticisms, especially the former, may sound stringent but we must admit that though Arnold promotes detachment he puts too much of himself in the essay and that is why some critics consider it too sentimental.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 8

What other inadequacies (content and form) have you observed in the essay under discussion?

4.6   Application

To apply Arnold's critical standard, you have to:

Identify an excellent literary piece on the basis of how such maintains high standard and possesses the qualities of truth and seriousness, in terms of matter and diction, and movement, in terms of manner.

Understand your role as an advocate of noble ideas and custodian of moral values.

Take a functional perspective to criticism and thus rate a literature text based on the value it offers in terms of its ability to perform interpretative, formative, sustaining, invigorating and entertaining roles.

Engage in a real estimate of a text using the touchstone theory.

Choose the objective and sociological approaches to criticism.

Adopt an international leaning and exhibit consciousness of different ages of literature in criticism.

Be conscious and respectful of classics.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 9

Which expressions in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Homer's *Iliad* can you apply as touchstones in your reading of two modern literary texts of your choice?

5.0   Conclusion

Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry' is a landmark essay in the history of literary theory and criticism. The essay is set against the background of socio-economic and political crises which characterise the Victorian period. Arnold's literary theory is concerned not only with literature but also with criticism. He makes philosophical statements on the status, functions and qualities of literature. In addition, he advances the principle that should guide criticism and identifies the best form of attitude to literary criticism. His view of literature and criticism is moderated by the factor of utility. Arnold's theory goes back to classics which are largely ignored by Romantic criticism. Some of the best merits derivable from 'The Study of Poetry' are first, its wide scope in terms of exploiting literatures of various European nations and periods. Again is its practical engagement with literary texts using its own touchstone concept and this style takes Arnold's essay beyond theory into practice and both represent the core of ENG815. Arnold's essay, though not without blemishes, contains a lot of merits and has remained important in the field of Literary Studies.

6.0   Summary

Module 3 Unit 4 of ENG815 discusses Mathew Arnold's conceptual treatise, 'The Study of Poetry'. This unit works to get you familiar with:

The background to Arnold's literary principle.

 The main points of Arnold's theory of literature.

Arnold's critical standard and his view on the role of criticism.

 Some of the major passages of the 'The Study of Poetry'.

An analysis of Arnold's philosophical ideas.

Significances and flaws of Arnold's literary theory.

Guidelines to literary examination based on Arnold's artistic concepts.

7.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment

1.   'The Study of Poetry' proposed two qualities which must mark every great work of art. Discuss these in relation to Aristotle's view on a good literary text.

2.   Do you agree that Arnold's concept of literature and criticism exhibits a functional persuasion? Defend your position. Please note that reference to other literary theorists and scholars will help your essay.

3.   Based on the statement below, discuss Arnold's critical standard as contained in 'The Study of Poetry'.

> Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of great poetry. It is much better to have recourse to concrete examples; to take specimens of the poetry of … the very highest quality …

4.   Justify the claim that Arnold's thesis takes a practical and objective approach to criticism and maintains a European outlook more than most of the essays discussed in this study guide.

5.   In Henry James words, "Mr. Arnold's Essays in Criticism come to … readers with a … reputation of a charming style, a great deal of excellent feeling, and an almost equal amount of questionable reasoning." Bearing this view in mind, discuss the significances and flaws of Matthew Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry'.

6. Arnold challenges students of literature, like you, to apply the general principles he advances in criticism. Based on that invitation, choose specimens from any two modern African fiction and use such in an examination of two contemporary African fictions. Your ability to justify your choices will attract extra marks.

9.0   References/Further Reading

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MODULE 4 UNIT 1:   LITERARY THEORY OF T. S. ELIOT.

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20.0   Further Analysis

1.0   Introduction

Welcome to the last module of this Study Guide. This module discusses the Modern and Post-modern periods of literary theory and criticism. Module 4 Unit 1 starts with the philosophical ideas of Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) on literary construction, consumption and criticism. T. S. Eliot is a 20th century American-born English poet and critic. According to Alan Pryce-Jones (1979, p. 748) T. S. Eliot is "the pivotal leader" among English writers in English in the twentieth century. Eliot's reputation is mostly based on his very influential critical statements on literature as expressed in "Tradition and Individual Talent" (*Sacred Woods* 1920). The essay ushered in the modern period of literary criticism and that is why Eliot is arguably the most important voice of 20th century criticism. Therefore, to do well in this course, you should pay attention to Eliot's postulations on literature.

This unit, like others before it, is divided into different segments to enable you follow Eliot's arguments gradually. The first part forms the background to the essay and provides a concise

exploration of Eliot's 20th century English society and his career as a critic. It is followed by the Main Content section which encapsulates Eliot's concepts on national literary heritage, the author and the relationship between both. Eliot's essay also expresses his text-based idea of literary criticism. After that, some passages that hold Eliot's most significant thoughts are identified. This study guide, in addition interprets the implications of Eliot's statements under Analysis. This is to help you understand the import of Eliot's philosophy on creative and critical trends of his age. Remember that as a literary student, you are expected to be conversant with both the content and form of Eliot's conceptual ideas and for this reason, Eliot's style is discussed under Method of Presentation. Furthermore, this unit is concerned with the contributions of Eliot's essay to the development of criticism but did not fail to recognize its inadequacies. Before the end, you are presented with some suggestions necessary for an objective study of literary texts based on Eliot's standard. There are a number of self-assessment exercises at different points of this unit. Do not fail to do the exercises as they test your understanding of Eliot's theory of literature. Additionally, there is a Tutor-Marked Assignment included here. Please attend to the assignment. Now, let us state the objectives of this unit.

2.0   Objectives

At the end of Module 4 Unit 1, you should be able to:

Appreciate the social and academic factors which engender T. S. Eliot's ideas as postulated in 'Tradition and Individual Talent'.

Identify Eliot's concept of 'Tradition and Individual Talent' and the relationship between both.

Analyse Eliot's major concerns in the essay in relation to literary criticism.

Illustrate the relationship between 'Tradition and Individual Talent' and other essays examined in this study guide.

Appraise the style employed by Eliot in the essay and comment on its effectiveness or otherwise.

Undertake a critical analysis of selected texts on the basis of Eliot's concepts.

3.0   Main Content

3.1   Historical Background

The 20th century, in which T. S. Eliot's 'Tradition and Individual Talent' was conceived and written, was quite different from the preceding Victorian period of the 19th century English society. The latter part of the Victorian period was marked by all sorts and manners of stoicism, pessimism and disillusionment. The second world war of 1914 ended the avid confidence of the Victorian period and ushered in an age of extreme inquiry. Victorian assumptions came under acerbic attacks from all directions. Instituted creed and traditions collapsed on the altar of disbelief as society lost its characteristic stability and cohesion. That confusion and cultural decay appear in arts like Eliot's long poem 'The Waste Land' and influenced criticism. Theory and Criticism began to seek something new in literature. Eliot's essay was written against this background. 'Tradition and Individual Talent' represents an intellectual attempt at providing order in a chaotic world using literature. Eliot's much-discussed near-austere life has been classified as an exemplar of orthodox decorum and moderation in a formless world. His pattern of living therefore demonstrates the moderation he advocates in his scholarship which is perhaps best represented by the seminal 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. Geoffrey O'Brien (1997, p. 1) posits that "appearing in a moment of avant-garde collectives, of manifestoes announcing decisive breaks with the past, Eliot's essay asserted the present writer as a member of the largest collective of all, the dead." O'Brien's analysis identifies the background of the essay as it summarizes its basic assumption.

3.2   Basic Assumptions

Arnold's essay exhibits concern with a number of issues staring with the concept of tradition and its application in the criticism of his day. He further locates the place of individual talent within a literary tradition and advances his requirements from a good poet. The essay also disagrees with the critical trend of Eliot's time and develops what the modern theorist considers a more effective approach.

3.2.1 Tradition

'Tradition and Individual Talent' articulates Eliot's view on the place and value of tradition in the criticism of his period as well as what tradition excludes and what it involves. In his estimation, the term 'tradition' is nearly absent in English writing. He observes that when deployed at all, the concept is assigned a censorial undertone and is used to illustrate that which is presumed archaic. For him, the importance of tradition is profound and tradition can only be acquired by diligent effort as it is not innate. Eliot further declares that tradition does not entail senile copying of past as this prevents a work from achieving perennial appeal. He asserts that "novelty is better than repetition" (405).

Eliot further states that tradition first involves "a historical sense" which, in his definition, is "a sense of the timeless as well as temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together…" (406). The historical sense, according to him, entails an awareness "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" and that is its contemporary relevance (406). He adds that the historical sense compels a writer to exhibit, in his arts, a consciousness of his period. In addition, the writer in Eliot's estimation, should also realise that the entire literature of Europe, beginning from Homer, and that of his/her country are connectedness and therefore have "a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (406). He holds that a writer's traditionalism derives from his historical sense which provides him makes him deeply aware of his position in time and of his contemporaneity.

In addition, Eliot advances what he describes as "a principle of aesthetics" which goes beyond the historical (406). This theory posits that the significance of any artist is only fully determined when placed beside other past writings. In his view each new work is influenced by past works and in turn influences all the other works before it. For him the "existing monuments" represents a whole perfect system which is inevitably altered by the admission of a new work into the canon (406). He submits that the past and present exist in an inevitable relationship that affects both. He adds that a writer who is conscious of this relationship is the one who understands the difficulty embedded in his immense responsibility. Eliot adds that the "dead poets" are "that which we know" (407). He proposes that an author must acquire "a consciousness of the past" which he must keep developing all through his career (407). For him, this represents a continuous act of subjecting the self under that which is more important. He then submits that a

writer's advancement entails constant extermination of personality and as such amounts to self-sacrifice.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Eliot's definition of tradition includes the concept of a historical sense. What do you understand by the term 'historical sense' as explained in the essay?

3.2.2 Individual Talent

Eliot stipulates what a writer must avoid and remember as well the writer's relationship with his literary legacy and his work. In his view, a writer must neither mold himself after few admired writers or period nor relate to the past as one indivisible mass. In Eliot's concept, a writer should understand that art "never improves" except that artistic materials differ (407). For him, a creative writer should be conscious of the major drifts in English literary history. Moreover, he needs to know "the mind" of his nation, its capacity to change and the all-embracing consequences of such changes. Eliot also posits that, through time and experience, the writer ought to realize that the national mind is more important that his personal mind. Again, the theorist postulates that an author has to realize that he must be evaluated in relation to his predecessors.

Moreover, Eliot's 'Impersonal theory of Poetry' (408) covers the creative artist, his work and creative materials. The theorist promotes the depersonalization of arts. His stated intension is to "divert interest from the poet to the poetry" (410). Eliot adds that he strives to convince his readers that the author does not have a personality to express, but a specific medium. He further submits that in that medium impressions and experiences are united in a manner that is both unique and unpredictable. In his conceptual world, the creative writer functions as a catalyst. He posits that the writer's mind is "a receptacle" for arresting and stockpiling innumerable feelings, experiences, images, phrases which all wait till all the relevant elements needed for the configuration of a new complex form are mutually present (408). Eliot notes the excellence observable in the combination of various types of feelings, emotions and other components but holds that what matters is not the intensity of the various components but that of the artistic process. In the scholar's evaluation, Keat's 'Ode to a Nightingale' effectively employs the nightingale to unite various feelings which do not originally have any relationship with the bird.

He further states that the pleasure a reader elicits from arts is unique and arises from various emotions and feelings encapsulated in specific expressions and images which are characteristic of an author. He uses examples from "greatest poetry" (408), including a passage from *Inferno*, to buttress his point.

According to Eliot, human emotions rather than personal passions are the poet's materials of creativity and these complex emotions he must contain and combine into something new. The new material should not show any trace of the poet who must remain detached, non-reactive and unchanging even as he functions as a vessel for change. He states that the artist's level of perfection is determined by his ability to separate his personal experiences and emotions from his creative enterprise.

He further posits that the concern of the author is to deploy common emotions and not to search for novel ones. The theorist postulates that the search for novel emotions is an "error of eccentricity" in literature (410). For Eliot therefore, the author does not communicate any "personality" as what makes him significant is not his personal emotions. In his view, poetry has little to do with emotion recollected in tranquility. He adjudges such an idea inaccurate. In his view, poetic construction also entails conscious and deliberate approach. He classifies "the bad poet" as that author who is unconscious when he should be conscious and conscious when he should be unconscious. He classifies both states as errors which make such a writer personal. Eliot, on the basis of these ideas, defines literature as "an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (410). In his conclusion, arts deal with impersonal emotion which is achievable only to the writer who is conscious of the relevance of the past in the present. Eliot insists that a writer, all through his practice, must acquire and constantly develop an awareness of the past. The writer, in Eliot's conception, achieves career development by continuously eliminating the individual in the quest for that which is more valuable.

 Eliot further holds that "the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show." He contends with the idea expressed by certain scholars which holds the present is more knowledgeable than the past. He reasons that the present is more knowledgeable than the past because the past is the knowledge which the present holds. The best part of any work, in

Eliot's estimation, is that which validates tradition and this does not mean conformity but an acknowledgement of that which had existed as every writer exists within a continuum. Eliot argues that all writers contribute into a tradition and so tradition absorbs individual talents across. For Eliot, no matter how individualistic a writer is, he is part of a tradition and following that tradition is more or less an unconscious act. He concludes that any writer who ignores tradition cuts himself off from a vital link and cannot survive.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 2

T. S. Eliot holds that the writer functions as "a catalyst" (408) and that his mind is a vessel. Explain how a writer achieves this feat according to Eliot's specifications.

3.2.3 Criticism

Eliot's essay under study takes a critical look at literary criticism noting the flaws and advancing suggestions for an objective criticism. He initially notes that each region and people experiences a shift in its creative and critical corpora. However, he observes that each period is more conscious of the inadequacies of its creative works than those of its critical practice. He then submits that criticism is "as inevitable as breathing" (405). Eliot goes further to point out the practice of criticism which entails reading a literary text and expressing one's feelings towards such. For him the responsibility of the reader is to first interpret a poem and then evaluate such in relation to how effective such a poem communicates the required complexity of significance.

 In Eliot's estimation, the critical trend of his period involves a commendation of those elements through which a writer's work departs from those of his predecessors. He holds that if critics can get rid of this bias they will discover that the most excellent and unique aspect of each work may be those parts in which the "dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (405). In Eliot's view, criticism is meant to evaluate new works against existing ones, rather than severe them from that relationship. For him certain terms like 'as good as', 'better than', 'worse than' are not fit for criticism, rather terms like 'appears to conform' or 'appears individual' are more fitting in expressing conformity or otherwise. He notes that critics are not after all, "infallible judges of conformity" and should as such employ words carefully (406). At

this point, let me remind you that you will find some of the most important portions of "Tradition and Individual Talent" in the passages listed below.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 3

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

In your evaluation, why does Eliot reject the use of certain terms in criticism?

4.0   Further Analysis

4.1   Key Passages

Page 405 – View of 'tradition' and examination of criticism.

Page 406 – Requirement of a good poet, definition of "the historical sense", – relationship

between past and present works and authors and suggested critical attitude.

Page 407 – Expectations from writers, honest criticism.

Page 408 – Functions of creative writers.

Page 409 – Eliot's stated point of view.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 4

Which portion of "Tradition and Individual Talent" is, in your view, most memorable and why?

4.2   Implications

4.2.1   Tradition Versus Individual Talent

Eliot's major concerns in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' are literary tradition versus talent of poets, poetry, and criticism. The essay, from its opening lines, demonstrates Eliot's objection to the critical trend of his age. The trend either ignores the term 'tradition' or uses it in a denunciatory manner; to describe that which is considered ancient and irrelevant. To understand Eliot's position, you must not lose sight of the fact that notable 20th perceives tradition as an art which belongs to the past and on that basis declared themselves against tradition. The attitude reflects the sensibilities of Eliot's English society and illustrates its impact on creative, critical and conceptual writings. Eliot's position advocates tradition and authority against unbridled individualism and illustrates his attempt to replace disorder with order.

In the essay, Eliot redefines the concept of tradition. First, the title is cast in a paradoxical statement which functions to underscore the complex relationship between the writer's personal creative endowment and the literary heritage of his nation. That is the thesis of the essay. Eliot's concept of the historical sense seeks to explain how a writer ought to relate with tradition. The idea of the historical sense reflects the thoughts of Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson on time. In addition, the concept of tradition and historical sense shows the influence of the theory of Idealism championed by the German Friedrich Hegel and American Josiah Royce.

Eliot explicitly promotes the notion of literature as an existing sum-total of   all the written literatures. Please note that the key idea encapsulated in Eliot's literary theory is the connectivity of all the works within a national canon. The idea justifies his view that tradition cannot be relegated to the past because writers rely on it and thus ensure its continual survival and relevance. In the word of Trevor Pateman, "The leading idea here is that a living Tradition is one in which new art can alter the meaning, the perception of the monuments of the past" (2005, p. 2). In other words, every new work influences all the other past works within a literary tradition. This influence helps in the separation of arts from trash. However, his "principle of aesthetics" suggests that the relationship of the past and present is more defined by aesthetic consideration rather than chronological or historical factor.

Let us bring Eliot's idea home. Nigerian writers like Chinua Achebe and J. P. Clark, respectively, adopt the Western novel and dramatic traditions and language, established by the writings of Daniel Dafoe and Sophocles, as a medium of creative expression. Achebe and Clark influence younger Nigerian novelists and dramatists like Chimmanda Ngozi Adichie and Ahmed

Yerima. Again, the new literary offerings exploit some of the materials and emotions employed by their predecessors but in new ways. Their creativity therefore displays a retransmission of the meanings encapsulated in older works as it reorganizes the entire Nigerian literary tradition. The result of these relationships is that the body of Nigerian literature is in a perpetual state of transformation, as long as writers keep publishing. Thus, contemporary arts draw from tradition and reflect the same tradition. This illustrates Eliot's central thesis in 'Tradition and Individual Talent'.

 Additionally, Eliot's concept of an author, as a medium of expression and a catalyst, defines the relationship between the writer and his writing, under his theory of literature. Eliot's classification of the major tasks of a writer suggests the tough task awaiting any writer. He locates the complexity of that responsibility to the connection between tradition and personal creative faculty of an author. Again, his view exhibits a demand for originality and rejection of isolation. Again, it illustrates the dilemma of a writer, who must validate tradition and still attain originality in the same piece of art. Eliot here focuses on the writer's anxiety which draws from the desire to create something different from what already exists and the need to borrow from the masters. Thus, a good writer, exploits the influences of his precursors to attain originality, and as such, is neither imitative nor repetitive (Harold Bloom in the 1973 concept of *Anxieties of Influence*). Moreover, Eliot assigns a subjacent position to a writer in relation to the national mindset and this exhibits his belief in the superiority of tradition to the individual. This concept resonates in the concluding lines of *Arrow of God* which asserts that "no man, however great was greater than his people" (230).

What does this idea imply? Eliot's repeated emphasis on tradition depicts his own anxiety over the fate of tradition which, in his conviction, should guide individual talent. Observe how Chinua Achebe (2012, p. 60) validates Eliot's position on what a writer's approach to tradition should be in the book, *There Was a Country*.

> Even though nobody is asking the new writer or intellectual
> to repeat the stories, the literary agenda or struggles of
> yesteryear, it is important for them to be aware of what our

literature achieved, what it has done for us, so that we can move forward.

Geoffrey O'Brien's interpretation summarises Eliot's view of the relationship between an author and his literary tradition. He notes that:

> The "talent" in the essay's title is the ability to recombine the elements of this archive so as to produce a new relation to it, one which complicates all the other extant combinations … Tradition and the individual talent are synonyms because they are both terms for the agency of literary work. (1997, 1; 2)

Eliot's protest against the employment of the poet's personality in creative construction defines his creative process. Eliot's theory displays an aversion for the expression of personal and novel emotions by any author. The theorist as such expects the creative writer to be impersonal in his/her creative enterprise and the idea, in a way, situates literature into a universal tradition and in order to keep it from being restricted to a specific tradition. Critics like William Harmon (2009, p. 1) and D. J. Kain, (2004, p. 1) share the same view. In describing a poet as a medium, the idea of a literary text as an account of personal emotion is removed and the idea of literature as an escape from personality is established. Hence the essential dynamic in literature becomes the imaginative medium instead of the writer's personality. Eliot's essay is associated with the classical emphasis on attaining impersonality as well as order and control in artistic practice and this contradicts the Romantic standard of arts. His view is further intensified in his definition of poetry as an escape from personality. The theory of the depersonalisation of arts supplies the foundation for new critics. Included in the qualities of Eliot's good poet are broad-based knowledge, attention to specific details, consciousness of major approaches and developments, knowledge of the nature of artistic materials and continuous personal development.

You must understand that Eliot's view does not stand against communication of intense passion but rather suggests that such expression should be divested of autobiographical elements to achieve objectivity and elicit the appropriate response from the audience. That illustrates his definition of good work. Related to this is Eliot's idea on the source of greatness in literature,

which in turn expresses his view of an excellent literary text. The idea of combination of arbitrary emotions shows an influence of the structuralists' notion of language. Eliot's position indicates that the meaning a piece of literature generates is more important than the form. Thus, the author's personal perspective of his/her subject, methods and emotions count little under Eliot's standard.

Before we continue let us make some important observations. First Eliot's suggestion on the use of "representative passages of the greatest poetry" (408) represents his artistic process. It also connects with Arnold's touchstone concept. Again, Eliot's analysis expresses his admiration of Keat's 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In addition, his description of an artistic creation as monument indicates his idea of the capacity of literature to compel an everlasting attention. Moreover, Eliot's theory exhibits his discontent with the modern world, longing for the past and a theoretical search in literature for that deep experience which the contemporary world can hardly offer. Lastly, Eliot's preference for Donne, rather than Milton, and Hopkins, rather than Tennyson, as respective models of the 17th and 19th centuries English literary tempers validates the alteration in the preferences of the reading public as noted by Abrams (1987, p. 2503).

4.2.2 Criticism

Apart from literary heritage and personal efforts, Eliot's pronouncements on criticism have profound implications. His initial comparison between creative writing and critical enterprise underscores the bond between the two arms of Literary Studies. His concept of criticism as inevitable and a natural response to arts, articulates his view of the nature, position and function of criticism, as well as his attitude towards English critics. Eliot's essay expresses his discontent with the critics of his generation. This is articulated by his view that critics sacrifice emphasis on proofs of connection for evidences of departures. Through this, he makes a fundamental statement on the human tendency to seek the new in things around him. His conclusion indicates that he considers the criticism of his age as narrow-minded and immature. His position appears like a reprimand directed at English writers and critics who he assumes disregard the legacy left by their predecessors. Eliot demands that the critic develop an intense historical sense in order to evaluate literary works from the proper perspective. You must know that Eliot's sense of history

is broad and includes sensitivity to all the influences which constitute an existing category. Please keep the main issue in view. It is that like Arnold, Eliot demands for a novel and more objective approach to criticism.

Eliot discourages the use of pejorative terms and his text-based criticism calls back attention from the author to the work. This persuasion defines the objective and intrinsic approach which negates the expressive and extrinsic inclination of Romanticism. On the strength of this proposal, Eliot has been generally acknowledged as a major originator of New Criticism, a 20th century critical approach. Do you know the main argument of new critics? New Criticism posits that a literary text has a sovereign or independent existence and as such its meaning resides solely within the text. In other words, the new critics advocate for a close examination of a text without consideration to the social, ethical and biographical influences. Therefore, for the new critics, the historical context, which stimulates 21st century war texts like Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*, Onuora Nzekwu's *Troubled Dust* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, hardly matter in the analysis of the texts. I am sure that you may be a little disturbed by Eliot's suggested approach to criticism. Do not forget that there is a purpose for that proposal. Eliot's primary objective is "to deflect his readers' attention from everything he considers of at best secondary importance – the poet's personal or social circumstances, and so on" and to place literature at the center stage (Hans Bertens, 2001, p. 12). The principal issue here is that criticism should be based on the art and not on the creative writer, who Eliot considers but a medium of expression.

In summary, Eliot's theory of arts conceives the text as an independent entity and an author as a medium and catalyst. The creative process in his view should exclude the author's personality while reception is a function of objectivity of poetic representation. Lastly, under his literary theory, criticism is text-based.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE 5

Read up the concept of Idealism as propounded by Hegel and Royce and identify areas of relationship between the concept and Eliot's.

4.3 Method

'Tradition and Individual Talent' is delivered in a conversational method. Eliot speaks in an assertive tone using lucid expressions. He also deploys memorable figurative terms and analogies in advancing his ideas. In addition, he uses comparisons, references, examples and contrasts to buttress points. His argument is meticulously and coherently delivered.

Generally, the essay is presented in a conversational method, like Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry'. Eliot uses the personal pronouns, especially 'we', to communicate his thoughts. This method engenders a relaxed atmosphere and makes the essay less formal and friendlier. It functions to include the reader into Eliot's world and persuades him/her to see issues from Eliot's perspective. Moreover, his tone is assertive and his expressions are lucid. His assertiveness spells competence and confidence and makes his position authoritative. These methods make Eliot's ideas easy to comprehend and analyse. For instance, against the thinking of his period, Eliot asserts the place of tradition in literature. He then offers a clearer and more robust image of its nature and demands as well as its relationship with the author, to validate his position. Observe how he describes poetry as a monument. In that one word, with multiple nuances, Eliot projects the sense of literature as testament, memorial and tribute. These communicate the capacity of literature to remain perennially appealing and command perpetual attention. In fact, the essay is a pleasure to read and contains many memorable statements. Consider two of them: "Novelty is better than repetition" and "… the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (405; 406). Talk of economy of words! These are short, precise and punchy statements which summarize his major ideas.

Furthermore, some of Eliot's most important concepts are delivered in figurative terms. For instance, the title seems like is a paradox. Though it expresses a relationship of interdependence between tradition and personal achievement, it also seems to illustrate a contradiction between both. Most parts of the essay thrive on juxtaposition of opposites. In fact, Eliot begins his essay with an "opposition between criticism and creativity …" (Studymode, 2011, p. 1). Perhaps his struggle to define the function of the poet and the creative process is where he employs figurative devices most. There he deploys simileric and metaphoric expressions exemplified by "the mind of the poet as a shred of platinum" (408) and criticism as "inevitable as breathing" (405). Have you have also noticed Eliot's exploitation of scientific and metaphysical analogies? The analogy of the catalyst describes the mind of a poet in terms a shred of platinum where chemical

reactions take place (408). What of his description of a poem in terms of the sum-total of all poems within a tradition? This exemplifies an employment of mathematical symbols in literary analysis. The use of universal symbols and images enable Eliot to demonstrate what he means in exact terms.

Furthermore, Eliot's comparative approach is not only historical, it is also aesthetic. The essay draws a comparison between different works like *Agamemnon* and *Othello*, to exhibit the quality of excellent literature. Arnold exploits the same method in his "touchstone" concept, though to a greater degree. Tradition and the Individual Talent" also sets the French critical enterprise against that of the English (405) thus borrowing a little from Dryden's approach. Eliot's essay additionally uses a remarkable number of references and examples, including *Inferno*, *Agamenon*, *Othello* and Ode to the Nightingale, to discuss emotion and feelings evoked by artistic combinations. Again, the essay makes use of the principle of contrast. For example, he illustrates the function of the writer using positives and negatives. He equally calls upon theories like "the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" to express his concept of impersonality of literature (409).

You can say without any fear of contradiction that the essay is meticulously organised. It is presented in two parts. The first part establishes a theoretical rationale for the relationship between the present and past (history) in poetic practice and criticism. The second part is interested in a poet's expression of creative impulse and the impact on the readers. His introductory passage wastes no word or time in dealing with his subject. His conclusion is very logical and adroitly summarizes his thesis. He thus maintains the order his theory advocates. This style makes it easy for the reader to remain focused on the main issue from beginning to the end. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' is a very coherent piece of work.

4.4   Contribution/Significance

'Tradition and Individual Talent' has made a huge impact on literary theory and criticism. Its significance is derived from a number of factors, including its representative function, attention

to tradition, author's talent and classics, redirection of critical approach, focus on the text, development of novel critical terms and influence on later conceptual ideas.

Eliot's essay is foundational to the modernist movement as Wordsworth's is for the neo-classical temper. The essay establishes Eliot as the voice of the 20th century theoretical and critical thoughts. In the words of Pryce-Jones (1979, p. 749), Eliot "changed the direction of modern writing more sharply than any of his contemporaries." His essay is arguably the most influential literary theory of the 20th century.

The essay is important because it recognises the place of tradition in an age when it faces a lot of antagonism. Eliot's concept also reemphasises the relationship between creative writings and criticism as well as the universality of arts. His view on tradition also calls attention to the function of classics in establishing national literary corpus and guiding creativity. Eliot assumes the responsibility of the conscience of his age by advocating for order in a moment of chaos, acute doubt and search for assurance. Critics, like Bertens, associates Eliot's efforts with that of Arnold as he notes its complementary role. He avers that Eliot is "the most influential spokesman for Arnold's vision" and that his idea of connectivity of all excellent literature makes up for the gap observed in Arnold's theory (2001, p. 11). Do you agree with Berten's submission?

By insisting on the primacy of the text, Eliot emphasizes the principle of the impersonality of arts which gives a work of arts prominence in relation to the author. This concept supports universality which enables a literary work to compel perennial appeal. Such appeal is the major requirement towards the attainment of the status of a classic by any text. Again, his objective approach to criticism functions to derive meaning from the text and so establishes the primacy of the text which is the natural object of criticism. The search for meaning within a literary text extensively governed the English and American literary activities between 1920s and 1970s and still remains significant afterwards. In addition, Eliot's idea of "depersonalization of art" wielded a huge influence on the 20th century critical thoughts.

Eliot's concept of literature and criticism has continued to wield a huge influence on younger scholars exemplified by I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis, both apostles of New Criticism. Both scholars use his theory as basis to formulate two closely related schools of thought that helped to define Western literary thoughts for about half a century. For instance, based on Eliot's attention

to the creative production, Richards develops what is termed practical criticism in a 1924 book, *Principles of Literary Criticism*. Moreover, Bloom's 'Anxiety of Influence' draws from Eliot's premise on the influence of dead authors on contemporary writers. Thus, Bloom's insight into the psychology of writers, exhibits Eliot's influence. Lastly, Eliot, in the essay, donates a number of scholarly vocabularies to Literary Studies and these include tradition and individual talent, historical sense, impersonal theory of poetry.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 6

Eliot's essay is also important in other ways. Can you identify some?

4.5   Limitations

Eliot's theoretical essay, 'Tradition and Individual Talent', maintains a number of flaws. These are related to definition and clarification of terms and ideas, emphasis on the past, the status of the poet and approach to criticism.

The essay notes the improper approach in the employment of the term tradition in the criticism of his period. However, do you think that Eliot's attempt to clarify the term is sufficient? Let us reexamine his clarification of tradition as a concept in the first paragraph of his essay. Eliot sets the foundation for a definition of tradition, which is his key term and focus, but hardly maximizes that opportunity. The meaning of tradition is therefore barely stated in clear terms. According to Taylor Sharpe (2007, p. 1-2), Eliot fails to clearly explain the word. The consequence is that the reader is compelled to piece together Eliot's sense of tradition from his ideas. In addition, the essay posits that tradition can only be acquired by "great labour" but Eliot's view of how a creative writer can this "great labour" appears vague. Thus, Eliot becomes guilty of the same accusation he makes against the criticism of his time.

In addition, Eliot's emphasis on the influence of "dead poets" on present writers is a little too much. Due to this, the essay reads like a tribute to a team of dead authors. Ikiddeh holds that "Eliot's idea of tradition seems to dwell mainly on dead poets" (1987, p, 139). Eliot seems to deny the very important factor of uniqueness in literary creativity and criticism in his attempt to

promote connectivity of all works. This presents a parochial view of critical reality and objectivity and again makes him guilty of the same sin he accuses critics of.

Eliot's expectation of an author sounds like a student's manual. It is thus prescriptive and prescriptivism is one factor that hardly agrees with creativity and criticism. Additionally, his idea of a writer's relationship with his work tends to present the literary work as an active entity produced by a passive agent. His concept denies the author the credit due to him for his intellectual efforts. Furthermore, Eliot's text-based critical approach has its own limitations. This is because historical, sociological and biographical factors can hardly be eliminated from a literary text which is a reflection of human realities and sensibilities. Of course war classics like Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and outstanding fictions like Nwapa's *Second Class Citizen* are all reputable autobiographical fictions.

4.5   Application

To critique a literary text based on Eliot's concepts in 'Tradition and Individual Talent', you should:

Engage in objective criticism.

Avoid pejorative expressions.

Seek out evidences of connection between the work under review and past writings within the same national/regional literary canon without ignoring elements of originality.

Determine how far an author eliminates personality and includes universal materials.

Establish the greatness of a literary text based on the intensity of the imaginative process which arises from the combination of various human emotions rather than the intensity of those emotions.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 7

Choose two literary texts and attempt a critique of both using insights supplied by Eliot's theory.

5.0   Conclusion

'Tradition and Individual Talent', I am sure you will agree, is one theoretical essay that enriches Literary Study, as a discipline. It ushers in the modern period of criticism and speaks for the 20th century. Eliot, as an active writer, exhibits his comprehension of the merits of past works to a contemporary author and thus acknowledges the place of classics in every literary tradition. His concern for tradition is an intellectual response to the socio-cultural condition of the post-World-War 1 English society. Though Eliot insists on tradition, he refuses to ignore the essence of originality and advances what he considers the qualities of a good poet and his ideal creative process. Apart from the above, Eliot's essay observes the limitations inherent in the criticism of his age and sets a new standard as he advocates constructive criticism. In addition, Eliot's arguments are made using a number of effective methods. Nevertheless, you have to admit the inadequacies of the essay but should not fail to acknowledge the profound significance of Eliot's efforts. Like Eliot, you should understand that "the attempt to evade tradition is misguided because ultimately incoherent: without tradition (an inherited language and culture) there is very little, if any, self, and consequently little or nothing to be expressed" (Pateman, 2005, p. 3).

6.0   Summary

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The circumstances which motivate Eliot's 'Tradition and Individual Talent'.

Major arguments of the essay, including Eliot's view on tradition, poet's creative enterprise and creative process.

Criticism according to Eliot – evaluation, approach and purpose.

Key passages of the essay.

Examination of major conceptual ideas postulated by Eliot.

Eliot's methods, contributions to literary studies and the inadequacies of his essay.

Tips for textual analysis, using Eliot's concepts.

7.0   Tutor- Marked Assignment

1. For Eliot tradition involves "the historical sense" and is indispensable to any author who desires to remain relevant in his/her society. Bearing this statement in mind, discuss Eliot's idea of the relationship between tradition and individual talent.

2. Eliot flays his English society for ignoring the shortcomings of its critical habits. Identify and discuss these shortcomings as well as the critical standards advanced by Eliot in the essay, 'Tradition and Individual Talent'.

3. Evaluate Eliot's "Impersonal Theory of Poetry" using relevant examples from literary and conceptual texts of your choice.

4. Several critics have linked aspects of 'Tradition and Individual Talent' to certain ideas relayed in Arnolds 'The Study of Poetry' and Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. Locate and review those ideas showing areas of correspondence and departure.

5. Using Eliot's standard of criticism, appraise two well-known novels written by creative writers from two different African regions. Your response should show your understanding of the influence of past writers on contemporary authors.

8.0   REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

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MODULE 4 UNIT 2   ROLAND BARTHES 'THE SRTUCTURALIST ACTIVITY'

25.0   Introduction
26.0   Objectives
27.0   Main Content
      27.1   Historical Background

3.0   INTRODUCTION

Module 4 Unit 2 examines Structuralism mainly through Raymond Barthes' conceptual essay, 'The Structuralist Activity'. As the other units, it provides the background to the ideas expressed in the essay. This is followed by the Basic Assumptions segment of the essay. This is treated under three parts – Structuralism, Literature and Creative writer/Critic. Moreover, this unit undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Barthes' ideas in order to illuminate the implications of his theory. In addition, this unit identifies the major considerations of Structural Criticism and gives you some tips on how to examine texts from the Structuralist perspective. These will help you engage in structuralist criticism of literary texts.   Unit 2 of Module 4 also contains conclusion and summary. Remember that you need to faithfully attempt the self-assessment exercises you will meet in different parts of this module.

I am sure that you know how important it is that you understand Barthes' logic and the main thrust of Structuralist theory and criticism. The implication is that you must pay close attention to his views in order to understand, interpret and deploy them. Please do not forget to note areas of convergences and divergences of conceptual positions of Barthes and other scholars studied in

this course. Furthermore, you need to identify the theoretical persuasions of Barthes and the Structuralism as you read. Remember that you will employ the abstract ideas advanced by the essay in practical analysis of literary texts. Now let us identify the objectives of Module 4 Unit 2.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of Unit Four, you should be able to:

Appreciate the background of Structuralism as a 20th century theory o literature.

Discuss the relationship between Structuralism and Linguistics.

Understand the Structuralist view of literature as constructed by Roland Barthes.

Interpret and evaluate the critical standards of Structuralism.

Examine the strengths and limitations of Structuralism.

Employ Structuralism in the examination of literary texts.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Historical Background

The hostility between the Western and Soviet powers became more overt after the WW11 influenced literature as many works of arts participated in the ideological disputation even when a greater percentage turned away from such political conflict. As a result, several concepts developed and affected the way literature is written and examined. Some of these are Phenomenology, Existentialism and Structuralism. Phenomenology is a 20th century philosophical movement which postulates that experience is a matter of perception. This represents a shift from objective reality and introduces subjectivity to the study of the objective reality. Phenomenology is introduced by the German Edmund Husserl in his book *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1931). Existentialism is another 20th century philosophical persuasion which highlights individual existence, choice and freedom. It

interrogates every system of belief and authority. The French Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the most recognized proponents of Existentialism. Sartre's proposition takes off from his disagreement with Husserl's position in the mid-20th century. Guided by Existentialist thinking, Albert Camus also wrote the *Myth of* Sisyphus which is employed by Orlando Patterson in his novel *Children of Sisyphus.* He speculates that essence comes after existence and therefore each person is first an independent and conscious being. Existentialism posits that the individual develops a sense of confusion before the absurd world in which he/she finds him/herself. The concept of the absurd interprets the world as a meaningless entity whose only meaning generates from that which it is accorded by people. This idea influenced literature and led to the development of the Theater of the Absurd. Creative writers like Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco adopted this tendency in drama. Beket's *Waiting for Godot* is one of the best representatives of the absurdist theater. However, in the 1950's another idea which still lays emphasis on the human subject was introduced. It is termed Structuralism. Claude Levi Strauss, a cultural anthropologist, developed Structuralism on the basis of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic ideas in *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure was a Swiss linguist whose ideas made a lot of impact in Linguistics and Literature. Saussure's approach to the study of language is synchronic and that marked a shift from the prior historical and philological tendencies. For the scholar, language is a system of signs which occur in relation, rather than in isolation and created by convention. His theory implies the role of language in comprehending and interpreting the world. The scholar was credited as the founder of modern linguistics and Structuralism. Cultural realities like kinship relations and mythology attract the attention of Structuralism. Roland Barthes contributes essentially to the development of Structuralism as a literary theory.

The French scholar and critic, Roland Barthes (1915-1980), is one of the most important theorists of the 20th century. He is very instrumental to the establishment of Structuralism and post-structuralism as prominent intellectual movements of the 20th century. He also wrote the phenomenal essay, 'The Death of the Author (1967). His theory of Literature was largely a reaction against the Existentialist ideas of the 1940s. His works had a huge influence on Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Semiotics. The basic assumptions of Structuralism are postulated in Barthes' essay, 'The Structuralist Activity'.

3.2 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The conceptual treatise, 'The Structuralist Activity', postulates on a number of issues including the concept of structuralism, literature and author and critic. You need to carefully follow Barthes' logic in order to understand the basis of Structuralist theory and criticism. As you read try to isolate his view of language use in literature, the writer, literary work and its nature and functions, and note how he adopts Saussure's linguistic modes and terms. Remember that these are the elements which define his ideas as Structuralist theory and criticism.

3.2.1 Structuralism

The essay first settles the question of the concept of Structuralism by providing definition and explanations. Barthes' definition of Structuralism is linked to its employment. He defines it as "essentially an activity" and as a controlled sequence of a given number of mental actions (489). The theorist postulates that Structuralism is neither a school, nor movement and so can hardly be reduced to the occupation of philosophers. He also does not considerate it a vocabulary. Under his theory, terms like forms, functions, signs and significations are not peculiar to Structuralist criticism as they are employed by various schools of thoughts in the examination of ideas. Then he identifies structure as an old overused word and insists that to differentiate Structuralism from other modes of thoughts it is necessary to employ such pairings as signifier/signified and synchronic/diachronic. According to the theorist, the first pair implies Saussure's linguistic insight and the second a reexamination of the concept of history. Again, he adds that the "structuralist vision" is exhibited by the use of signifier and signified as well as synchrony and diachrony. He further postulates on the relationship between structuralism and history. For him, structuralism does not seek to set the world free from history but draws a connection between history and given contents and forms, the material and intelligible, the ideological and the aesthetic.

Barthes posits that what makes structuralism essential is that the representation which is constructed on the basis of the components gives a new and functional as against real and rational, image of the universe. Again he notes that it emphasises the "strictly human process by which men give meaning to things" (491). Thus, he identifies the object of structuralism as the

fabrication of meaning by men. According to the theorist, structuralism differs from other styles of analysis in that its objective is directly connected to given techniques. In structuralism, the object is reconstituted in order to emphasize given functions. Barthes submits that this idea is the foundation of the term, structuralist activity, rather than structuralist work.

Another issue Barthes' essay speculates on is the operations of structuralist activity. He observes that the structuralist activity consists of two distinctive operations which are dissection and articulation. The first is the stage of analysis. The first stage is the part where the structuralist dissects a text, which could be literature, film, painting and cultural trends like dressing, into smaller meaning-bearing components. The components could be phonemes or mythemes whose co-occurrences are governed by laid-down rules and conventions. He observes that the components are by themselves bereft of meanings but have the capacity to effect a change of meaning when used in different ways in the company of others. Synthesis is the second stage and at this stage the smaller components are organized to create higher meanings in cultural productions like literature. Thus, he perceives language as one of the systems through which the human experience is organized.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

What do you understand by Structuralism as defined by Barthes?

3.2.2 Literature

Furthermore, Barthes' essay displays his concept of the nature and functions of literature in the process of identifying the Structuralist activity. He hypothesizing that the goal of the Structuralist activity is to "reconstruct an object" in a way that exhibits the functions of such object. In his terms structure is the *simulacrum*, that is the image or representation, of an object. He adds that such representation is however, regulated and attractive and brings to life something which is hitherto hidden or incomprehensible in the normal object. Barthes posits that the "simulacrum is intellect added to object" and postulates that such created image has anthropological value and represents the man, his freedom, history and situation (489). He identifies the representation as an authentic fabrication, rather than an original idea, of the universe and as that which function is

not to copy to make the natural object more comprehensible. Please pay special attention to the next line of argument. Barthes' assumes that "Structuralism is essentially an activity of imitation" and observes that there is hardly any difference, technically speaking, between structuralism, as an intellectual endeavour, and literature and other art forms. In his calculation, on functional basis, both originate from *mimesis,*that is imitation. He estimates that art is not defined by the object it imitates – whether it emanates from imaginary reality or social reality – rather it is defined by what goes into the reconstruction of that reality. He therefore concludes that "technique is the very being of all creation" (490). Furthermore, he conceives literature as a prophetic activity comprehensible and interrogating at the same time. Barthes goes ahead to describe literature as a speaking and silent, close and distant and an answer and question system.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

How does Barthes concept of mimesis differ from Aristotle?

3.2.3 Creative Writer/Critic

Barthes' theory also exhibits interest in the creative writer and the critic. Barthes goes ahead to identify a class of analysts and artists, including writers, musicians, painters, who perceive the employment of structure as a typical experience. He refers to everyone in this group by a common term – "*structural man*" and such a man "takes the real, decomposes it, then recomposes it" in order to create "something new" (489). He defines a Structuralist by "his imagination … by the way in which he mentally experiences structure" rather than by thoughts or language (489). He recognises the structural man as that man who inquires into culture in order to perceive the natural; humanity in a constant process of creating meanings. In his view, the artist and analyst recreates meaning. He notes that the artist's functions to articulate the position of meaning not to name it.

Moreover, Barthes recognises the burden of the structural man who is at times charged with dealing with unreality. He concludes that that man understands that even Structuralism is a given "form of the world which will change with the world" (492). He posits that the structural man is conscious of fact that as he possesses the faculty and authority to employ the existing world language in a new manner so will another new mode of interpretation develop in the course of

history. The one who comprehend humanity through the structuralist analytical perspective he terms "the new man of inquiry … *Homo significans*" (492).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Discuss the major functions of the author and critic as postulated by Barthes.

4. 0   Further Analysis

4.1   **Interpretation**

Have would have observed that Barthes' definition of Structuralism is linked to its employment in creative writing and in criticism. His definition exhibits Structuralism as a regulated activity which, transcends the borders of philosophy and cannot be classified on the bases of general terms of analysis. His proposed term, struturalist activity, rather than structuralist work, illustrates an on-going process. It is important that we emphasise that Barthes' Struturalist theory covers both creative writing (poetic) and criticism (reflexive). Thus, his concept of structuralist activity entails creation and reflection. This displays a notion of structuralism as both an intellectual and artistic occupation.

 Moreover, Barthes scholarship also indicates his basis for the identification of Structuralist approach to textual analysis in its overt invocation of Saussure's linguistic concept of signifier/signifies. Again his synchronic, rather than diachronic, approach implies the simultaneity that guides his thoughts. It also specifies his concept of history as well as the relationship between structuralism and history. Therefore, his notion of history is broad. You must understand that Barthes' structuralist theory also finds a link between content and form as well as the conceptual and aesthetic. The implication is that his idea finds a connection between the substance and method and between philosophy and artistic. Again, in speculating that structuralism is a historical occurrence whose currency will wane in order to make room for alternative standards of analysis, Barthes underscores the development of literary theory and criticism from classical to the modern and post-modern periods.

By its interest in both classic and popular cultures, including literary texts, mythical tales, fashion, food, advertisement, social etiquette, Barthes' view of Structuralism covers a wide spectrum. Its interest in convention is also articulated in the position these aspects represent combination of signs which have a series of meaning for people of a given culture. His idea is that text of all types pulls from previous texts, norms, conventions, and as such these must be considered in order to comprehend a given text. In a way, this connects his idea to T. S. Eliot's in 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. Note that Structuralists' interest in specific cultural object/idea is geared towards decoding the structure, characteristics and conventions of a general system which gives basis and significance to such object/idea is constructed facilitates the significance of such an object/idea are gleaned. That makes his focus cultural. M. A. R. Habib observes that Barthes broadens the focus of structural analysis and Semiology and extends the limits of Structuralism thus creating room for a more robust analysis of texts "and their role in culture" (2011, p. 226). Do you now understand why structuralists consider the term structure as abstract, set of ideas or framework employed in the organization and comprehension of reality?

Language is at the core of Barthes' philosophy of arts. Remember that his thoughts are shaped by the linguistic scholarship of Ferdinand de Saussure. You can observe that influence in his attention to langue, which represents a language system that enables a text to make meaning. You need o identify the key arguments of Barthes Structuralist theory as expressed in the essay under study. The essay communicates the significance and functions of langue and parole – language as an entire communicative system common to a human group and a given spoken or written utterance in that language, in Structurlism. In reiterating the arbitrary relationship between the signified – a real object/idea and the signifier – the symbol/sound which designates such an object/idea, he emphasises the dependence of literary language and style on culture and conventions of a specific group of people. Structuralism works as a human science and attempts to understand the underlying principle which regulate human experiences in its entirety and that means all human actions and compositions. That is why Structuralism cuts across disciplines – Anthropology, Psychology, linguistics, Sociology and Literary Studies.

One of the first things a vigilant student will note in Barthes structuralist theory is his little concern with the meanings generated by single texts and quality of a text. So what is his major concern? Easily deducible! It is discovered in his view the goal of Structuralism. It is "how a text

means what it means" rather than "what a text means" (Lois Tyson, 1999, p. 209). His theory is interested in discovering how meanings are created. Thus, Structuralists conceive the world as constituted by two levels – surface phenomenon which is innumerable visible and observable objects, attitude and activities human beings participate in and relate with. The second level, which is invisible, is constituted by structures which lie beneath and organise the phenomena and make them meaningful. One other important issue you must take note of is that Barthes conceives Structuralism as a meaning-giving procedure which totally belongs to the human sphere and functions to reconstruct what already exists. In this he frees literature from the supernatural burden placed upon it by Plato. Have you observed that we still go back to the beginning of literary theory and criticism with Plato? Alfred Drake (2002, p. 1) submits that Barthes postulates that the goal of structuralism is "to reconstruct a given object of study" in order to expose its rule and that is what enables the object to function as a system. Structuralist theory and criticism emphasize the how of a literary piece as against the what. It is therefore more interested in technique instead of theme. There exists a deep relationship between "literature as a field of study and Structuralism as a method of analysis" (Tyson, 1999, p. 208). Jeane Willet (2013, p. 1) submits that Structuralism enables Barthes "to examine writing as a culture, as being embedded in society. Indeed he replaced a rather passive "method" for a more active examination of literature in which a reader intervened in the text." His theory is as such text-based and represents an objective persuasion. Structuralism examines literature from a scientific objective perspective like Formalism does. It is interested in form/structure of literature rather than the historical or social features which guides criticism under schools like Post-colonialism.

Barthes' structuralist idea also postulates on literature. His concept of the nature and functions of literature is embedded in the essay under examination. By tracing respective philosophies, criticisms and arts of Levi-strauss, Granger, Richard, Mondrain and Butor, to *mimesis* – imitation – Barthes assigns the same origin to literature, other art forms and criticism. Thus, Structuralism has a wide view of what a text is. You must have noted the use of the term text instead of literary work. Under Structural criticism a piece of literature is referred to as text. Text represents a form of writing composed of a combination of component units in line with particular literary rules and regulations. This description displays the interest of structuralist criticism in language. Literature, as an art form which mediates through language, and as such is directly connected to

the language. Structuralist criticism perceives literature as "a second order signifying system" which employs a "first order structural system of language as its medium" and which should be examined using the linguistic theory (Abrams 2005, p. 309-3 10). Literature is considered as a system of signs. You now understand why Barthes' theoretical text manifests a linguistic approach. It is for the same reason that Structuralist critics employ linguistic concepts, terms and notions in the analysis of texts.

Barthes' concept of literature manifests a mimetic and functional perspective and seeks connection rather than distinction. This represents a mimetic approach and links him to Aristotle and other scholars whose concepts are guided by the mimetic paradigm. In advancing his concept of literature as an imitation of object/idea, he identifies two sources of such imitation and these are imaginary reality or social reality. Barthes' idea of literature as a *simulacrum* supports the predominant view of art as a representation; an image. This illustrates the nature of literature as an invention which draws its breath from its society as it makes literature an image of reality. Again, his idea of control in artistic production and view of literature as an authentic fabrication implies a procedural organization of different materials into something whole, meaningful and functional. In his conceptual world literature happens when mental ability is applied to the object of imitation. Thus, literature and criticism involves creativity. Literature is therefore not just an emotional activity. Barthes position here tends to contradict the stance of the Romantic paradigm. In Barthes essay under examination, literature is assigned a lot of significance and this observed in the statement that it has a historical and anthropological value and speaks for the human condition. This makes literature a systematic production and creation which provides a genuine account of idea, reality and experience. His view precludes any form of suggestion that literature projects lies and so turns Plato's logic on its head. Barthes theory introduces a religious metaphor to emphasise the visionary position of literature by classifying the art form as a prophetic endeavor. His idea also implies that literature operation is open-ended and it functions in different ways. He elevates literature above nature by his view that literature energises nature to make it more attractive and comprehensible. You can therefore say that Barthes' perceives literature as an art that finds the unique in the seemingly ordinary. His definition of art is guided by techniques rather than its subject. He locates technique as the primary consideration in all arts. This tells you that he perceives literature from the perspective of technique and under his idea technique separates a production from the world it imitates. Do

you observe a relationship of thoughts between Barthes and Aristotle? You must understand that Barthes' ideas represent the position of Structuralism in its extended view of arts.

Furthermore, Barthes's structuralist principle of arts is concerned with both the author and the critic. He refers to both as the "structural man" and thus donates a term to literary criticism. Richard Clark observes that Structuralism is not an exclusive preserve of philosophers "both artists and critics may be described as structuralist in outlook" (1971, p. 1). Barthes' idea demarcates the functions of the author from that of the critic. Under his theory, the author represents the world using language as a medium of expression. However, his creative process involves a methodical organization of the existing linguistic system in a manner that creates a meaningful whole out of various units provided by the language of expression. Thus, the author's account of the world is directly related to the language of the world he recreates. The author as such employs language to create a clearer and more comprehensible world and this means that he improves upon the object/idea he recreates. This departs from Plato's concept of direct copying. In Barthes' view, the act of representation goes beyond an object/idea but also includes the rules and conventions of language used by the artist. In his theory, the artist imitates his universe but does not engage in a senile copying of that universe. Creativity for him entails skill and takes place when the author, through his mental ability, reorganises the world in arts. His theory demands that an author engages in a conscious organization of materials into a meaning-making form. Barthes hardly assesses the author on the basis of contents but on the basis of technique. He connects the Structuralist writer and critic in their role as close observers and interrogators of nature in which they find flexible, infinite but true meanings. The metaphor of the enormous machine facilities his view of the structuralist as one on a constant quest of seeking meaning in his environment. His concept of meaning as a major marker of humanity places the author and the critic at the centre of the world and makes them interpreters of human reality and experiences. In his concept the creative writer and critic are prophets. Do you remember Philip Sydney's view of the creative writer as a vate, a prophet?

Barthes' essay exhibits his position on the poetic (literature) and reflexive (criticism). M. H. Abrams (2005, p. 309) defines Structuralist criticism as "the practice of critics who analyse literature on the explicit model of structuralist linguistics." In responding to his question on what Structuralism is he identifies the focus of Structuralist criticism and the function of a structuralist

critic. Barthes observes two levels of structuralist analysis – dissection and articulation. Therefore, a critic engages in a double-part activity which entails dissection (analysis) and articulation (synthesis). While the first part dissects, the second organises. Thus, a critic, in Barthes' theory is expected to first break down a literary work, or other cultural productions, into smaller units. At the dissection level, the issue of "difference" becomes a significant issue as the small units only make meaning in the company of others which are different. Then in the second part, the critic is burdened with the task of reconstructing the object in order to make manifest the rules and conventions which guide the functioning of such an object. This implies that the level of articulation is the creative stage where organization of the units takes place. Here the critic consciously and carefully creates an organised system that makes a text. A critic therefore reveals the means by which the object operates, or expresses itself, as a cultural production. Structurlist critics departs from the tradition which seeks to examine literature as a reflection of a particular reality and examines a text to show that it is made up of linguistic rules and conventions and placed among other texts and cultural productions.

In his view, the creative writer and critic do not function in isolation and by any original imagination but combines an already existing terms in a novel way. His position alters the conventional status of an author as a sole creator of his work and thus as suggests a shift in the meaning and function of an author. This means that Achebe draws from an already existing literary and cultural structures and this idea makes his fiction part of entire systems. Barthes still continues this line of argument in another essay 'The Death of the Author' where he reclassifies an author as a *Scriptor*. Willet (2013, p. 1) posits that Structuralism "destroyed the fiction of the individual and the myth of the literary creator but retained the fiction of logocentricsm, or the metaphysics of presence." The import of Barthes' postulation is that writing is emphasised above the author and this is the opposite of the Romantic criticism where the author is given a prominent place. Structuralism has a lot of influence on literary theories like Deconstruction, Cultural Studies and Queer Studies.

SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE 4

Examine the fate of the protagonists in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Thomas Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* by linking elements and patterns that display commonalities of human experience across different regions of the world.

4.2   Structuralist Criticism

The structuralist criticism interprets texts by examining the fundamental structures such as genre, theme, plot and characterisation. This approach to criticism seeks to display these patterns as universal models which could be employed to arrive at a common conclusion about cultural productions and the systems from which they originate. In other words, Structuralist criticism is concerned with discovering the rules and conventions which govern collections of literary works. This approach assumes that certain structures can be discovered in some texts. It therefore sets out to discover common structures that underlie literary works like tragic drama, epic poetry, and realist novel. Again, it may also be interested in discovering the literary elements that lie beneath all novels, like setting, theme, plot, characterization and conflict. These are patterns common to all novels and therefore constitute the patterns that link one novel to all other novels. For instance, a structuralist critic can study Achebe's *Arrow of God* by looking at patterns that exists in the texts which make it a narrative and a product of the Igbo culture. In this, both the genre and the larger culture constitute the object of examination.

Moreover, structuralist criticism can examine the connection between a text's language and the informing culture or even between the language of one text and others. For instance, there is an observable connection between the language of Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and the Islamic culture in which it is set.

Structuralist criticism also examines thematic patterns which form the foundation of different texts. For example, Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, Femi Osofisan's the *Dance Contest* and Bosede Ademilua-Afolayan's *Once Upon an Elephant* are all connected in terms of their interest in African politics and mainly from the Yoruba cultural perspective.

To undertake a structuralist activity, you have to analyse the structure of a text in order to identify how the organization of the different constituents display the underlying principle of a

particular structural system. Remember that Literary Structuralism examines how a reader makes meaning out of a text by identifying the essential system of language and literary conventions which the reader has unconsciously imbibed.

Structuralism is concerned with the underlying patterns which regulate human behaviour, speech and literary production. It is a scientific approach that provides a framework which will guide your study of different types of cultural production. Hence, you can employ it to discover the deep structures which underlie your world. This is why you need to get close to this theory. However, you must understand that literature is a product of the society and as such reflects its society – history, culture, sensibility, experience and reality. The interest of Structuralism in signs tends to push these vital areas to the background and that is why this method of literary analysis is considered limited.

4.3   Application

To critique a literary text based on Barthes' structuralist ideas, you should:

Engage in objective criticism.

Employ linguistic terms as donated by Ferdinand de Saussure.

Consider a literary production as a text rather than a work and a cultural production.

Be interested in techniques and examine how an author makes meaning out of the world he/she imitates.

Work to reveal the underlying patterns; the rules and conventions which govern a group of literary works.

Examine a work on two levels – Engage in dissection (analysis) and articulation (synthesis).

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Examine two African plays using Barthes' structuralist principles.

5.0   Conclusion

Roland Barthes' 'The Structuralist Activity' is a modern conceptual treatise that speculates on literature using a linguistic approach. The essay re-emphasises the relationship between language and literature as it provides an additional perspective to the reading of literary texts. The essay exhibits Barthes' understanding of the role of culture in literature and other cultural productions. It also extended the focus of criticism beyond classic texts to cover popular literature. The essay observes the connection between one text and others in a manner different from Eliot's in 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. It also provides an objective paradigm in which the text is given a prominent position in relation to its writer. In addition, Barthes redefines literature from work to text. He postulates on structuralism, author/critic and literature in a way that offers a deeper insight into each of the concepts. Structuralism influences the development of other literary theories including, Deconstruction. Cultural Theory and Queer Theory. The essay contributes to the development of Literary Theory and Criticism.

6.0   Summary

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The background to Structuralism and Barthes' 'The Structuralist Activity'.

Major ideas of Barthes' 'The Structuralist Activity', especially his concept of literature, creative writer and critic.

Linguistic approach to literary criticism.

The major focus of Structuralist criticism and practical tips for a structuralist analysis of texts.

7.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment
1.   Discuss Structuralism as a literary concept.

2. What is the structuralist view of literature?

3. Examine Barthes creative and critical principles.

4. Evaluate Barthes' major postulations in the essay, 'The Structuralist Activity'?

5. Discuss Barthes' concepts of texts, mimesis, simulacrum and structural man.

6. Do a structuralist analysis of two literary texts of your choice.

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ENG 815: MODULE 4 UNIT 3: PSYCHOANALYSIS

CONTENTS

1.0   **Introduction**

Welcome to Module 4 Unit 3. This unit is concerned with Psychoanalysis literary theory, under psychological criticism. It is here studied from the respective perspectives of three prominent theorists of the school who are Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung. These three are selected because of their enormous contributions to the establishment and systematization of the psychoanalysis literary theory as a prominent body of knowledge. This unit concentrates on the most significant concepts postulated by the scholars.

After this introduction, unit 3 of Module 4 opens by providing a brief account of psychological criticism as a background to the Psychoanalysis as a form of literary theory. Then it goes to the heart of the unit which explores the basic assumptions of the Psychoanalysis school of thought. This part begins with the hypotheses of Freud and the choice is based on his pioneering efforts in Psychoanalysis. This unit also discusses the individual speculations of Lacan and Jung. This unit employs a lot of examples, especially, from prose, drama and poetry, in order to help you understand the concepts and notions treated here and use them in textual analysis. The next

segment of this unit focuses on suggestions towards an application of the concepts studied here in the reading of texts.

Moreover, there are a number of self-assessment exercises which you will find at different segments of this unit. The exercises work to help you ascertain your understanding of the different concepts examined here. Furthermore, there is a set of tutor-marked assignment towards the end of Module 5 Unit 3. Part of your task as a student is to do the assignments. Please do not forget that the assignments are there to guide your reading and assess your comprehension of the theory under study. Take each of them seriously. As a literary student, it is important that you pay special attention to this unit. This is because apart from facilitating textual analysis, psychological criticism helps you understand yourself and other people better. The implication is that this theory can help you improve your interpersonal relationships and enjoy a better life. I am sure you will have a pleasant relationship with this unit.

2.0   Objectives

The overall aim of this unit is to facilitate your comprehension of major Psychoanalytic theories and concepts so they can apply such in the reading of literary texts. Thus, at the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Understand the main concern of psychological criticism.

Be exposed to the most significant Psychoanalysis postulates as advanced by major theorists like Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung.

Understand the kernel of each major theory/concept/notion.

Identify the contributions of each of the theories to the development of the school as a body of conceptual resource as well as literary criticism as an academic discipline.

Note different levels of relationship existing between the ideas of the three theorists under study in this unit.

Exploit the theories discussed in this unit in textual analysis.

3.0   Main Content

3.1   Background

3.1.1. Psychological Criticism

Psychoanalysis is a form of Psychological criticism. Psychological Criticism started in early 19th century. Its expressive orientation represents an aspect of the Romantic substitution of the previous mimetic and pragmatic methods. Do not forget that Mimetic and Pragmatic approaches are respectively universe oriented and audience oriented but the expressive approach is artist oriented because the author's psychology is a prominent factor in the method. Thus, while theories like Marxism, Feminism and Post-colonialism deal with external forces of class, gender and race as manifest in a work of art, psychological theories examine "the key role of the mind in perceiving reality" (Robert Evans 3). So what is Psychological criticism? Psychological criticism is a form of criticism that adopts the approach developed by psychological theorists in the analysis of creative works. According to M.H. Abrams (2005, p. 257) psychological criticism is "the mode of reading a literary work specifically in order to experience the distinctive subjectivity, or consciousness, of its author." Abrams adds that to interpret a literary text, this form of criticism makes reference to the author's personality and it also refers to a creative work to determine, biographically, the author's personality.

Let us explain more. Psychological criticism perceives a literary work, fiction, drama or poetry, as an indirect and fictional expression of the author's mentality and personality structure – his/her desires, wishes, thoughts, and traits. Under this method, the patterns and particulars of a literary work are treated as connected to the author's idiosyncratic psychological and emotional tendencies. Have you read the novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad? Conrad's racial consciousness is discernible through his image of Africans in that creative work. In addition, this approach examines the psychology and personality of characters in order to discern the meaning embedded in a text. Thus, this method of analysis pays attention to the mentality and psychology of the author and or characters in an attempt to interpret a given literary work. You can say that psychological criticism focuses on internal forces as manifest in behaviour. From the classical to contemporary period, literary theorizing and criticism have explored the psychological dimension of literature and this is evident in the attention given to author's purpose and motivation as well as the impact of creative work on the audience. One of such psychological theories is the pre-Freudian Apperception, popularized by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841),

a post-Kantian scholar in the early 19th century. After Freud, Harold Bloom establishes the theory of The Anxiety of influence advanced in his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). I advise you to explore both theories further. I assure you that you will receive a lot of insights that will enable you read literature in a different way. Nevertheless, this unit is concerned with Psychoanalysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

In one sentence, summarize psychological criticism.

3.1.2   Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a term employed by Freud to designate the dynamic type of Psychology he developed as a method of analysis and treatment for neurosis. Psychoanalysis has developed into the most dominant form of psychological criticism. As a psychological criticism, it has an expressive and intrinsic orientation. Since its development in the early 20th century, several scholars have made useful inputs into this school. However, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Gustav Jung are regarded as the seminal thinkers of this school of thought. Sigmund Freud has been credited with the initiation of the principles and processes of psychoanalysis in the study of literature. Therefore, we begin our study of Psychoanalytic literary theories with Freud.

3.2   Basic Assumptions

3.2.1   Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud is an Austrian neurologist and physician. In 1897, Freud (1856-1939) postulated his theory which he classified as "a new method of research and cure …" ('The Origin'1909, p. 3). Psychoanalysis represents an entirely novel and dynamic system of understanding the human personality. That is why Terry Eagleton (2006, p. 142) classifies Freud's ideas as a "strikingly original attempt." The principles and processes of classical Psychoanalysis theory and criticism were advanced in Freud's book *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1920).

You need to understand that Freud is did not set out to speculate or legislate on the nature and functions of literature, like Aristotle, T. S. Eliot and other literary theorists you have studied in

this course. Freud's Psychoanalytic hypotheses were based on existing ideas and his long lasting observations of his mental patients. Freud departs from the traditional practice that considers the condition of a neurotic patient as inexplicable by approaching it as a behaviour which could be traced to certain hidden causes in the patient's psyche. As a practice, Psychoanalysis seeks to resolve a hysterical patient's conflicts by discovering the concealed causes of his/her neurosis. It is based on Freud's observation that hysterical patients are plagued by reminiscences and "their symptoms are the remnants and the memory symbols of certain (traumatic) experiences … they cannot escape from the past and neglect present reality in its favor" ('The Origin' 1909, p. 7). The theorist concludes that the hysterical patient's mind is "full of active yet unconscious ideas" and his/her symptoms originate from such ideas ('A Note' 1912, p. 48). Thus, Freud's treatment of his Viennese neurotic patients is guided by his interpretation of the close relationship between neurotic symptoms and unconscious thought processes. J. A.C. (1961, p. 3) holds that in his early study of hysterical patients, Freud discovers that the obvious irrational symptoms which, for so long, doctors found mysterious acquires meaning when interpreted in the light of "painful memories which had been repressed into the unconscious and were striving to find expression." Freud later expanded the frontiers of his scholarship in order to explain developments in human civilization such as religion, mythology, warfare, literature and other forms of artistic expressions. His postulation on the workings of imagination in the 1920 *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* provided the initial theoretical framework of classical psychoanalytic criticism. Consequently, in searching for better ways of treating mental illness, the theorist donated a huge body of conceptual ideas to literary criticism.

In order to effectively employ Freud's theory in the examination of literary texts, you have to be familiar with some of the most important concepts developed by the theorist. These include the Unconscious, Human Mind (Id, Ego and Superego), Defences, (especially Repression) Infantile Sexuality and Oedipus Complex.

3.2.1.1 The Unconscious

The notion of the Unconscious underlies the whole corpus of Freud's psychoanalysis theory. The concept had appeared in the scholarships of A. W. Schlegel and Friedrich Nietzsche but it was Freud who first studied it methodically and developed the vocabulary and terminology for the expression of its the role. Freud reveals "the concept of the unconscious" was obtained from "the theory of repression (as) the repressed serves … as a prototype of the unconscious" ('The Ego' 1923, p. 210). The theorist explains that "the term unconscious … describes not only latent ideas in general, but especially ideas with a certain dynamic character, ideas keeping apart from consciousness in spite of their intensity and activity" ('A Note' 1912, p. 49). The scholar insists that the unconscious is not only a reservoir of reminiscences and thoughts but is equally a concealed active power regulating human actions and inactions. Freud holds that the human being is usually unaware of the unconscious but only acknowledge its existence "on account of other proofs or signs" ('A Note' 1912, p. 47).

You need to comprehend Freud's idea of the unconscious because it plays a fundamental role in his psychological theory and Psychoanalysis as a school of literary theory and criticism. Do you know that Freud's examination of the mechanism of the human psyche and its enormous impact on human behaviour still controls Psychoanalysis theory and criticism? Thus, Freud's concept of the unconscious holds that the mind is constituted by two parts; conscious and unconscious. Freud speculates that human desires and impulses, which are reserved or subdued in the unconscious realm of the human mind play, active roles in the behaviour or attitude of human beings. In other words, an individual's conscious actions and inactions are influenced by certain repressed ideas, desires, needs, fear, wishes, conflicts and others which exist in the unconscious domain. Freud's notion of the unconscious as the primary origin and clarification of human behaviour represents a major point of departure from the concept of man as a rational being whose thoughts and actions are guided by morality and intellect, which regulated Western thought pattern from the classical periods. The idea of the unconscious remains "one of Sigmund Freud's most radical insights" (Lois Tyson 1999, p. 15). Literary characters demonstrate this idea. Surely you still remember Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall* Apart. The narrator says that "his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness … Okonkwo's fear … was not external but lay deep within him" (9). Thus, Okonkwo's fear is repressed in his unconscious but remains an active force that propels most of the character's harsh and violent actions, like the killing of his surrogate son, Ikemefuna.

Let us bring all these even closer to literature. Freud analyzes a work of art the same way he does a dream which he conceives as an expression of concealed wishes and anxieties. He speculates that the unconscious freely expresses itself in dreams when the body is asleep. However, the messages/meanings it expresses are distorted through the primary revision processes of displacement and condensation. The objective of interpreting dreams is to unmask the latent content (hidden meaning) by recollecting the manifest content (the dream) which functions as symbolisms. The symbols have both cultural and personal dynamics. Freud suggests that, like dreams, literary texts communicate the author's hidden anxieties and desires. Thus, the author's distinctive psychology and neurosis are manifest in his/her creative writing and consequently, a text becomes a reflection of the author's mind. For him, the author's psyche is projected in the characters. Freud further postulates that the "dream thoughts" are expressed in unusual forms. They are not expressed in prosaic language used by human thoughts "but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech." Hence, the psychological substances are covertly expressed, as in dreams, and thus disguised through symbolisms, condensation and displacement. Symbolisms are repressed materials displayed in disguise, Condensation represents many ideas or individuals depicted in one image and Displacement explains the location of anxiety onto a different image through association. Habib (2011, p. 237 and 234) observes that Freud's scholarship situates creative arts within "the broader contexts of culture and religion" and displays his consciousness of the difficulty of language, its "opaqueness and materiality, its resistance to clarity and its refusal to be reduced to any one dimensional "literal" meaning."

The Romantic poet, John Keats will serve as a good example here. The poet suffered and died from tuberculosis and his poems unmask the secret pain lodged in his unconscious. Observe the morbid symbols of the sixth stanza of his 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

> Have been half in love with easeful Death,
>
> Called him soft names in a mused rhyme,
>
> To take into the air my quite breath;
>
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
>
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain …

The notion of the unconscious plays a dominant role in all psychoanalytic thoughts. Do you now understand why Freud is acknowledged as a "major cultural force" within Psychoanalysis literary theory (Peter Barry, 1995 p. 96)?

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Read the poem, 'The World is too Much With Us' by the Romantic writer, William Wordsworth, and examine how the poem unmasks his unconscious fear and anxiety over possible destruction of the ecosystem which is the object of his adoration.

3.2.1.2   The Human Mind

You must have observed that Freud's erudition is interested in the workings of the human mind and its impact on behaviour. He postulates that the human mind has three functional constituents which are the id, the ego and the superego.

The Id is reservoir of psychic power or libido. It is the unorganized part of the unconscious. The Id contains sexual and other passions or desires. These instincts are natural and uncivilised.

The Superego represents conscious life. It is the organised aspect of the human psyche. This component signifies the internalisation of the society's pattern of etiquette. It works as the voice of common sense and reason and is developed by the impact of the external environment.

The Ego is the principal part of the conscious mind which regulates human action in civilized societies as it suppresses inappropriate sexual desires and instincts. It mediates between the Id and the Superego; that is between unconscious desires/impulses and learnt standards of propriety Thus, it functions to moderate human behaviour by regulating impulses and desires that are socially inappropriate.

Freud's idea of the human mind is closely connected to drives or instincts. He believes that at the mental sphere of the human mind are several instincts which function as primary motivating energy. These instincts therefore energise all the functions of the mind. He classified these instincts into two broad categories – *Eros* and *Thanatos*. *Eros* is the life instinct and includes the

erotic and self-preserving instincts. *Thanatos* is the death instinct and covers instincts related to aggression, cruelty and self-destruction.

Observe Freud's demarcation of the conscious and unconscious components of the human psyche as well as the functions of each. His scholarship notes the contest between the two. The two categories of instincts also display a relationship of opposites. The theorist's postulations put a lot of emphasis on the psycho-sexual dynamics of the human person. In the words of Sephen T. Thorton (p. 2), "Freud gave sexual drives an importance and centrality in human life, human actions, and human behaviour which was new …" and shocked many.

3.2.1.3   Defences

Remember that Freud assert that the forbidden desires or wishes are repressed in the unconscious realm. He adds that the contents of the unconscious are systematically preserved in the unconscious realm through a psychic procedure he terms Defences. Hence, the notion of Defences represent a major idea advanced by scholarship in its discussion of the structure of the human mind. He assumes that the mind develops a number of defence mechanisms in a bid to manage its conflicts. They are used by the ego to prevent anxieties and make the person feel better. In Freudian scholarship, Defences include Repression, Fixation, Denial, Regression, Sublimation, Selective Memory and Selective Perception. Repression is the most central of all these Defences. According to Freud (1915, p. 89) "the essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness." In **Repression** painful and disturbing thoughts, memories and socially inappropriate desires are erased from the conscious realm and repressed in the unconscious. Through repression, the human mind comes to terms with the requirements of the Id and Superego and it helps the Ego to prevent inner pain and conflict. The repressed desire or instinct continues to exist in the unconscious and influence the human behaviour. **Fixation** describes a situation in which the human being fails to move from one phase of development to the other. **Denial** is when an individual believes that a horrible event did not take place or denies the existence of a problem. **Regression** occurs when a person returns to a past psychological condition or regresses to a former behavioural pattern. It entails reliving a past pleasant or unpleasant event in order to take the mind away from a present problem or condition. **Sublimation** is when the sexual drives and desires can be converted into accomplishing goals that are socially acceptable. This could be in science, arts or literature. Do

you know that Freud views the creative energy as rechanneled sexual impulses sublimated on a work of art by a creative writer? He perceives Literature and other art forms as fictionalised wish fulfillments which are either not realistic or forbidden by social conventions. **Selective Memory** entails forgetting hurting memories. It is an attempt at adjustment of memories to avoid feeling overburdened by such reminiscences. **Selective Perception** is the tendency of human beings to see and hear only what such a person feels he/she can handle. It has to do with the attempt to ignore or forget that which may cause emotional distress or contradict previous beliefs.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Examine how Ocol's behaviour demonstrates Freud's concept of Selective Perception in Okot P'Bitek narrative poem 'Song of Lawino'.

3.2.1.4 Infantile Sexuality and Oedipus Complex

Freud later formulates the concepts of infantile sexuality and Oedipus Complex. His theory thus highlights the significance of the childhood experiences of a human subject. It is important for you to understand that Freud's definition of sexuality is however very broad. His concept of sexuality includes any type pleasure that can be obtained from the human body. The scholar further argues that the sexual drives of human beings starts from birth and are observable in children. Furthermore, he speculates that the libido, that is sexual energy, is the major motivating power in adult human beings. You must also take note that his concept of infantile sexuality represents an essential aspect of his wider hypothesis of the human personality.

In Freud's view, one's unconscious is influenced by childhood incident which he classifies into developmental phases. These phases involve a child's association with parents and with the instinct of desire in which the child derives pleasure from different parts of the body; first from the mouth, then the anus and the sexual organ. Therefore, Freud hypothesises that there are three phases of human development which are Oral, Anal and Phallic. At the **oral phase**, the infant gains his/her sexual pleasure from the act of sucking. After this comes the **anal phase** where the anus takes over as the site of pleasure and the infant derives pleasure from defecating. At the

phallic stage the location of pleasure changes to the child's sexual organs. At this point, the child develops a profound sexual attraction for the parent of the opposite sex and conversely a strong feeling of hatred for the parent of the same sex. This Freud terms the Oedipus Complex.

3.2.1.5   Oedipus Complex

The theory of the **Oedipus Conflict** suggests that a child competes for the affection and attention of the parent of the opposite gender. The term is drawn from Sophocles' classic drama *Oedipus Rex*, in which the tragic hero, Oedipus, killed his father, King Laius, and married his mother, Queen Jocasta. He submits that the Greek play articulates the universal principle of mental life. This Oedipus theory claims that the boy child is unconsciously sexually attracted to his mother as he feels jealousy towards his father. He also adds that these desire and feeling are repressed in most cases. The desire also results into a feeling of guilt and emotional conflict as the boy realises that it is almost impossible to displace his father. Again, he realises that any attempt to follow his desire for his mother may attract the wrath of his father against him and this may lead to his castration. Thus, he develops **castration complex**; that is the fear of being castrated by his father. Freud believes that this constitutes the most essential event in a boy's infancy and greatly influences his adult life.

Moreover, Freud postulates that girls experience the same complex in which they tend to sexually desire their father and resent their mother. This he terms **Electra complex.** Parental control and social coercion keep these desires in check and prevent the child from trying to satisfy them. He also propounds the related concept of **penis envy** which states that girls, realising that they lack the penis, which confers social and political privileges on the boys, develops a feeling of deprivation and envy the boys. The ability of the child to resolve these complexes successfully is critical in the development of a healthy heterosexual adult life. Freud supposes that the sex life of an adult is a function of his/her exposure to sexual roles from infancy. Freud holds that several mental illnesses, especially hysteria, could be traced to the failure to resolve these conflicts. Related to these is Freud's concept of **sibling rivalry** which

refers to the competition among siblings for their parents' love and attention. It usually begins after the second child is born into the family and lasts all through childhood.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Study Freud's Castration Complex and Penis Envy again and establish the relationship between both.

Have you observed that Freud's theory of infantile sexuality is still heavily dependent on the human psychosexuality? The view of the three human developmental stages, in the words of M.A.R. Habib, contravenes "conventional notions of childhood innocence" (2011, p. 235). His Oedipus Complex also redefines parent-child relationship. In Freud's Psychoanalysis, love becomes a contest between three people, where the third person is present "as a psychic obstacle", instead of a relationship between two and this represents the "most disturbing implication" of Freud's oedipal complex (Maud Ellmann 1994, p. 13). Nevertheless, Freud's considers them the developmental phases as natural processes of maturation and identity construction. Let us ascertain how all these impact upon literary analysis. Freud's Oedipus Complex can effectively be deployed in the explanation of the respective relationships between Gertrude Morel and her eldest son William in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Okonkwo and his daughter Ezimma in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ephraim and his son Eben in Eugene O'Neill's drama *Desire Under the Elms*. As a literary critic, you can examine a text using one or more Psychoanalysis concepts. Solomon Azumurana's essay "Freud, Lacan and Adichie's Aesthetics: Familial and Filial Generated Psychological Complexes in *Purple Hibiscus*", which examines the behaviour of the character Eugene in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, is a good example of psychoanalysis criticism. You can source and study other examples.

One crucial implication of Freud's postulates you must not ignore is the role of the nuclear family establishment, as vital to human development.

As you will soon observe, the family is a very significant aspect of Psychoanalytic theory. Each person is a product

The Oedipal and Electra complexes are based on the closely connected realities of familial relationships and filial bonds, which account the relationship between parents and children and between siblings in Psychoanalysis. In addition to Freud's concepts, Lacan's Symbolic Order and Jung's Mother archetype, as Psychoanalysis concepts, are predicated on familial relationships, at the nuclear family level. The nuclear family establishment, as such, largely provides the foundation for Psychoanalysis theorisations. This is because each individual is largely a product of his/her role within the family and the roles are usually gender-based. Explaining further Azumurana, (2012, p. 134) posits that:

> The family unit … is the concern of psychoanalysis … not the extended family but the nuclear one which consists the father, mother and children. Thus, while familial relationship in psychoanalysis is that between parents and siblings, filial affiliation is between siblings."

Azumurana goes ahead to note these difference between familial and family, two terms which could be confused. He notes that familial relationship in psychoanalysis characteristically refers to the relationship between children and their parents while family may include parents, children and even servants.

Freud's psychoanalysis concepts have elicited a lot of criticism, especially due to its explicit sexual and gender undertones. Thus, Ellmann (1994, p. 12) observes that "Freud's account of gender has incited furious debates in psychoanalytic circles …" Indeed for decades, scholars have continued to contend with Freud's perspective. For instance, Terry Eagleton, speaking in general terms, holds that Freud's theory is "conservative and pessimistic" (139). Peter Barry, in more specific terms, submits that Freud's ideas are "deeply masculinist in bias" and displays 'infantile sexuality' (97). Supporting Barry's conclusion, feminists, exemplified by Simone de Beauvoir, accuse Freud of formulating a masculine pattern. Simone de Beauvoir, in the very seminal book *The Second Sex*, pointed out the socio-political underpinning of penis envy, which Freud's scholarship ignores. Due to these limitations, other scholars, like Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung, reformulate some of Freud's concepts.

3.2.2   Jacques Lacan

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan was a psychiatrist. He is influenced by Structural Linguistics and Hegelian Philosophy and employed the ideas derived from both to restructure Freud's postulations. Using the structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, Lacan reformulated Freud's primary ideas and procedure and therefore alters Freud's basically humanistic theory. Lacan's theory adopts Ferdinand de Saussure's Linguistic perspective to advance a semiotic account of Psychoanalysis. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure posits that there are only differences and no "positive terms" in a language. Lacan speculates that the human mind is composed of the language employed in his/her society. Thus, under his theory, desire and gender are results of the signifying system. Lacan's fame is largely based on the publication of a collection of his most significant essays in the book *Ecrits* (1966). His thoughts exerted a lot of influence on Marxist and Feminist thinkers like the French Louis Althusser and the Bulgaria-born French Julie Kristeva. The latter is a prominent scholar of Intertextuality.

3.2.2.1   Stages of Human Development

Lacan examines how linguistic and ideological systems organize the human conscious and unconscious existence and function in the construction of knowledge. Lacan's theory projects a linguistic model in the interpretation of the entrance of the individual into the social order of his/her society. He deemphasises the role of natural instincts and desires in human behaviour in his postulation that the human being understands his/her relationship to him/her self and with others through existing ideological systems, particularly language.

 Lacan's human developmental theory is also known as Register theory or the theory of the three registers. We will give these registers some attention. Do you know why? Let me tell you! It is because the registers provide the framework for several of Lacan's other concepts. This implies that for you to understand Lacan's psychoanalysis, you must first understand his theory of the three registers. In the seminal paper "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" (1953), Lacan demarcates the human mental disposition into three stages. This corresponds with, but differs from, Freud's account of stages of human development. The first

and third are before and after the acquisition of language while the second is positioned in between the two. Below are the different levels of Lacanian triad psychoanalytic orders: Imaginary Order, Symbolic Order/Mirror Stage and Real Order.

Imagery Order lasts between 0 to 6 months. At this stage, the child exists in a world made up of images. The child cannot separate "1 and Other". This implies that he/she cannot make a distinction between him/herself, his/her mother and objects in his/her surroundings. Such a child is largely a "body in bits and pieces" and depends totally on his/her nurturers for sustenance. It represents the stage of unity and immediate possession. The world of the child at this stage is "not fragmented or mediated by difference, by categories, in a word, by language and signs (Habib 2011, p. 235). The infant therefore is unaware of difference and has no sense of self.

The Symbolic Order/Mirror Stage lasts between 6 and 18 months and represents the most important phase in the child's development. It starts at the point where the imaginary stage ends. This phase is closely connected to the superego. It is the stage of recognition for the child. Under this order, he/she can recognize him/herself and his/her surrounding in the mirror and he/she begins to develop sense of a separate self and begins to perceive him/her self as an independent subject. In other words, he/she begins to develop a perception of him/herself as a unified and a separate person. The child's interaction with others reinforces this understanding through what is mirrored back to him/her, especially by his/her nurturers, typically the mother. The symbolic order ushers the child into a symbolic world of gender differences in which social roles are predetermined. It is the world of language and of objects and subjects.

The Real Order occurs between 18 months to 4 years. It is conceptualizes as a phase that cannot be represented in speech or writing. It is linked to the impossible. It is only comprehended in connection to the other two which it places in their individual positions.

For Lacan, an individual's actions and inactions are largely controlled by what he/she internalises within the nuclear family, through language. Thus, his study, unlike Freud's, emphasises social relationships in the context of the family. Lacan's claims imply that symbolic stage is a very critical phase in a child's development as it determines his image of self which is central to identity construction. Mathew Sharpe (p. 3) posits that Lacan adopts both linguistic and literary perspectives "whereby the symbolic order is a linguistic dimension, the imagery is a

field of imagery and deception and finally the Real is the unconscious that is mysterious because it remains hidden." It also reiterates Freud's observation on the role of the family in the socialisation of a child. Lacan's reinvention of Freud's psychosexual development of the human being at the early stage and the development of Oedipus complex is "especially important in Lacanian literary criticism" (M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary*, 2005, p. 260).

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Summarize Lacan's concept of the three registers and do a critical analysis of each.

At this point, you must have noted that though predicated on linguistic mode, Lacan's perspective, like Freud's, is established on the nuclear family dynamics, in terms of relationships present in the family hierarchy. According to Ellmann (1994, p. 16):

> Lacan argues that every human infant enters its existence in this undifferentiated and miasmic state which Freud described as 'oceanic feeling'. To achieve subjectivity, the infant has to be conscripted into the lexicon of kinship, in which its identity as child, son or daughter is determined by its difference from other subjects, such as mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts.

3.2.2.2   The Unconscious

You must never forget that Lacan's theory is summarised in the oft quoted statement that the "unconscious is structured like a language". For him, the unconscious functions like language along the points of Metaphor and Metonymy from which the signified is generated. The theorist attributes the origin of the unconscious to a "split" within the human subject in the process of development. A significant aspect of Lacan's concept of the unconscious is his suggestion of a form of distinction between metaphor and metonymy, a binary set he adopted from Roman Jakobson's scholarship. In his words: It is "one word for another: that is the formula of metaphor (and) it is in the word-to-word connection that metonymy is based." The two sets therefore cater for Substitution and Combination. Sadeq Rahimi (2009, p. 1) explains that the main difference between the two is that "metaphor functions to suppress, while metonymy functions to

combine." Symbolisms are the repressed materials displayed in disguise, Condensation represents many ideas or individuals depicted in one image and Displacement accounts for the location of anxiety onto a different image through association. Lacan further reveals that he conceptualizes Metaphor and Metonymy to account for the ideas which Freud terms Condensation and Displacement. Thus, in Lacan's broader speculations, the unconscious represents the being of all things and is at work constantly. Do you observe a correspondence between his view of the unconscious and Freud's? You also need to discern the differences, especially how he gives less attention to human impulses and desires as the primary governor of human actions and inactions. Examine the following excerpt from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

> Even as a little boy, Okonkwo had resented his father's failure and weakness. Even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate told him that his father was an *agbala. That was* how Okonkwo came to know that *agbala* was not only a name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. (10)

In the above excerpt, the signifier *agbala* symbolically functions in the construction of different ideas of gender and class. In addition, Daniel Dafoe's use of terms like heathen, savages, master and servant in *Robinson Crusoe* are metaphoric expressions of his class, racial and religious socializations.

Khursheed Ahmad Qazi, (2011, p. 1) holds that Lacan's "greatest contribution to literary studies is the way he reinterpreted and reformulated Freudian theories so as to make them compatible for literary studies." Conversely, Lacan's work has been accused of displaying a phallocentric perspective. Do you agree with this conclusion? Do not be in a hurry to answer. Study the next section before you do.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Establish the connection and disconnection between Lacan and Freud's notions of the Unconscious.

3.2.2.3 Oedipus Complex

This is a major concern of Lacan as it is for Freud. However Lacan considers this in connection to language acquisition. His account reformulates Freud's biological approach into a linguistic system. He postulates that the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, through the understanding that as a boy, one cannot sexually possess the mother he desires represents a means of obeying social restrictions. It also entails following a determined structure of language in which the 'self' is perceived in relation to 'others'. When the human being makes his entrance into language, he loses his sense of the perfect and plenitude; both unachievable. Then the phallus takes the place of all the individual loses and represents all the powers associated with the "symbolic father" and the "Name-of-the-Father", which goes beyond the father and includes the social systems which directs the human action and implies control, knowledge and law. Lacan insists that the phallus does not mean the biological penis or biological father. After the Oedipus stage, anybody – mother, leader, teacher, mentor – can take the status of the phallus. For instance, In *Things Fall Apart*, Unoka, the biological father of Okonkwo, hardly takes the position of phallus in the life of his son. The character Matilda functions as a quintessential phallus in Marie-Elena John's novel, *Unburnable*. Again, the character, Aunty Ifeoma takes the position of the phallus in the life of her children (*Purple Hibiscus*). She even displaces her brother Eugene to play the same role in the lives of Kambili and Jaja. Furthermore, it could be argued that Trovald's reaction to his wife Nora's initiative and resourcefulness, in the modern drama, *A Doll's House* by Henrick Ibsen, represents his fear of losing his cultural position of the phallus in his family.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Demonstrate your comprehension of Lacan's phallus by exploiting the concept in the examination of any of the characters used as examples above.

3.2.3 Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)

Carl G. Jung is a Swiss psychiatrist and a co-founder of analytical school of psychology. Though it draws from Freudian thoughts, the Jungian literary criticism departs considerably from Freud and Lacan's version of Psychoanalysis. Jung's concept of the unconscious is his most important

contribution to Psychoanalysis. His concept of libido goes beyond Freud's sexual drives and encapsulates all imaginative instincts and desires as well as the whole energy motivating the human conduct. Thus, Jung's concept pays little attention to the sexual feature which mainly characterises Freud's. His notion of the Unconscious and the Human Psyche are especially productive in literary criticism.

3.2.3.1 The Collective Unconscious

Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious was first advanced in his book, *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*, originally published in 1912. Jung acknowledges Freud's individual unconscious but observes a further form of unconscious he terms "collective unconscious". His observation is based on his study and wide knowledge of the literature, myth, religion, philosophy and symbolisms of several cultures of the world. Please note how literature continues to function in the formulation of literary theories and concepts. The scholar extends Freud's boundaries by his speculations noted afterwards. The unconscious is composed of not only repressed primal processes but also facets of mental existence and certain personal experiences ignored in the course of human development. It is divided into individual unconscious and collective unconscious. The individual unconscious is constituted by the entire experience of an individual. The collective unconscious is the pool of collective human experiences. Only a comparatively minor portion of the entire unconscious material constitutes personal unconscious. Below is a summary of Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as interpreted by J. A. C. Brown. The collective unconscious is:

> That which lies below the personal unconscious is known as the collective or racial unconscious, since it contains the collective beliefs and myths of the race to which the individual belongs. The deepest levels of the collective unconscious are the universal unconscious common to all humanity, and even, it would appear, to man's primate and animal ancestry. (1964, p. 45)

In Jung's term, the collective unconscious is the repository of "racial memory" shared by people in every human culture. It is constituted by primordial images or what Jung describes as

'Archetypes'" Archetypes are trans-individual thoughts; they are primal forms of thought which typically manifest in myths, religion, fantasies and fairy tales. An archetype, in his terms, embodies "patterns of behaviour … inherited mode of functioning" rather than "inherited idea." Thus, they appear as recurrent ideas in human thoughts and they have provided tale materials to the literature of different civilizations of the world. These are exemplified by the great mother, father of all, the child, serpent, sun-gods, birth and rebirth, sphinx and others. Jung postulates that the thoughts are deeply internalized within the human psyche under the suppressed and undeveloped individual memory. The theorist speculates that the collective unconscious are revealed in dreams and myths which shows that humanity is connected to some images and symbols which manifest in the form of archetypes. Jung describes different archetypes including The Mother - comforter and nurturer; The Father – authority, strict, powerful; The Child – rebirth, yearning for innocence, salvation; The Hero – rescuer, defender, champion; The Trickster – liar, mischief-maker, cheat; The Maiden – purity, virtue, desire. He posits that all these forms manifest symbolically in literature.

For Jung, great literature is an expression of the archetypes of the collective racial memory, like myth whose outline appears in all human cultures. He adds that a superior creative writer enables his/her audience gain access into the racial memory where archetypal images are housed. The author as such regenerates parts of the consciousness necessary for personal and collective welfare of humanity. Please note the way this postulation departs from Freud's view of literature. Also note that his theory has a huge influence on other literary theories like Myth and Archetypal Criticisms.

The implication of Jung's postulate is that literature functions like myth. So, how does Jung describe myth? In *The Archetype and the Collective Unconscious* (1959), Jung posits that "myths are projections of innate psychic phenomena (and) do not derive from external factors" (G. N. Ofor 1987, p. 37). Archetypes therefore manifest in myths. Thus, unconscious forms are displayed in a comprehensible manner in myths. Ofor (1987, p. 38) again validates Jung's speculation by his conclusion that "Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* is suffused with archetypal symbols like water imagery, rites of passage … the myths of gods and the dibia …" Different examples of archetypal symbols abound in several literary texts; across genres and regions. For instance, Achebe's *Arrow of God* displays gods and the serpent, in Idemili's sacred python, Ulu,

Eru and others. The ancient Greek plays like *Prometheus* Bound by Aeschylus, is also saturated with gods while Christopher Okigbo invokes of Mother Idoto in his poem "The Passage". Shakespeare's *Macbeth* contains witches. Additionally, the journey motif is a universal symbol observable in T.S Eliot's narrative poem "Journey of the Magi", Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Ehi's journey in Bel Ofili's novel, *Seventh Virgin*. Moreover, the father archetype is discernible in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* through Ezekiel's Presbyterian "mean … austere holiness" (71) and in the image of Gabriel Grimmes in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it to the Mountain*. The mother archetype is evident in the character Mother in Andrew Munroe's *The Obeah Woman May* and Miranda in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*. You have more than enough examples above, don't you? The function of these examples is to clarify the concepts.

Self-Assessment Exercise 8

Explain Jung's concept of Archetypes and identify archetypes in any literary work you have studied.

3.2.3.2 The Human Psyche

In Jung's model, the human psyche is made up of three layers which are consciousness, personal unconscious and collective unconscious. The self exists at the center and, with its influences, pervades the whole system. The collective unconscious exists at the deepest level and is made up of archetypes. Consciousness is at the outer level and the personal consciousness takes an intermediate position between consciousness and collective unconscious. The personal consciousness is composed of complexes which are each connected to an archetype.

> To a limited extent (sic) Jung's archetypes resemble Plato's ideas.
> For Plato, 'ideas' were pure mental forms existing in the minds of
> the gods before human life began and were consequently above
> and beyond the ordinary world of phenomenon. (Anthony
> Stephens 1994, p. 1)

The implication of Stephen's observation is that the modern theory of Jung connects to the ancient ideas of Plato and intensifies the long relationship between different literary theories

across different periods of literary history. Jung posits that just as the chicken inherits an innate response to the hawk, the human being inherits structural mechanisms of the psyche and these are the Persona, the Shadow and the Anima/Animus.

The persona, to some extent, corresponds with Freud's idea of superego. The term is derived from the Latin word for 'mask'. This represents the impression one wants to make to the other; the role an individual decides to play. It is what an individual wants others to think he/she is as against what he/she is actually. In summary, it is the aspect of an individual that is revealed to his/her world and which conceals the real person. The persona is contradicted by negative traits and thus forms the shadow. In dreams the persona manifest in various forms.

The shadow is comprised of sex and life impulses. In it are repressed, inadequacies, flaws, ideas, instincts. This part represents the villain; inferior darker aspect of the unconscious self that an individual strive to suppress. They embody the unknown, disorder and wildness. For Jung, "where there is light, there must also be shadow" and consequently the darker side has some value as it functions to balance the whole human psyche. He speculates that this may manifest in dreams in forms of wild and exotic symbols like demon, monster, dragon and others. For Jung the shadow is usually outlined in the villain in a literary work. Thus, the shadow is manifest in the following characters who externalize evil in classic texts. Lady Macbeth and Iago in William Shakespeare's drama Macbeth and *Othello*, Jack in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Achitophel in John Dryden's mock heroic poem, 'Absalom and Achitophel' and Satan in John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost".

The anima and animus, in Jung's view are two halves of the same whole. In the human psyche, both are the contra-sexual archetypes. The anima is the feminine side of a man and the animus the masculine aspect of a woman. They work to provide balance for what should have been a one-sided gender existence. Jude Dibia's depictions of Ngozi and Nduesoh, the protagonists of *Unbriddled* and *Blackbird*, tend to reveal his (Dibia's) anima. In addition, Aunty Ifeoma's aura of "fearlessness" (76) and her hands which seem to be "made of metal" (245), display the characters animus in Adichie's *Purpe Hibiscus*, the same way her portrayal of the character Ifemelu does in *Americanah*.

These three structural mechanisms of the psyche usually manifest in works of arts, albeit in different ways. I am sure that as a literary student you find Jung's ideas very insightful. A serious student will undertake a further study of the theories studied in this unit. There are also other psychoanalytic theories which are not covered by this unit. Why not identify them?

Self-Assessment Exercise 9

Explain the Persona as conceptualised by Carl Jung using examples from any literary text(s).

4.0   Application

To examine a literary text from the Psychoanalytic perspective you should:

First, regard a creative piece (fiction, drama and poetry) as an indirect and imaginative expression of the author's mentality and personality.

Interpret a text by making reference to the author's personality and ascertain the author's state of mind by referring to his/her creative work.

Consider the character's attitude as a consequence of hidden unconscious desires, instincts, fears, anxiety, needs, thoughts and ideas.

Unmask the different Defences operating in a work of literature and determine the consequences of such.

Search for major terms with additional and concealed meanings and determine the subconscious motives underlying the employment of such words by the author.

Establish the psychological motives of the reader by analysing his/her interpretation of a literary text.

Identify the archetypes manifest in the literary elements employed by the author and examine how the author employs these to achieve his/her creative objective.

5.0   Conclusion

Psychoanalysis is a primary type of psychological criticism that works to unmask the author's motives. Scholars have extended its original boundaries to include examination of the motives of the author, fictional characters and readers. For instance, the critics in this school search for elements of the author's biography, like his/her relationship with parents and siblings and childhood memories, in a text. They examine the psychology of the audience, creative process, archetypes, search for hidden meanings by interpreting symbols employed in a text and seek links between different creative writers within a literary tradition. The critics also study the role of language in the establishment of the conscious and unconscious, stereotypes and gender roles. Thus, the author, character and audience are the focus of this type of criticism. Psychoanalysis supplies literary critics and students like you, the conceptual tools with which to read and make more meaning out of broaden the creative works. This method of criticism has indeed broadened the context of Literary Studies. Finally remember that your primary task as a psychoanalytic critic is to "to decipher the true content, and thereby, to explain the emotional effects on the reader, of a literary work by translating its manifest elements into the latent, unconscious determinants that constitute their true but suppressed meanings" (Abrams 2005, p. 258).

6.0   Summary

Unit 3 of Module 5 has brought you in contact with the:

Main thrust of psychological criticism which is principally constituted by Psychoanalysis theory and criticism.

Sigmund Freud's notions and concepts of the Unconscious, Human Mind, Defences, Infantile Sexuality and Oedipus Complex.

Jacques Lacan's theories of Stages of Human Development, Unconscious, Oedipus Complex.

Theories of Collective Unconscious and Human Psyche as postulated by Carl Jung.

Suggestions for examination of texts drawing from insights provided by the theories discussed in this unit.

Assessment exercises towards ensuring comprehension and application of theories in literary analysis.

7.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Discuss the concern of Psychoanalysis as a prominent form of literary theory and criticism. Your essay will be enhanced by relevant illustrations and copious examples.
2. Discuss Freud's notion of the unconscious and establish its central relevance to Psychoanalysis as a school of literary theory and criticism.
3. Examine the major ways in which Jacques Lacan reformulates Freud's psychoanalytic ideas.
4. Identify the main assumptions of Carl Jung's concept of the Collective Unconscious and assess its contributions to the development of Psychoanalysis.
5. Identify the archetypes in any novel of your choice and examine how the author employs them to achieve his/her creative objective.
6. Using ample examples from literary texts, discuss at least five Defences, including Repression, and determine the consequences of each.

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MODULE 4 UNIT 4 FEMINISM AND MARXISM

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction

Welcome to Unit 4 of Module 4. It is a bit different from the previous units because it is interested in two major conceptual schools – Feminism and Marxism. The two are socially-conscious theories and deal with artificial divisive factors of gender and class. Both factors form the concern of several fictions across all regions of the world. The first of the two schools you will meet under this unit is Feminism. Our study of the Feminist theory and criticism here is mainly based on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. The choice of the text is guided by the status of the essay in the academic domain, especially within Feminism. In addition, Elaine Showalter's 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism' is also employed to offer supplementary insights into Feminist criticism. After engaging Feminism, we move on Marxism. The principal ideas of Marx in *Critique of Political Economy* are discussed in this section. Furthermore, a further analysis of those ideas in Terry Eagleton's essay, 'From Marxism and Literary Criticism', is also identified. Eagleton has been identified as the "most prominent" Marxist critic in Britain who consistently worked to define and rearticulate the principles of Marxist philosophy in literary analysis (M. A. R. Habib, 2011, p. 232). Thus, we have to consult him in our effort to understand the Marxist perspective to literary analysis.

In addition, this unit offers a brief background of each of the two schools and engages in an examination of each of the concepts. Again, you will find a guide on how to apply the concepts within each of the theories. Moreover, there are a number of self-assessment exercises and tutor-Marked assignment which you must dully attend to. All these are intended to help you adequately understand and utilize each theoretical position in literary analysis.

2.0   Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Understand the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions which led to the development of Feminism and Marxism.

Identify the major claims of Feminism.

Discuss Virginia's Woolf's position as articulated in 'A Room of One's Own and the contributions of the text to the growth of Feminism as a literary theory.

Explain why Marxism is referred to as an economic and political theory which has had a profound impact on Literary Studies as a discipline.

Appreciate the relationship between Marxist and Feminist criticisms.

Employ the conceptual postulations of Feminist and Marxist scholars in textual analysis.

3.0   Main Content

3.1   Feminist Criticism

3.1.1   Background

Written records suggest that the traditional Western society was mainly patriarchal, economically, socially and politically. Women were kept in the background and assigned marginal positions. Many societies, including ancient Rome and Greek, regarded women as inferior beings and assigned them marginal positions. In the Elizabethan England, women had no right to politics, education and property, they had no legal status. This was also the case in many African societies as illustrated in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Even, in the early Christian period the story remained same. Again, in Muslim societies, gender inequality is apparent and texts like E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* respectively thematise the reality. However, by 17th century, resistance to that cultural establishment began to arise and eventually materialized into the Feminism movement.

Feminism, by its nature and scope, has become an amorphous and ever-evolving phenomenon and so very difficult to satisfactorily define. However, Barbara Arneil (1999, p. 3-4) provides "a preliminary definition" in which Feminism entails:

> The recognition that virtually across time and place, men and women are unequal in the power they have, either in society or over their own lives, and the corollary belief that men and women should be equal; the belief that knowledge has been written about, and for men and the corollary belief that all schools of knowledge must be re-examined and understood to reveal the extent to which they ignore or distort gender.

In addition, Cathy Reisenwitz (N.D., p. 1) defines Feminism as "the belief in the social, political, and economic equality of sexes." She further identifies 5 items which constitute the core beliefs of Feminism and these are:

1. Sexism is a reality.
2. Misogyny is cultural, systemic, entrenched, enduring and all-encompassing.
3. Equality of right and opportunity for men and women.
4. Intellectually and socially, men and women are equal.
5. Recognition and treatment of women as equal to men.

Both definitions offer an insight into the primary postulations of Feminism, as a literary theory.

3.1.2   Basic Assumptions

The central objective of feminism is gender equality. It works to elevate the status of the woman. The struggle for gender equality and redefinition of women's socio-cultural, legal and political roles and rights goes back to the eighteenth century. Feminism, as a theory, was initiated by a host of seminal texts including Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), John Stuart Mill's 'The Subjection of Women' (1869), Simone de Beauviour's *The*

Second Sex (1949), and Kate Miller's *Sexual Politics* (1969). These texts provide the intellectual basis and force for the development of feminist theory and criticism.

Feminist criticism, as a concentrated and separate approach to the examination of literary texts, was inaugurated in the 1960s and popularized in the 1970s. In its various colorations, feminist criticism is guided by a number of considerations. First, feminist criticism believes that the Western society is patriarchal and as such subjugates women. Secondly, sex is biological and natural while gender is cultural and 'nurtural'. Thirdly, traditional literature and its critical standard are 'masculinist' or 'androcentric'. Consequently, feminist criticism functions to explore patriarchal cultures and reorder the perception and participation of literary enterprise to include the woman's perspective (Elizabeth Woledge, 2012, p. 1). It also works to identify and remedy the distorted image of the woman in literary works and move her from the margins to the centre of creative production and consumption. Virginia Woolf is acknowledged as an important pioneer in feminist criticism and her thoughts are advanced in the seminal essay 'A Room of One's Own'.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Why is Feminism a difficult concept to define and what are its major concerns?

3.1.1.1   Virginia Woolf *A Room of One's Own*

Background

You need to have a glimpse into Woolf's background in order to understand her position better. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), is a British novelist, essayist and critic. Unlike her brothers, she did not have formal education as her patriarchal Victorian society legally and culturally exempted women from participating in socio-political and economic activities. However, Woolf was educated at home by her father. Armed with her private education and irked by the condition of the woman, the theorist examines the socio-historical position of women in two conceptual essays: *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938).

A Room of One's Own is an extended essay based on a serialized lecture – 'Women and Fiction'– Woolf delivered at two women's colleges, Newnham College and Girton College, of Cambridge University in 1928. 'Shakespeare's Sister' is chapter 3 of the 6-chapter book, *A Room of One's Own*. In that chapter, Woolf employs a fictional character in an examination of women as writers and characters and thus argues for the literal and metaphoric liberty of a woman in an explicit patriarchal society of the Elizabethan England. According to Kaplan and Anderson the text is "the first practical and theoretical" account of a feminist literary history and a rallying spot in the feminist mission to attain a self-allocated and different identity (2000, 412). This essay has assumed the status of a reference text for feminist historical and literary analysis and that is why you need to know what it proposes.

Main Ideas

The controlling emphasis all through *A Room of One's Own* is gender inequality and its impact on the creative possibilities of the woman. Woolf examines entrenched sexism of the pre-eighteenth century England and the condition of the middle-class women in that society. In addition she postulates on the nature of History, impediments to writing, qualities of a good writer and an ideal literary work.

The essay starts by summarising gender inequality as perceived by Woolf in her statement that "women are poorer than men" (412). Woolf shifts her attention to literature as she expresses her puzzlement over the absence of women in the vibrant literary scene of the Elizabethan age. She posits that women's condition in that society did not allow for creativity. In her view, literature captures human conditions in relation to material things, like healthiness, finance and accommodation. Woolf then likens fiction to "a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners … (and) is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as Science may be" (412). Furthermore, based on her academic investigation, through history books, especially Trevelyan's *History of England*, Woolf makes a number of discoveries. First, there was no record of the woman before the eighteenth century; "history scarcely mentions her" and she is absent in any anthology of anecdote (414). The woman Again, the woman was only accounted for in relation to the man. Thus, she was usually subjected to child betrothal, coerced into marriage in which the man was "lord and master" and where she experienced constant brutal

wife-battering. However, Woolf observes that the same Trevelyan's account notes that Shakespeare's women tend to be equipped with "personality and character" (413). Woolf submits that history, which is constituted by the great events of the past, rarely mention women who are ironically given some measure of prominence and significance in arts. She summarizes the disparity between the historic and imaginative image and condition of the woman thus:

> A very queer composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. … Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

In Woolf's conclusion, history presents a biased account and therefore departs from the truth while fiction tends to hold more truth than facts. She insists that the unrecorded life of the typical Elizabethan woman exists, in fragments, somewhere. In Woolf's perception, there is need to "rewrite history … add a supplement to history" in order to present a balanced picture in which the experiences of the woman is also presented in books (415). She identifies the young women of the famous Girton and Newnham colleges as more qualified than herself in carrying out the arduous task of researching and rewriting the underwritten woman.

 The above observations set the tone for Woolf's picture of gender inequality and its impact on women creative potentials. Goaded by a bishop's view that it is impossible for a woman to possess Shakespeare's talents, she adopts Shakespeare as an expressive technique. Woolf assigns Shakespeare a fictional sister, Judith, and uses both to illustrate gender inequality embedded in the systematic subordination and emasculation of women and their creative capacities. Judith, unlike her brother, was denied education, had no private reading time and space, was beaten and coaxed by her father when she refused to marry and absconded from home to pursue her dreams as an artist. The teenager Judith was mocked and rejected by the male-controlled theatre, impregnated by the actor-manager, committed suicide and was buried in an unmarked grave. She postulates that even in the 19[th] century, "a woman is not encourages to be an artist" she was

rather indoctrinated, ignored and maltreated (420). Woolf further notes this gender inequality not only in arts but also in politics which is a serious business a woman must not meddle in no matter how passionate she may be in political matters. She attributes the condition of the woman to the masked "masculine complex" which strives to keep the woman "inferior" so that he "shall be superior" (420). Woolf finds this complex detrimental to the woman's movement and wellbeing. In all, Woolf's stated thesis is that a woman cannot be as successful as Shakespeare "for genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people" which is where women belong (416). She submits that a woman born with some creative talent in the sixteenth century was bound to a tragic life because her conditions were detrimental to the "state of mind" required for the expression of such innate gifts (418).

Based on the premise of the state of mind, Woolf identifies impediments to creativity. First, poetry demand intellectual freedom which derives from material circumstances. In addition is distractions and then ill-health. Again, the general "notorious indifference" to literature adds to Woolf's list of enemies of creativity (418). Employing the analogy of two rats, she depicts additional barriers to a woman's creative energy and success. She observes that even till early nineteenth century, a woman can hardly write literature especially poetry, because she was denied of a conducive "room of her own" (419). Her condition permits constant interruptions, encourages poverty, forbids freedom of thought and facilitates resentment and anxiety.   In addition, her world was not just indifferent but hostile to her writings. In her conclusion, Woolf conceives writing as an exceptionally difficult enterprise and even worse for a woman who had a long list 'dos' and 'don'ts' "to protest against, to overcome" (419-420).

Using the looking-glass metaphor, Woolf further classifies men's writing as revealing masculine aggression motivated by the quest to dominate which manifests in the historical disparaging of women. A credible work of arts must be "dispassionate", she states. Woolf adds that literature should concentrate on the subject of arts rather than the artist. According to Woolf, the artist's mind "must be incandescent" and free from obstacles before poetry can surge from within him/her "free and unimpeded" (421). In her view, Shakespeare is the best exemplar of an ideal creative mind because he successfully conceals his resentments, malice and dislikes from his readers. All the yearnings to settle a score, announce a grievance, broadcast some difficulty, preach, protest was eliminated in his works (421).

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

In your view, why does Woolf employ Ophelia to make her case?

Analysis

Woolf travels back to Elizabethan times to give a fictional and historical illustration of sexism using Professor Trevelyan's account and Shakespeare's mythical sister, Judith. Her research for women in history serves as a basis to articulate the discrepancy between literary and historical images of the woman. Her view illustrates her suspicion of history which she considers an interpretation of reality based on personal circumstances and as such subjective. In Woolf's opinion, fiction is more dependable than history. This justifies her exploitation of fiction in her search for the truth behind women's absence in the creative enterprise. Woolf's convincing and realistic characterization of the unfortunate Judith depicts her own creative prowess and her circumstances as a woman in a rabid patriarchal society.

Woolf employs "room" in a figurative sense to discuss gender inequality of the Elizabethan period which stifled the woman's imaginative voice and space. Kaplan and Anderson submit that rooms specify the "inherently submissive roles of women – kitchen, bedroom, and nursery" (2000, p. 412). Woolf essay is intended to rebut the thinking of her period that a woman did not have the intellectual capacity to produce a work of fiction. She therefore hypothesizes on the economic, educational, social and psychological barriers which made it almost impossible for a woman to demonstrate her imaginative abilities and perhaps participate in history. Her reference to women as "laboring, uneducated and servile" (416) more than most passages articulates the socio-political status of Elizabethan women which barred them from partaking in the production and consumption of literature. This is further dramatised by the historical account of women's subservient position through Judith's tragedy. Have you noted that the central argument of *A Room of One's Own* is that a woman needs adequate time and the space – 'a room of her own' – to express her creative skills.

In an attempt to identify impediments to women's writing, Woolf postulates on the economic, social and mental conditions detrimental to writing, qualities of a good writer and a good work of arts. Teddy Wayne observes that Woolf posits that money and personal freedom foster "freedom of thought, and that poverty and its attendant ills inhibit such thought" (2002, p. 1). The theorist's concept of a good writer and good writing is encapsulated in her view that for a writer to get to the status of Shakespeare's, he/she must be free from external hindrances and his/her work must be free from personal grudges. Under Woolf's concept of literature, economic empowerment and uninterrupted concentration are prerequisite for writing fiction. Therefore, Woolf's essay classifies what she considers necessary for creativity even as she pursues her gender equality agenda. By her choice of the word, "incandescent", Woolf interprets the mind of an artist as brilliant, luminous and uncorrupted. Her expectations from a good writer equally reveal her concept of literature as never an expression of personal passion but a realistic illumination of the world in which an artist lives. In this she departs from the Romantic theory of arts. Woolf, unlike many critics of her period, does not advocate protest literature which for her distorts the incandescence force of an artist. In other words the 'agitprop' literature will not receive Woolf's endorsement. We can summarise Woolf's theory of a good work of art as that which concentrates on the subject rather than the writer, flows unimpeded, and conceals all personal yearnings to settle a score, announce a grievance, broadcast some difficulty, preach or protest.

It is important to make some relevant observations. First, Woolf is interested in the upper-middle class women, where she and her fictional characters belong. Thus, she represents her own reality. In addition, Woolf's lecture underscores her expectation from women who, unlike her, have access to formal education. She challenges them to use their education to uplift the understated status of women in the society and this is in line with the feminist agenda. Again, Woolf's essay maintains some obvious flaws. For instance, her sole interest in the middle class women of the Elizabethan English society restricts her scope and tends to exclude a recognisable percentage of women, exemplified by writers like Gayatri Spivak and Alice Walker, from Woolf's room on the bases of class and colour. Walker (2004, p. 235) flaws Woolf's argument that a woman needs both economic and psychological freedom to write fiction by pointing to Phyllis Wheatley "a sickly, frail, Black girl … a slave, who owned not even herself." In her terms, if Wheatley had

been a white, she would have been considered intellectually greater than all women and even most men of her period. Moreover, by defining women as subservient uneducated working class, Woolf's theory acquires a classist tone. Indeed this class-based categorization may be considered a bit snobbish. Furthermore, the same Woolf who calls upon college girls to arise and rewrite the woman from obscurity to limelight ironically seeks to remove the person from literature. She holds that a woman has a lot of obstacles to "to protest against" but renounces protest literature. Is that not inconsistency? *A Room of One's Own* has been severally attacked on these bases.

Despite its limitations, Woolf's conceptual essay has provided the scholarly impetus for the development of a new critical and creative approach in Literary Studies. *A Room of One's Own* has indeed motivated several other critical and conceptual texts epitomised by Elaine Showalter's investigation of responsibilities of feminist criticism using Shakespeare's characterization of Ophelia in *Hamlet*.

3.1.2.2   'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism' – Elaine Showalter

Elaine Showalter, an American and a foremost feminist and literary critic, writes on cultural and social issues. Showalter developed the concept and approach of Gynocriticism in literary criticism. Gynocriticism functions to formulate a female structure that facilitates the examination of all types of Women writings, in all their aspects. Showalter's essay encapsulates her requirements for an objective feminist criticism following what she considers subjective interpretations of Shakespeare's characterization of Ophelia. The essay represents a criticism of Jacques Lacan's lecture in a Paris 1959 conference on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Showalter observes that Lacan played "a bait-and-switch game" with Ophelia when he largely ignored the character, which he sets out to address, but gives primary attention to Hamlet. The American theorist observes that by popular culture, Ophelia is perhaps the most visible heroine created by Shakespeare although she is ignored by criticism. Showalter also notes that even feminist critics tend to avoid Ophelia or treat her with a measure of embarrassment. In Showalter's view, giving

Ophelia more attention than Hamlet in feminist criticism, will shift the conceptual argument on the relationship between "femininity, female sexuality, insanity and representation" to the front burner (616).

After identifying the contrasting position of the character Ophelia in popular culture and criticism Showalter develops a set of five questions to guide her theoretical argument. First, why is popular culture fascinated by the character? Second, does she really represent women? Third, is her insanity a symbol of women's oppression in tragedy and society? Fourth, is she the textual model of "women as madness or madness as women" (617). Finally, how should the character, as a woman, be treated in feminist critical discourse? The theorist further notes that feminist criticism has advanced different responses to the questions. She classifies the approaches into three and discusses their limitations. Then she takes a position which is that Ophelia has a personal story, which can be narrated by feminist criticism. Nevertheless, she adds that story is "the *history* of her representation" rather than her life tale, love narration or Lacan's account which all makes her a part of Hamlet's world (618). Showalter at this point states her scope and focus. She states that the essay focuses on the concept of feminism from the perspectives of French feminist ideas and American critical and historical practices.

Showalter's essay traces the representation and re-representation of the character Ophelia in arts, on stage and in criticism across the periods. She notes that since 1970's feminist discourse has offered "a new perspective of Ophelia's madness as protest and rebellion" (628). She posits that feminist criticism recreates Ophelia as a sister and a hysteric who rebuffs the patriarchal terms and system of her society. The character, in her view, is imbued with power and analysed as a radical superwoman who refuses to maintain the gender status quo of her environment. However, Showalter insists that feminine criticism should aim beyond the philosophy of defiance. She posits that in choosing to focus on representation, instead of women's texts, the criticism must "aim for a maximum interdisciplinary contextualism" (628). For her, the comprehensive approach will enable feminine criticism to examine the contrastive perspectives of femininity from a more robust socio-historical context demanded by an age of gender reconstruction. Based on the contrastive and corresponding images of Ophelia over the periods, Showalter postulates that feminist criticism cannot lay claim to any "true" Ophelia. She therefore proposes that the criticism should describe "a cubist Ophelia of multiple perspectives, more than the sum of all her

parts" (629). The theorist concludes that, in unmasking the ideology of representation, feminist critics' acquires an additional task of admitting and studying the limitations of their own ideological stances as the consequences of their gender and period. Finally, Showalter recognizes her period as an age of critical arrogance and identifies humility as the feminist critics' utmost pathway to integrity in its examination of the character of Ophelia in a way Lacan fails to do.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Identify the three approaches advanced by feminist critics in response to Showalter's five questions above and discuss the limitation of each.

Analysis

The subsidiary status Jacques Lacan accords to Ophelia, a female character in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who he identifies as his primary concern, provides the opportunity and impetus for Showalter's conceptual essay under study. Showalter therefore engages in meta-criticism as it displays the gender crisis of her late 20th century, a period of fervent feminist revolt. Kaplan and Anderson hold that Showalter's essay exhibits a "clear parallel" to Virginia Woolf's (616). Indeed both are interested in the image of women in literary works. However, Showalter essay's displays more concern in the interpretation of literary feminist images by critics. The title of the essay, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism', is telling of Showalter's concern, focus, approach and scope. The essay is concerned with the issue of representation and this theme is like a thread that holds the whole essay together. It deploys Ophelia as a symbol of the woman cast in contrastive images over different periods in arts, theater and criticism. The character's madness becomes a metaphor of distortion and desecration of the female gender, gender inequality, and subjugation as well as their consequences. On these bases, Showalter develops her theory; a female-centered framework – Gynocriticism – for a more comprehensive and objective critique of different forms of women's writing. Her essay thus displays an in-depth review of literature and a broad perspective and both give authority to her submissions and conclusions and make her essay scholarly.

Showalter's choice of the insane Ophelia, who is a female character in an Elizabethan drama by a male author, tends to be a conscious attempt at interrogating the patriarchal image of the

woman as mentally unstable. After taking a hard look at the different manifestations of the character, the essay, guided by five questions, suggests that a critical examination of the character is best situated within social and historical framework. The questions functions as her method of presenting her concerns and subsequently, her postulations. Showalter's recourse to French theoretical insights and American practical scholarship gives the essay an interregional scope that makes her theory comprehensive. Her view of Ophelia as a viable material for feminist criticism outside Hamlet liberates Ophelia from Hamlet as it assigns an independent status to the character in line with the feminist appeal for freedom and equality of genders. Moreover, using the same character, the theorist establishes her interest in criticism, female criticism, from the beginning to the end of the essay. This is one of the reasons why the essay is a masterpiece of feminism. In addition, by pointing out Ophelia's reconstruction as a 'sister', a hysteric, radical and superwoman, in the late 20[th] century feminist criticism, Showalter emphasizes the kinship relationship between the character and female critics as well as the reinterpretation of madness as a form of protest. Her revelation also observes the shift in Ophelia's image within female criticism and the attendant radical and protest thrusts. One significant aspect of Showalter's essay is that it goes beyond the defiance theme of feminist criticism to emphasize the need for a gender reconstruction based on a more inclusive content and broader context. In this way Showalter unmasks not just the limitations of male centered criticism but also the inadequacies of the feminist criticism and challenges the latter to reexamine its approach to criticism. Showalter's employment of language indicates that under her theory, the task of redirecting the path of criticism is an obligatory, rather than an optional, element of her new feminist criticism. In addition, the theorist identifies the implication of the character Ophelia, as an abstraction, a concept, a symbol, and this again stresses her representational role within female criticism. In advocating for humility in the practice of feminist criticism, Showalter presents the relationship between humility and integrity within the critical scholarship. In ending the essay with Lacan, Showalter takes the reader back to the origin of her concept of literature in a way that establishes a necessary link between her introductory and concluding statements.

3.3   MARXISM

3.3.1 Background

Marxism is a socio-economic and political literary theory and criticism founded by the German Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883). Marx was one of the most important political philosophers and revolutionaries of the 20th century and worked closely with another philosopher, Friedrich Engels (1820-95). Marxism developed in Europe and America in the 1930s. That was the period of Great Depression, which lasted from late 1929 to early 1940s in the Western world, beginning from America. In that era, literary creativity and criticism developed a more socially-conscious approach thus shifted away from formalism. In America, Germany and Britain, prominent Marxist scholars, including Granville Hicks, V. F. Calverton, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and W. H. Auden employed Marxist concepts and precept in criticism and creativity. For instance, the Frankfurt School of critical theory, in Germany, adopted the revolutionary ideas of Friedrich Hegel, a German idealist philosopher, and Marx in their postulations. Marxism exerts an enormous and extensive influence on the 20th century political structures, best exemplified by the USSR communist system, and scholarship – philosophy, Sociology, Economics and Cultural theory. In addition, literary schools of thoughts such as Feminism, Post-colonialism, Cultural theory and Deconstruction, take their bearings from Marxism. Marxism represents a trenchant criticism of the socio-economic class/capitalist system of the 19th Century Europe. Marxist criticism, in theory and practice, draws from Marx's economic and cultural theory.

Key Ideas

In the essay, 'From the German Ideology', Marx classifies his theory as existing "in direct contrast" to German philosophy in its method of "earth to heaven" instead of "heaven to earth" (315). Marx notes that his focus is based on concrete evidences, actual individuals, their activities and material circumstances. His postulations are constructed upon physical organisations and modes of relationships which for him serve as natural bases for the construction of human History and their modifications across periods as dictated by men's activities. He and Engels advance what, in their terms, is "a materialist conception of history." In his estimation, man is distinguished by his ability to produce his means of survival. Which entails "indirectly producing their actual material life" (311). In his definition, history is not as "a

collection of dead facts" but is premised on definite progressive and verifiable human conditions. Human relation, in his terms, is materialistic; based on needs and material productions. In his interpretation, the evolving history of humanity, social groups, interpersonal and international relations, organisations and ideas are determined by the shifting method of material production. They postulate that each period of human existence exhibit two major classes of people – the dominant and subordinate groups. The scholars observe struggle for social-economic and political benefits in the relationship between the two groups in all the different "stages of development" in the history of humanity. (312).

Marx posits that "the production of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life" (314). This means that that the base, or infrastructure of a society is linked to its economics. In addition, the superstructure – politics, law, religion, philosophy, and art are established on the basis of such economy. In other words, a particular economic base or infrastructure give rise to an ideological superstructure, in Marx's thinking. His concept of ideology is rooted in this view. He submits that consciousness is from inception "a social product" which exits alongside people (317). In his understanding, the ruling ideology of a given period functions to endorse and legalise the interest of the dominant socio-economic class. He submits that consciousness is determined by life not life by consciousness. Again, he perceives that language is "as old as consciousness … practical consciousness" that subsists for others (317).

ANALYSIS

The essay starts by identifying the relationship between Marx's idea and previous German philosophies as it establishes his method and focus. It is obvious that Marx's theory is constructed upon observable economic basis and thus is materialist. It manifests class consciousness in its interest in the relationship between different socio-economic categories in a society. The theory takes a bottom-up approach and serves as an instrument of social change in its examination of history and socio-economic reality. In its rejection of abstract rationalisations and contradiction of the previous positions of his German forebears, best represented by the idealist scholar Immanuel Kant, Marx's philosophy becomes a radical departure from the entire

history of Philosophy. It is important to remind you again that Marx's ideas were greatly influenced by G.W.F Hegel, a German idealist who had earlier attempted to examine literary productions in relation to their historical backgrounds.

According to Bertens (1996, p. 82), the position of Marxist theory is that the pattern of human thinking and experiences of one's world determine the organization of the economy in human societies. His ideas of the capitalist economy and historical materialism illustrate his concept of class struggle and his interpretation of human history. In other words, he interprets culture and history from an economic perspective. In addition, Marx's position on the infrastructure and superstructure of every society shows the relationship between economy and culture as well as the concept of ideology. M. H. Abrams observes that even though the concept of ideology is not given a prominent position in The German Ideology, it has developed into "a key concept" in Marxist literary criticism (2005, p. 155). Please note that Marx's relevance within literary theory is based on his view that language use is socio-economically determined. The significance is that cultural productions as literature are influenced by the material world.

Marx's essay exhibits some flaws. His reactionary approach injects a seeming tone of defense and defiance into his work. Moreover, Kaplan and Anderson aver that some of his thematic positions, technical preferences and focus have been described as archaic and exclusive by certain scholars. For example his sole reliance on the Western society – German, French and English – has been considered limiting. However, Marx's efforts have and still exert a lot of influence in literary production and consumption.

All the different postulations of Marxist scholars derive from Marx's theory. Please understand that Marxism is not overtly a literary assumption and as such has elicited several interpretations from scholars. Marx's philosophy has facilitated the development of other ideas and concepts including Antonio Gramsci's view of Ideology and Hegemony, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of language as discourses and dialogues and Terry Eagleton's ideas on literary text and history. One of the most generally accepted literary readings of Marxism is advanced by and Terry Eagleton.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Why is Marxism regarded as an economic theory?

3.3.1.2　　　Terry Eagleton's 'From Marxism and Literary Criticism' (1976)

Eagleton's essay attempts a comprehensive explanation of Marxist ideas of literature, ideology and criticism. Initially, he notes that Marx and Engels do not exhibit any profound interest in the development of a complete theory of arts. This is based on his observation that their comments on literature are "scattered and fragmentary" and advances only allusions instead of comprehensive positions (526). Do you still remember Plato? The same is true of his theory of arts. Eagleton again locates the originality of Marxist thoughts in its radical conception of history rather than in its historical perspective. His view of Marxism is very insightful.

Marxism

His essay states his understanding of Marxism as a theory. Read his explanation. Marxism is not just "a sociology of literature" interested in how novels are published and checking if the novels display the working class (257). Sociology of literature is interested in "mean of literary production, distribution, and exchange" within a specific society (527). These entail the way in which books get published, the social makeup of their authors and readers, literacy level, social factors of taste and examining texts from the sociological significance. The objective of Marxism as a conceptual tool of analysis. In his words:

> Its aim is to *explain* the literary work more fully; and this means a
> sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings. But it also
> means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the product of
> a particular history. (1976, p. 257)

Thus, the scholar identifies two things the theory cannot be reduced to and thus states what Marxism is not in order to illuminate what it is. His explanation of the sociology of literature is

perhaps to make his readers understand his subject better. Eagleton also explains Marxist notion of ideology which is a key aspect of Marxist theory.

Ideology

Eagleton provides what could be considered a simplified definition of the concepts of ideology and class relations as conceived by Marxism. Ideology is the "definite forms of social consciousness" including religious, political, ethical and artistic which are all parts of Marx's superstructure (528). It is the result of observable social relations among people at a specific place and time. Ideology functions to legalise the supremacy of the ruling class in the society where the prevailing ideas of that class are the ideas of the society. Ideology is the manner in which class relations are experienced, legalised and sustained. It is not "a set of doctrines" but indicates the manner in which people experience class relationships in their society (534). This includes ideas, images and values which bind them to their social roles and prevents them from gaining an authentic understanding of their society as an entire system. To comprehend ideology demands an understanding of the exact relations among different classes of people in a given society and this in turn entails understanding the position of the classes in terms of mode of production. To understand creative works a critic must understand "the complex, indirect relations between those works and the ideological world they inhabit" both in terms of themes and technique (529). As difficult as this may seem to a student of literature like you, and even critics, it represents what must be done to achieve a wholesome interpretation of creative work(s). This is a tall order but it is not impossible. Eagleton's scholarship here explains in lucid terms what Marxist criticism expects you to do with a work of literature.

Literature

The next subject Eagleton deals with is the Marxist concept of literature. Initially, Eagleton informs his readers like you that Literature and art constitute "part of the very air Marx breathed" (526). Marx, he writes, read very widely and is very familiar with literatures of all periods and regions. Again, he says that Marx is highly conscious of literary style. He tends to use this to show that Marx's idea of arts draws from a solid scholarship in order to validate his concept of arts which is explained by Eagleton in the following sentences. Marxism perceives arts as part of

the superstructure. It postulates that to understand literature implies a comprehension of whole social process which that literature is a part of. Marxism considers literature as linked to ideology but presented artistically. Under the theory, creative writings are "forms of perception" and so are connected to the ideology of the period in which they are created (528). Thus, this expresses the text-universe variable as postulated by M. H. Abrams' 1953 *The Mirror and the Lamp*. You still remember Module 1 Unit 1, don't you? Literature and Science treat the same object but in different ways. While Science provides theoretical knowledge, literature provides the experience of that knowledge and this is comparable to ideology. Literature unmasks the character of ideology in order to help readers gain a fuller understanding of ideology which is but a scientific knowledge. The implication is that literature offers a more concrete image of life to help the reader understand his/her world as it is. This conceptual school estimates that literature neither flows from mysterious inspiration nor from the psychology of the author, expresses the Marxist resistance to Plato and the Romantic's respective concepts of literature.

Criticism

Furthermore, Eagleton advances his understanding of what literary criticism should do. First, he traces the beginning of historical examination of literature; that is evaluation of literature in relation to the historical background, not to Marx but to philosophers like the German G.W.F. Hegel who he notes influences Marx's thoughts heavily. In his understanding the novelty of Marxist criticism is rooted in its revolutionary concept of history rather than in its historical approach. Eagleton's ideas of Marxist Criticism are represented afterwards. Marxist criticism goes beyond reaffirming the ideas of founders of Marxism and the sociology of literature. Eagleton's position here represents a critique of Marxism and makes Eagleton's approach objective. Marxist criticism is interested in "the unity" between the text, ideology, social relations, productive forces within a particular society and so it is "a mistake to imply that Marxist criticism moves mechanically" between these levels (530). In Marxist criticism, Literature is an aspect of the superstructure but not passive expression of the economic base. Marxist criticism perceives form and content as existing in a dialectical relationship. However, it attempts to emphasise that content primarily regulates form.

Udenta Udenta (1993, p. 59) explains further that Materialist criticism is:

The study of literature, especially literary texts, from the standpoint of the *objective, non-literary conditions teta determine and overdetermine the literary text.* Literature, in this regard, is seen as a double signification of history and ideology, a signification that contains so much 'unsaids', gaps and disorder than 'saids', wholes and order.

Eagleton presents his interpretation of Marxism from the perspectives of different Marxist scholars including Marx and Engels, Lukacs, Goldmann and Jameson. He also makes his case using literary texts such as Shakespeare's *King* Lear, Conrad's *Nostromo*, Eliot's *The Wasteland* and Dicken's *Hard Times*. These situate his essay firmly within the precinct of literary theory and criticism.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Read Eagleton's essay from 'our text' and summarise his most important ideas in 2 typed pages (font 12, double line spacing and Times New Roman).

3.3.2   MARXIST CRITICISM

Using the insights gained from Eagleton's essay and other scholarly contributions let us revisit Marxist criticism. Marxist literary criticism describes a type of sociological criticism guided by the ideas of Marx and works to assess the political leaning of a literary text. According to Murfin and Ray (1998), "Marxist criticism is a type of criticism in which literary works are viewed as the product of work and whose practitioners emphasise the role of class and ideology as they reflect, propagate, and even challenge the prevailing social order." Under Marxist criticism, a literary text is considered as a material creation which could be generally interpreted in historical terms as against the concept of a text as a site for concealed significances. All persuasions of Marxist theory are commonly bound by a number of factors. The theories are interested in the depiction of class division and conflict in literature. It pays less attention to artistic and aesthetic qualities and gives more consideration to social and political properties of a text. Marxist literary

criticism views literature as an instrument of struggle towards constructing an alternative socio-economic system that will support an egalitarian society. Marxist criticism thus works to advocate a literature that enhances the establishment of egalitarian ideals and the dismantling of bourgeois superstructure through collective struggles. For the Marxist critics, the ideology of a work is critical in literary analysis and they investigate literature in relation to its economic, cultural and political contexts. In addition, Marxist criticism explores the relationship between the writer and his/her society as well as the contribution of the influence of the audience on a text.

Socialist Realism is Marxist critics' term for novels which "reflected social reality – that is novels that accorded with the Marxist view that the struggle between economic classes is the essential dynamic of society" (M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary*, 2005, p. 297). After the 1930s to the 1991, when the Soviet Union crumbled, Communist writers adopt this mode in the interpretation of the human society. Such works demonstrate the merits of the working class, capitalist exploitation of workers and the dethronement of the capitalists by mass actions. For this they are at times classified as Proletarian Novels. Please note that there are certain terms you cannot avoid in Marxist criticism. These include Materialism, Capitalism, Classicism, Proletariat, Bourgeoisie, Commodification, Base and Superstructure, Ideology. You have to employ Marxist language in Marxist criticism.

4.1   Feminism

For a profitable examination of a literary text from the three perspectives discussed in this unit there are pointers you must look out for. To be a feminist critic, you have to:

> Explore evidences of patriarchy and its debilitating effect on the woman. Here you watch out for issues of heterosexual relationship (marriage, child-bearing and rearing), economic empowerment, political participation, carrier, leadership, freedom, etc.

> Focus on the relationship between sex and gender and emphasise the masculinist character of traditional literature.

Work to re-organise the literary context (production and consumption) towards the inclusion of women's contribution and viewpoint and identify and correct the deformed image of the woman.

4.2.   Marxism

Marxist criticism considers:

Literary texts as a material creation which could be generally interpreted in historical terms.

Conceives literature as a tool of struggle towards a construction of an alternative socio-economic system built upon egalitarian principles.

Accords more attention to the social and political properties rather than aesthetic qualities of a text. It is interested in depiction of class division and conflict in literature.

Investigates the relationship between the writer and his/her society without neglecting the role of audiences' influence on a text.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Attempt a critical analysis of Arthur Miller's drama, *Death of a Salesman* or Sembene Ousmane's novel, *God's Bits of Wood*, from a Marxist perspective.

5.0   Conclusion

Feminism and Marxism are two theories you cannot avoid as a literary critic. Udenta (1993, p. vii) insists that the class approach has not stopped being relevant and can hardly be wished away especially in the face of the reality of hunger, poverty and disease in Africa. The same applies to the Feminist inclination. Each of the two schools offers you a set of conceptual ideas that facilitate an investigation of a literary writing from several perspectives. Feminist and Marxist concepts respectively provide the necessary ideas for an examination of gender and class relations within the context of literature and from different perspectives. This unit works to aid

your analysis of texts from feminist and Marxist standpoints and provide tips for a suitable examination of other related concepts.

6.0   Summary

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The respective backgrounds of Feminism and Marxism, as literary theories.

The main concern both schools of thought.

Fundamental suppositions of the different concepts within each theory.

Respective analysis of the concepts studied in this unit.

Contributions and limitations of the individual concepts/theories.

Guidelines for textual examination on the bases of the concepts within each theory.

7.0   Tutor- Marked Assignment

1. Account for the socio-cultural and political factors that aided the development of feminist and Marxist literary theories.
2. How does Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own' reflect the major concerns of feminist theory of literature?
3. Discuss the major concerns of Karl Marx in 'The German Ideology' and examine its influence on literary criticism.
4. Examine the ideal focus of Feminist literary criticism as advanced by Elaine Showalter in the essay 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism'.
5. Scholars have attacked both Marxist and Feminist interpretations of social-cultural and political realities of their world. Identify the bases of such criticism.
6. Analyse any literary text of your choice from either of the two theories discussed in this unit.

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MODULE 4 UNIT 5:   POST-COLONIAL THEORY AND CRITICISM

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction

This is Module 4 Unit 5. Welcome! It is interested in Post-colonial literary theory and criticism. The theory is primarily driven by the issue race, particularly the relationship between Western and non-Western societies of the world as manifest in texts. The relationship forms the concern of several literary works, especially African, West Indian and Black American fiction. That is why this theory, perhaps more than any other discussed in this module, plays a major role in the establishment and development of literary activities in non-Western regions of the world, including Africa. It is here studied from the perspectives of three conceptual essays fundamental to Post-colonial theory and criticism. The essays are Edward Said's "Cultural Imperialism", Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" This unit concentrates on the most popular concepts postulated by the three renowned Post-colonial scholars. The concepts are Othering (Said), Hybridity (Bhabha) and Subalternity (Spivak).

This unit first offers you a concise background to the Post-colonial school of thought. Afterwards it examines the three identified concepts, individually. Again, you will find some suggestions towards an application of the concepts in textual analysis. In addition, there are a set of self-assessment exercises and tutor-Marked assignment within the body of this unit. It is your responsibility to respond to them. They are there to guide and assess your reading and comprehension of the theory under study.

2.0   Objectives:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Understand the conditions that necessitated the development of Post-colonialism as a literary theory.

Appreciate the major postulations of Post-colonial theory as conceptualized by Said, Bhabha and Spivak in Othering, Hybridity and Subaternity.

Identify the unique contributions of each of the three concepts to the establishment and development of the theory as a body of intellectual resources germane to textual examination.

Discover and discuss areas of relationship between the three major concepts of Postcolonial theory discussed in this unit.

Examine the role and impact of Post-colonialism in literary creativity and criticism in non-Western societies of the world, especially Nigeria.

Exploit different ideas generated by the three concepts in textual analysis.

3.0   Main Content

3.1   Background

Post-colonial theory is a socially conscious body of knowledge. Post-colonial criticism represents a political approach to interpretation of literary texts. Post-colonialism emanates as an intellectual response to colonialism. It is therefore a reactionary force against Western imperialism which lasted between 15th and 20th centuries. Imperialism works for the expansion of Western culture and ideas into non-Western territories, especially through slavery and colonialism. By the end of 19th century and guided by economic, political, ideological (including religious) objectives, European powers engaged in territorial annexation of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. For instance, Nigeria was a colony of the British up till 1960 when she gained her independence. Thus, the super powers of the world gain political and economic control over non-Western regions. The quest for power and control grievously altered the history of humanity, especially that of blacks as a human race. The development of the 20th century Nationalism

constitute an essential force that ended imperialism and started the process of revising perceived injuries caused by the system. Post-colonialism partly provides such force.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffen (1989, p. 2), Post-colonialism is a term employed "to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day". These include non-Western regions, especially Africa, Asia and South America, which were reshaped by slavery and imperialism as well as their consequences. The development of Post-colonialism is enhanced by the impact of the World War 11 and Harlem Renaissance. The raw impetus for the initiation of the theory and practice of Post-colonialism was provided by the concept of the Negritude (1920s and 1930s) propounded by Aime Cesaire and Leopald Sedar Senghor, Franz Fanon's thoughts, mainly encapsulated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and Achebe' seminal essays, 'The Role of a Writer in a New Nation' (1962) and 'The Novelist as a Teacher' (1965).

Post-colonial literary theory is a modern assumption which emanates as a powerful force in Literary Criticism in the 1990s. It is a major form of sociological and anthropological criticism with pragmatic and extrinsic orientations. Post-colonial theory and criticism represent a reaction against colonialism and its consequences. As an instrument of textual examination, it employs the resistance and reconstruction technique in the analysis of the history, culture, literature and forms of dialogue peculiar to the former colonies of Europe. It draws essentially from the conceptual ideas of Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist theorist and Jacques Derrida, an Algerian-born French philosopher. Specifically, Foulcault's notion of Discourse, Gramsci's Hegemony and Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction provide the intellectual basis of Post-colonialism.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Following the approaches employed in previous units, study and summarise Foulcault's notion of Discourse, Gramsci's Hegemony and Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction.

Post-colonial theory consorts with movements with recognizable methodologies of analysis, like Marxism and Feminism. It has "grown into a monstrously disparate body of knowledge" and has

consequently developed into a controversial theoretic (Adesanmi, 2008, p. 35). The theory is first distinguished as an independent field in Robert J. C. Young's *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990). The book also classifies the works of the "Holy Trinity" – Said, Bhabha and Spivak – as the intellectual hub of the field. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989), by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, popularized the employment of the theory within the literary field.

3.2   **Basic Assumptions**

The scope of reference of Post-colonial theory is very wide; including third world countries. However, it is governed by the tension between the West and their (former) colonies. The agenda of the literary theory is to de-establish imperialist artistic and literary values. In addition, it works to replace such narratives with canonical counter-narratives intended to revise the marginal position of the victims of imperialism in the world. In other words, the aim of the theory is to subvert the Western paradigm and provide a space for the marginalised groups to construct counter dialogues. The body of knowledge reinterprets the history of colonialism from the standpoint of the colonised. Consequently, it facilitates the inclusion of creative writers and critics from non-Western regions into the world's literary canon. Race, ethnicity, identity, class, gender, language, and mostly power, are issues central to the theory. As a literary theory, it is problematized on the basis of term, scope and language, form and effect.

Post-colonial criticism addresses the problem of cultural identity and national reinvention. It aims at examining the "continued impact of the colonial experience on the former colonies and their people" (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu 2010, p. 235). The leaning manifests in the analysis of the literatures of the former European colonies. Its major weakness is holding the Western creative and critical texts in suspicion. Literary works including Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, provide the basis of analysis for many Post-colonial critics. Edward Said's analysis of cultural imperialism, Homi Bhabha's notion of Hybridity and Gayatri Gharavorty Spivak's examination of the subtaltern subjects are canonical texts in Post-colonial literary scholarship.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

What is the primarily interest Post-colonial theory and criticism?

3.2.1   Edward Said: "Cultural Imperialism"

Edward Said is a Palestinian-American scholar whose pungent criticism of cultural imperialism in the text *Orientalism* formally initiates the theory of Post-colonialism. His idea works to enunciate the cultural situation and roles of literary critics and scholars. In addition, it interprets the invention of the orient by Western discourses as well as its motivation. Said advances the definition, origin, basis and process of Orientalism and repudiates the textual position of the orient as inferior. The theorist conceives it as a Western system of reorganising and dominating the orient. He postulates that it is:

> A style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the orient' and … 'the occident" … represents an amplification of a fundamental geographical dissection that separates the world into "two unequal halves, Orient and Occident. (1995 p. 88; 90)

Said postulates that the distinction between the orient (non-Western) and the occident (Western) is achieved through the process of 'Othering' using language. He describes Othering as a racially and geographically motivated human construct. Said's opening premise is that both the Orient and the Occident are artificial creations. He observes that the Orient is largely a European contraption and from the beginning represents a site of primitive alien beings, shocking memories, sceneries and occurrences. He adds that the Orient exists in opposition to Europe and includes Europe's oldest, richest and greatest colonies. In addition, it is among the most significant and persistent images of the "Other." Furthermore, Said avers that the Orient facilitates the designation of the West as its contrasting image, idea, qualities, experience. He

concludes that the relationship between occident and Orient is constructed upon power, supremacy and different levels of a complex hegemony.

 For Said (1995, p. 89-90), Orientalism goes beyond Eurocentricism and fundamental geographical distinction. He adds that Orientalism symbolises a whole series of 'interests' invented and sustained through an unequal relationship among various political, academic, moral and cultural power means and modes. Again it represents a given goal to comprehend, and at times to control, influence, even to integrate, what is a patently different/alternative or new world, (1995, p. 90). Said goes ahead to questions the Western perceptions of the East as the "other," – a place of barbaric, flawed people and oriental tyrants with mysterious and degenerate cultures. The theorist insists that these notions have influenced politics and policies and still persist into the present time. Based on that, he interrogates the concept of the 'other' culture, representation of 'other' cultures, the value of the idea of a different culture/civilization/race/religion, the tendency of engaging in self-congratulation in discussing one's culture and antagonism in discussing the 'other' culture.

Said (1995, p. 90) detects the subtle but antagonistic and self-validating "flexible *positional* superiority" strategy of Orientalism which places the Occident (non-Western) in varying forms of asymmetrical relationship with the Orient (Western). He adds that under this encoded standard all outsiders are conceived as essentially different and antithetical. For Said, Eurocentric textual representation of the "Orient" in scholarly works of Literature, History, Religion, and so on, and the endorsement of that view in many writings, are inauthentic and inaccurate. He posits that the view of the East and its history by Westerners is both imperfect and shallow and is a function of political imperialism.

3.2.1.1   Analysis

Orientalism is a critique of the view of non-Western societies by Western intellectuals. Please note that Orientalism is originally a neutral term employed in the West to classify the study and creative delineation of the Orient. Said ingeniously subverts the term as an assemblage of artificial assumptions fundamental to the Western perception and approach towards the Middle East. It thus assumes the meaning of a constructed binary separation of the world into two – the Orient and the Occident. The West/non-West dichotomy is fundamental in Post-colonial theory.

Said's multiple definition of Orienatalism works to cover the different connotations of that concept, confers a scholarly ambiance on his text and facilitates the placement of his idea in a proper perspective.

 You must understand Said's key idea. It is that the Western awareness about the non-Western societies is inauthentic, inaccurate and emanates from predetermined archetype that conceives all non-Western societies as similar and essentially different from Western societies. According to Alli Mazrui (2005, p. 69), Said's central thesis in Orientalism is "the invention of the orient" by the West. Said perceives Othering as a method of self-validation geared towards justifying Western domination of non-Western regions of the world. Do you comprehend the implication of Said's speculation? The implication is that the orient is a product of the imagination of the West. Said's concept of Orientalism suggests that both Western and non-Western societies exist in a man-made negating relationship which makes the orient an outsider and thus assigns it a marginal position in the global scheme of things. In essence the orient and the Occident are human constructions motivated by racial and geographical factors.

Be aware that Othering underscores the basis and process of Orientalism. It also identifies its artificial character and composition. Tyson's simplified definition of Othering provides you with a clearer and more comprehensive view of the concept. She defines it as the "practice of judging others who are different as inferiors" (1994, p. 266). You must have observed that Othering thrives on the doctrine of thesis and antithesis and totally prohibits the idea of synthesis. By formulating the concept, Said donates one of the most influential analytical terms of literary criticism.

One of the most important and objective insights of Said's polemics is that the Orient and the Occident share a mutually oppositional relationship in which the "Orient" is given a subjacent position which it accepts. You must not neglect this aspect of Othering because in it Said implicates both worlds and thus makes one as guilty as the other. His view that historical records, religious and literary texts are responsible for communicating and sustaining that erroneous idea of inequality identifies the site of Orientalism. The observation also illustrates the role of language and literature in that scheme. Can you now identify the close relationship between this concept, literary texts and critics like you?

There are some important points you must take note of at this point in our discussion. First, in interrogating Eurocentric cultural discourse, Said brings the relevant issue of cultural construction in human history to the fore and thus politicizes it. Secondly, he questions the authenticity of history and draws attention to the divisive factors of race, religion and culture. In this Post-colonial literary theory consorts with other theories like Feminism and Marxism, which respectively interrogate gender and class relations. Furthermore, Said's concept provides the principal foundation for the codification of Post-colonial studies as an independent academic discipline. Moreover, his thesis exerts a huge influence over intellectuals from the former European colonies and thus provides the intellectual impetus for the re-examination of certain British-authored literary texts like Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Joyce Cary's *The African Witch* and *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. As an African literary student, you must have read Chinua Achebe's seminal essay, 'An Image of Africa' Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe submits that the novel "projects the image of Africa as "the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are fully mocked by triumphant bestiality" (2). This is a quintessential post-colonial criticism. Why not read Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to ascertain the veracity of Achebe's position.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

In your own terms, define Said's idea of Orientalism and his concept of Othering.

Said's achievement in Orientalism is enormous but his view is not without some blemishes. The scholar's discussion is limited to academic study of Middle Eastern, African and Asian history and culture. Thus, it cuts off a reasonable number of societies affected by European imperialism. Again, the essay tends to suggest that the relationship between the West and the non-Western societies is absolutely harmful to the non-Western societies. In this it denies the apparent advantages of Western civilization. Authenticating this view, Mazrui (2005, p. 69) accuses Said of "reverse otherness-stereotyping the West"/"anti-alterity Otherness"/"anti-other Otherness." The theorist seems suspicious of all European texts and thus does not make any room for any

form of heterogeneity. Said's separatist calculation thus fails to address the profound reality of what really takes place in the relationship between two co-existing cultures. Consequently, it ignores a profound and creative aspect of the cultural communication that takes place in the relationship between Western and non-western societies. This is a yawning gap Homi Bhabha exploits.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Identify other inadequacies you have noticed in Said's polemics and discuss their implications?

3.2.2   Homi Bhabha: *The Location of Culture*

The Indian-born Homi Bhabha propounds the influential notion of Hybridity in the book *The Location of Culture* (1994). The theorist derives his conceptual ideas from cultural and literary theories. He reveals, in an interview with William Mitchell, that he was influenced by the ideas of scholars – theorists and creative writers – including Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Franz Fanon, Toni Morrison, Derek Walcott and Salman Rushdie. However, Bhabha admits that he was mostly influenced by Edward Said's work and perspective which were "crucial in suggesting a whole transdisciplinary terrain (and) … caused the flash of recognition in which I first apprehended my own project" ("Translator Translated" 1995). Bhabha's most significant contribution to Post-colonial theory and practice is the concept of Hybridity. Other related concepts developed by Bhabha include Third Space, Ambivalence and Mimicry.

Bhabha employs Hybridity to clarify cultural and identity inventions within the context of colonial discrimination and hostility. Hybridity provides the intellectual basis for interrogating the systematic representation of the colonised as 'the Other', under Western hegemonic powers. Thus, Bhabha's concept questions the accuracy and authenticity of cultural fundamentalism. Hybridity (syncretism), in Bhabha's words, represents "the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (1995, p. 45). His major postulation is that the interaction of cultures has a revolutionary influence on subjects of both cultures and results in a fusion of two separate cultural systems into a single mutated variety. Thus, Hybridity explains

the emergence of a novel cultural variant as a natural consequence of multiculturalism. In his terms, the new culture, which develops from an interaction from two different systems, acquires a new identity. The culture draws from its constituting elements but differs from both, or all. It thus becomes an ambivalent space. Bhabha posits that the cultural interaction produces "the third space" or "third term" marked by ambivalence. The Third Space is therefore produced out of the mixture of one culture with the other (under conditions of uneven power). Consequently, Bhabha speculates that there "is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid." (1995, p. 46). Still pursuing his concept of Hybridity, Bhabha in another essay, 'Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences' (1995) explains that the initiators of "the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are … bearers of a hybrid identity" (208). He argues for a shift towards an analytical viewpoint that avoids the colonial-sponsored sociological categorization and hierarchies. This is in order to understand other cultures.

Bhabha's concept of Mimicry still exploits the effects of cultural interaction from the perspective of the asymmetrical relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. It explains the condition in which the colonised accepts and imitates the culture and language of the colonisers. Mimicry represents the colonials' attempt to recreate the other to make him/her more occidental and less oriental. The goal is to make the colonised more acceptable to the colonialists.

3.2.2.1   Analysis

Hybridity simply refers to mixture. It is originally derived from Biology and employed in 19th century in Linguistics and in Racial Theory. The 'hybridity' vocabulary is presently a descriptive term applied in many academic disciplines in an attempt to organise data about the material world. It is primarily linked to Post-colonial scholarship and its examination of cultural imperialism. Post-colonial and Feminist thoughts have applied the term to identities that cannot be captured by static categories. Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, Paul Gilroy and Homi Bhabha represent the major theorists of Hybridity.

Fletcher (2008, p. 14) explains that 'Hybridity' refers to the mixing that brings forth new forms from previously identified categories. This term is unbundled by Bhabha and used as a system of

repudiating Western superiority and its hegemonic inclination. In Habib's term "the notion of "hybridity" – a state of "in betweenness" with respect to two cultures – is central to Bhabha's work" in the interrogation of notions of culture an identity (M.A.R Habib 2011, p. 273). Bhabha's scholarship accords a positive interpretation to Hybridity in a way that accepts the reality of cultural interaction but denies the superiority doctrine of the West. In doing this, Bhabha reverses the process of Othering. He creates a space for a synthesis, thus negating the notion of thesis and antithesis marked by superiority and separation as depicted in Said's Orientalism. Bhabha is not interested in 'either' and 'or' but in 'both' and seeks to intellectually bring two or more different cultures into one distinct class. It is an attempt to merge two different worlds. Bhabha's theory thus serves as an integrating system. Achebe ("Colonialist" 1995, p. 58) describes Hybridity as "a man of two world's theory." In addition, Tyson (1994, p. 369) notes that Hybridity does not amount to a deadlock between two contrasting cultures but is, rather "a productive, exciting positive force" in a world that is fast becoming a hybrid entity. This concept, as such, presents a positive perspective that enhances an acceptance of the various, at times conflicting, civilisations of human existence.

Bhabha's approach seems more objective because it works to give Hybridity a positive connotation. It confirms colonial influence but dislodges its superjacent status. Bhabha's concept of Hybridity explicates the inevitable meeting-point between two different cultures co-existing within one society. Consequently this theory supplies another perspective of accounting for the relationships between different cultures. It explains cultural cooperation rather than antagonism of Othering. Bhabha's argument for a shift in critical perspective makes room for the 'other' cultures to exhibit their own merits and make their own appeal. Spivak is another notable Post-colonial theorist.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Modern African fiction shows evidence of cultural interactions. Examine such manifestations through the agency of Yvonne Vera's novel *Nehanda* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

3.2.3   Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

In the seminal essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' the renowned Indian critic, Spivak, is concerned with the "subaltern" in his/her asymmetric relationship with the oppressor. Spivak classifies as "epistemic violence" the remotely organised intense and diverse schemes to constitute the colonial subject as the Other" (Can, 24-5). Within the Western/non-western relationship, she identifies what she interprets as a relentless construction of the other as "the self's shadow." She assumes that the subjugated is conscious of his/her subjacent status and can speak up if he/she is given a voice. Spivak posits that the colonised subaltern subject is "irretrievably heterogeneous" Concentrating on female subaltern Spivak argues that :

> The ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in
>
> the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and
>
> cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the
>
> shadow … (Spivak, Can, p.28).

She concludes that identity is congenially unstable and without a "fixed center."

3.2.3.1 Analysis

Bhabha's and Said's respective concepts provide very illuminating insights. However, Berten (1996, p. 212-3) notes that while Bhabha fails to take into consideration the cultural aspects of the interaction, Said largely ignores the important question of difference. He then identifies Spivaks' role as "postcolonial theory's theoretical conscience" and her significance in providing for those perceivable gaps. Spivak's view illustrates attentiveness to difference or heterogeneity. Drawing largely from Marxist and Feminist perspectives, the former more, Spivak is concerned with the oppressed in his/her asymmetric relationship with the oppressor using the Indian experience as a point of reference. 'Subaltern' is a Post-colonial terminology derived from Gramsci's work and used to designate the lower class, including the homeless, subsistence farmers, labourers, unemployed, etc. It is thus employed by Spivak to classify the lower class of the colonial and post-colonial societies, especially the female subaltern. Her conceptual logic

therefore covers race, gender and class. Spivak's position on the subaltern subject precludes homogeneity in the construction of human experiences of non-western societies. Her concept of identity illustrates her view of identity as an ever-evolving phenomenon, a position also taken by Stuart Hall within the field of Cultural Studies.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Study Spivak's essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Identify her major interests.

4.0   Application

A Post-colonial criticism should:

Consider a literary text as an instrument of subversion and reversal of the imperialist artistic and literary values.

Pay close attention to issues of race, ethnicity, class, language, cultural identity national reinvention.

Investigate the representation of colonialism and its consequences, especially from the view point of power relations - the tension between the West and the (former) colonies and the consequences of such.

Examine the role of the writer in resisting European view of Africa and reconstructing the image of the continent.

Identify representations of Othering, Hybridity and Subalternity in literary works.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

Attempt a critical analysis of any African poem using any of the three major concepts discussed in this unit.

5.0   Conclusion

Post-colonial literary theory is a force to be reckoned with in the construction and consumption of literature of the non-Western regions of the world. As an African literary critic, you can hardly avoid a close interaction with primary Post-colonial concepts like Said's Othering and Bhabha's Hybridity. The concepts are energized by the relationship between Western and non-Western cultures, largely due to Western imperialism. They provide the basis for interpretations of racial relations as manifest in works of literature. Thus, the responsibility of Module 4, Unit 5 is to facilitate your reading and comprehension of creative writings from the Post-colonial perspective. Before we get out of this unit, have you noticed the dominant presence of Indian scholars in this school of thought that African critics seem to have embraced enthusiastically? If you have, you are not alone. Scholars like Pius Adesami bemoans the "reality of Africa's presence" from the concern of Post-colonial studies as well as "the preeminence of India" (37). This should be a challenge to African literary scholars, including you.

6.0   Summary

In this unit, you have been exposed to:

The background of Post-colonialism as a literary theory.

The major considerations of Post-colonial criticism.

Said's Othering as a major Post-colonial concept.

The Post-colonial concept of Hybridity as propounded by Bhabha.

Spivk's Post-colonial polemics on the subaltern.

Tips for examination of creative works using Post-colonial concepts.

Relevant assessments (self and tutor-marked) that guide your reading.

7.0   Tutor- Marked Assignment

1. Discuss in details the historical and political backgrounds of Post-colonialism.

2. Examine the basic assumptions of Post-colonial literary theory and criticism.

3. The Post-colonial concepts of 'othering' and 'hybridity' tend to manifest a contradictory relationship. Investigate this assertion using at least two African literary texts.

4. What is the kernel of Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' How does the essay advance the lot of Post-colonial literary theory and criticism?

5. Do a detailed analysis of any contemporary Nigerian novel using one of the three Post-colonial concepts studied in this course.

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SELF-ASSESEMENT EXERCISE

Module 1 Unit 1:

1. Attempt a personal definition of literary theory and literary criticism.

2. Justify the application of theories in criticism giving at least five reasons.

3. Identify the relationship between literary texts, literary theories and a critic.

4. Using diagrams and or tables, classify the four different orientations according to their multiple identities?

Module 2 Unit 1

c. "For all good poets … compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed" (15). "God takes away reasons from poets, and uses them as his ministers … God himself is the speaker, and through them he is addressing us" (16).

Examine the above assertion in relation to the place of inspiration in literary creativity.

d. In the light of Plato's concept of possession in arts, read and analyze the indicated passages of the novels listed below.
   3. *Anthills of the Savannah* (Achebe), pages 124, 125 and 153.
   4. *The Last of the Strong Ones* (Adimora-Ezeigbo), pages 82-85.

5. Of all the many Excellencies which I perceive in the order of our state, there is none which upon reflection pleases me better than the rule about poetry." What rule is Plato referring to and what is the implication of the statement above?

6. Identify the principle concern of Plato's theory?

7. Open to page 13 of 'our text' and write out, in lucid terms, what you consider three most crucial points discussed in there.

8. According to Plato's classification, which of the genres best represents literature and can you decipher the factors that determine his choice?

Module 2 Unit 2

1. Identify the basic differences between the respective interpretations of Aristotle and Plato in relation to the concept of mimesis? Your illustration should take into consideration the idea of 'the three beds.'
2. Based on Aristotle's examples on medium, object and manner, identify areas of convergences and divergences between Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Diop's *"The Vultures."*
3. Comment on the following Aristotelian statement. "The plot then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of tragedy."
4. Attempt an analysis of Aristotle's method of presentation noting the unique merits.
5. From what you have read so far, do you agree that Aristotle represents the most valuable voice of the classical literary criticism? As you answer the question, keep the value and inadequacies of his logic in view.
6. You must have read J. P. Clark's *Ozidi.* Can you identify the position of the supernatural and roles of music and spectacle in it? Please keep Aristotle's concept in mind as you do this exercise.

Module 2 Unit 3

1. Discuss the implications of Longinus' view that no one can produce a great work unless his thought is sublime.
2. In your own language, attempt a two-page analysis of the major proposals of Longinus' essay, "On the Sublime."

3. Study excerpts of Sappho's and Homer's respective writings employed by Longinus in his analysis in pages 56 – 58 of our recommended text. Examine the texts in relation to Longinus' evaluations and critique his view of both writings.
4. As a critic, examine Longinus' presentation style.
5. Choose two classic texts (African and English) and using Longinus precepts attempt an investigation of both bearing in mind the elements of sublimity.

Module 2 Unit 4

1. Identify Horace's standard for a good creative work.
2. Using 'our text', identify the different focus and qualities of different genres of literature as established by Horace.

3. What roles does Horace assign to the writer and the critic?
4. Explain the concept of decorum as advanced by Horace.
5. Identify at least ten different rules established by Horace in 'Art of Poetry'.
6. Of all the identified contributions of Horace to literary Criticism, which do you consider the most important and why?

Module 3 Unit 1

1. Draw a link between Sydney's background and his statements on poetry, types of texts and the effectiveness of a literary piece.
2. Analyze how Achebe's novel use of the English language in his creative works, especially *Things Fall Apart*, represents a new method of expression and descriptions. Do this based on Sydney's concept of enlarging of conceit.
3. Which of the Gosson's charges do you consider the most damaging to literature and why?
4. How will you asses Sydney' insistence on the classical conventions of drama?
5. Undertake your own analysis of the key ideas of Sydney's argument guided by what you have learnt so far.

6. Do you consider Sydney's method effective? If so, why? If not, why?

Module 3 Unit 2

1. Attempt a detailed summary of Crites' and Eugenius respective arguments.

2. The sub-plot constitutes a major concern in Lisideus' and Neander's logic. Undertake a brief analysis of both positions on the issue.

3. There are other major ideas expressed in some of the passages in the essay. Identify at least three more and state why you consider each very important.
4. Which of these methods do you consider the most effective and why?
5. There could still be more flaws in "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy." Please locate and discuss at least two more.
6. Undertake a comparative analysis of any Shakespeare and Johnson's dramatic texts, based on what you have learnt in this unit.

Module 3 Unit 3

1. What do you consider the most fundamental suggestion of Wordsworth from his views on content and style of literature?
2. Identify the position of the audience in Wordsworth's concept of the poet and poetry.
3. There are still passages which are very central to Wordsworth's theory of literature in 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. Identify at least three of such.
4. Which other literary theorist pays attention to criticism and how is his view different from Wordsworth's?
5. Identify other methods used in "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads." Which of the methods do you consider more effective and why?
6. Study the poems 'The World is Too Much With Us' and 'Tintern Abbey' and determine if and to what extent Wordsworth adheres to his literary principles in poetic construction.

Module 3 Unit 4

1. Summarise Arnold's view on the status and qualities of literature.

2. Why do you think Arnold describes historic and personal estimates as "fallacious?"
3. What can you make out of Arnold's definition of poetry as "a criticism of life" especially in relation to Wordsworth's definition previously discussed in the previous unit?
4. Arnold's standard of criticism is articulated in the touchstone concept. Describe this concept as you understand it and state how it works.

5. Arnold recognises Chaucer's input to the development of English literature. Identify three Nigerian authors who, you believe, have contributed most in establishing the canon of African literature?
6. Arnold, like Plato, presented his essay in a conversational manner. How does this method, together with the others discussed above, facilitate your understanding of Arnold's concept of literature?
7. Which of Arnold's contributions do you find most remarkable and why?
8. What other inadequacies (content and form) have you observed in the essay under discussion?
9. Which expressions in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Homer's *Iliad* can you apply as touchstones in your reading of two modern literary texts of your choice?

Module 4 Unit 1

1. Eliot's definition of tradition includes the concept of a historical sense. What do you understand by the term 'historical sense'?
2. T. S. Eliot holds that the writer functions as "a catalyst" (408) and that his mind is a vessel. Explain how a writer achieves this feat according to Eliot's specifications.
3. In your evaluation, why does Eliot reject the use of certain terms in criticism?
4. Which portion of 'Tradition and Individual Talent' is, in your view, most memorable and why?
5. Read up the concept of Idealism as propounded by Hegel and Royce and identify areas of relationship between the concept and Eliot's.
6. Eliot's essay is also important in other ways. Can you identify some?
7. Choose two literary texts and attempt a critique of both using insights supplied by Eliot's theory.

Module 4 Unit 2

1. What do you understand by Structuralism as defined by Barthes?
2. How does Barthes' concept of mimesis differ from Aristotle's?
3. Discuss the major functions of the author and critic as postulated by Barthes.
4. Examine the fate of the protagonists in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Thomas Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* by linking elements and patterns that display commonalities of human experience across different regions of the world.
5. Examine two African plays using Barthes' Structuralist principles.

Module 4 Unit 3

1. In not more than two sentences, summarise psychological criticism and psychoanalysis.
2. Study the poem 'The World is too Much With Us' by the Romantic writer William Wordsworth and examine how it unmasks his unconscious fear and anxiety over the possible destruction of the ecosystem.
3. Examine how Ocol's behaviour demonstrates Freud's concept of Selective Perception in Okot P'Bitek narrative poem "Song of Lawino."
4. Study Freud's Castration Complex and Penis Envy again and establish the relationship between both.
5. Summarize Lacan's concept of the three registers and do a critical analysis of each.
6. Establish the connection and disconnection between Lacan and Freud's notions of the Unconscious.
7. Demonstrate your comprehension of Lacan's phallus by exploiting the concept in the examination of any of the characters used as examples above.
8. Explain the meaning of archetype and identify archetypes in any literary work you have studied.

Module 4 Unit 4

1. Why is Feminism a difficult concept to define and what are its major concerns?
2. In your view, why does Woolf employ Ophelia to make her case?
3. Identify the three approaches advanced by feminist critics in response to Showalter's five questions above and discuss the limitation of each.
4. Why is Marxism regarded as an economic theory?
5. Read Eagleton's essay from 'our text' and summarize his most important ideas in 2 typed pages (font 12, double line spacing and Times New Roman).
6. Attempt a critical analysis of Arthur Miller's drama, *Death of a Salesman* or Sembene Ousmane's novel, *God's Bits of Wood*, from a Marxist perspective.

Module 4 Unit 5

1. Following the approaches employed in previous units, study and summarize Foulcault's notion of Discourse, Gramsci's Hegemony and Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction.

2. What is the primarily interest Post-colonial theory and criticism?

3. In your own terms, define Said's idea of Orientalism and his concept of Othering.

4. Identify other inadequacies you have noticed in Said's polemics and discuss their implications.

5. Modern African fiction shows evidence of cultural interactions. Examine such manifestations through the agency of Yvonne Vera's novel *Nehanda* and Ahmed Yerimah's play, *Hard Ground*.

6. Study Spivak's essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and identify her major interests.

7. Attempt a critical analysis of an African novel using any of the three major concepts discussed in this unit.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

MODULE 1 UNIT 1

6. Explain the concept of literary theory and criticism clearly stating the relationship between both arms.

7. Discuss the factors that influence the classification of literary criticism into different categories.

8. If you are given two fictional texts to analyse, what processes are you going to follow to ensure that you generate a comprehensive and methodological critical text?

9. Discuss your responsibility as a potential critic.

10. Write short notes on the following:
    a. Mimetic theory
    b. Pragmatic theory
    c. Expressive theory
    d. Objective theory

e. Intrinsic and extrinsic criticisms

Module 2 Unit 1

1. Explain the position of Plato in relation to the formal inauguration of literary criticism.
2. Closely examine Plato's philosophy of arts without ignoring its conceptual orientation and background. Your response should cater for his specific views on inspiration, imitation, and functions of literature.
3. Closely examine Plato's employment of the concept of bed, table and carpenter and state how the illustrative system advance his thesis.
4. Identify at least five methods of presentation utilized by Plato and appraise the value of each within the scheme of the essay.
5. Comprehensively discuss Plato's significance/contributions to the development of literary theory and criticism and the intrinsic inadequacies of his blueprint.
6. Attempt a critical analysis of two classical literary texts of your choice using Plato's standard.

Module 2 Unit 2

1. Attempt a comparative examination of the Platonian and Aristotelian views on inspiration, imitation and the uses of poetry.

2. Define the place of Aristotle in the English literary history.

3. Modes of imitation differ "from one another in three respects, - the medium, the object, the manner or mode of imitation …" Discuss.

4. Identify five methods employed by Aristotle in his presentation in the *Poetics* and state how each facilitates a better understanding of his thesis

5.   Examine Aristotle's concept of tragedy. Your answer must be supported by at least two standard dramatic texts of different writers and periods.

6.   Identify the inadequacies of Aristotle's theory of arts.

Module 2 Unit 3

7. Discuss the nature, features and forms of poetry as conceived by Longinus.
8. Longinus identified five principal sources of sublimity in creativity. Classify these into their proper categories and discuss each without ignoring the relationship between all the five.
9. Bearing in mind, the three pitfalls identified by Longinus, discuss what a writer must avoid in order to produce an excellent literature.
10. Examine the impact of Longinus's method in the communication of his theory of literature.
11. How does Longinus' essay echo Plato's thoughts on the impact of literature on the audience?

Module 2 Unit 4

1. Discuss the nature, features and forms of poetry as conceived by Horace.
2. One of the fundamental views of Horace covers the functions of "natural talent" and "technical competence" in literary production. Examine this view and observe its rapport with similar views of other classical theorists treated in this module.
3. Explain Horace's concept of decorum in literary construction.
4. Undertake a comparative analysis of the presentation methods of Longinus and Horace and state the value of each identified style.
5. Analyse Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are Not to Blame* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, using Horace's principle literature.

6. Scholars agree that the contributions of the four chief classicists to the development of literary criticism can never be over-emphasised. Identify these contributions with special emphasis on Longinus and Horace.

Module 3 Unit 1

6. Account for the contributions of Philip Sydney's exposure and demands of his period to 'An Apology for Poetry'.
7. "Poesy therefore is an art of imitation … that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and to delight." Examine this statement as major aspect of Sydney's basic assumption in 'An Apology for Poetry'.
8. The essay we have studied in this unit is alternatively titled 'A Defence of Poesy'. Discuss this essay as a direct and remote defence against various attacks on literature.
9. Stephen Cowen holds that in discussing the various forms, "Sidney develops a series of stylistic, structural, and thematic categories … arranged hierarchically" (3). Bearing this in mind, comment on Sydney's method of presentation.
10. Undertake a critical analysis of Sydney's significance within the scope of English literary History.

Module 3 Unit 2

1. Discuss Dryden's concept of drama in relation to his definition. Making references to other theorists will give you a lot of advantages.
2. Dryden stipulates elements which can stain a piece of writing. Identify these and articulate impact using any dramatic text(s) of your choice.
3. Account for the role and position of Aristotle, Horace, Shakespeare and Jonson in Dryden's 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy'.

4. Dryden has been acknowledged as a very significant voice in literary theory and criticism. Ascertain the major factors that contribute to his enviable status in English literary history.

5. Dryden's methods of presentation are quite unique. Critically examine Dryden's technique and determine its effectiveness.

Module 3 Unit 3

1. Considering Wordsworth's view on style of poetry, what is his idea of a good literary text?

2. Wordsworth is described as "a voice of the voiceless" in the concluding part of this unit. Justify this title in relation to his literary theory.

3. Wordsworth's definition of poet and poetry is quite telling. Based on both definitions, analyse his views on the qualities and responsibilities of a poet as well as the functions of literature.

4. 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' has identifiable relationships with other literary principles previously discussed in this study guide. In what ways does Wordsworth's ideas reflect Plato, Aristotle and Sydney's.

5. Wordsworth's essay is generally acknowledged as a revolutionary theoretical piece. Discuss how the essay has impacted upon the development of English literary theory, despite its limitations.

Module 3 Unit 4

1. 'The Study of Poetry' proposed two qualities which must mark every great work of art. Discuss these in relation to Aristotle's view on a good literary text.

2. Do you agree that Arnold's concept of literature and criticism exhibits a functional persuasion? Defend your position. Please note that reference to other literary theorists and scholars will help your essay.

3. Based on the statement below, discuss Arnold's critical standard as contained in 'The Study of Poetry'.

> Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of great poetry. It is much better to have recourse to concrete examples; to take specimens of the poetry of … the very highest quality …

4. Justify the claim that Arnold's thesis takes a practical and objective approach to criticism and maintains a European outlook more than most of the essays discussed in this study guide.

5. In Henry James words, "Mr. Arnold's Essays in Criticism come to … readers with a … reputation of a charming style, a great deal of excellent feeling, and an almost equal amount of questionable reasoning." Bearing this view in mind, discuss the significances and flaws of Matthew Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry'.

6. Arnold challenges students of literature, like you, to apply the general principles he advances in criticism. Based on that invitation, choose specimens from any two modern African fiction and use such in an examination of two contemporary African fictions. Your ability to justify your choices will attract extra marks.

MODULE 4 UNIT 1

6. For Eliot tradition involves "the historical sense" and is indispensable to any author who desires to remain relevant in his/her society. Bearing this statement in mind, discuss Eliot's idea of the relationship between tradition and individual talent.

7. Eliot flays his English society for ignoring the shortcomings of its critical habits. Identify and discuss these shortcomings as well as the critical standards advanced by Eliot in the essay, 'Tradition and Individual Talent'.

8. Evaluate Eliot's 'Impersonal Theory of Poetry' using relevant examples from literary and conceptual texts of your choice.

9. Several critics have linked aspects of 'Tradition and Individual Talent' to certain ideas relayed in Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry' and Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'. Locate and review those ideas showing areas of correspondence and departure.

10. Using Eliot's standard of criticism, appraise two well-known novels written by creative writers from two different African regions. Your response should show your understanding of the influence of past writers on contemporary authors.

Module 4 Unit 2

1. Discuss Structuralism as a literary concept
2. What is the structuralist view of literature?
3. Examine Barthes creative and critical principles.
4. Evaluate Barthes' major postulations in the essay, 'The Structuralist Activity'
5. Discuss Barthes' concepts of texts, mimesis, simulacrum and structural man.
6. Do a structuralist analysis of two literary texts of your choice.

Module 4 Unit 3

7. Discuss the concern of Psychoanalysis as a prominent form of literary theory and criticism. Your essay will be enhanced by relevant illustrations and copious examples.
8. Discuss Freud's notion of the unconscious and establish its central relevance to Psychoanalysis as a school of literary theory and criticism.
9. Examine the major ways in which Jacques Lacan reformulates Freud's psychoanalytic ideas.
10. Identify the main assumptions of Carl Jung's concept of the Collective Unconscious and assess its contributions to the development of Psychoanalysis.
11. Identify the archetypes in any novel of your choice and examine how the author employs them to achieve his/her creative objective.

12. Using ample examples from literary texts, discuss at least five Defences, including Repression, and determine the consequences of each.

Module 4 Unit 4

1. Account for the socio-cultural and political factors that aided the development of feminist and Marxist literary theories.
2. How does Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own' reflect the major concerns of feminist theory of literature?
3. Discuss the major concerns of Karl Marx in 'The German Ideology' and examine its influence on literary criticism.
4. Examine the ideal focus of Feminist literary criticism as advanced by Elaine Showalter in the essay, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism'.
5. Scholars have attacked both Marxist and Feminist interpretations of social-cultural and political realities of their world. Identify the bases of such criticism.
6. Analyse any literary text of your choice from either of the two theories discussed in this unit.

Module 4 Unit 5

1. Discuss in details the historical and political backgrounds of Post-colonialism.
2. Examine the basic assumptions of Post-colonial literary theory and criticism.
3. The Post-colonial concepts of 'othering' and 'hybridity' tend to manifest a contradictory relationship. Investigate this assertion using at least two African literary texts.
4. What is the kernel of Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak'? How does the essay advance the lot of Post-colonial literary theory and criticism?

5. Do a detailed analysis of any contemporary Nigerian novel using one of the three Post-colonial concepts studied in this course.