# UGC NET - ENGLISH

## SAMPLE THEORY

## PAPER - III

### HISTORY OF LITERARY THEORY & CRITICISM

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**HISTORY OF LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM**

The practice of literary theory became a profession in the 20th century, but it has historical roots that run as far back as ancient Greece (Aristotle's Poetics is an often cited early example), ancient India (Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra), ancient Rome (Longinus's On the Su]) and medieval Iraq (Al-Jahiz's al-Bayan wa-'l-tabyin and al-Hayawan, and ibn al-Mu'tazz's Kitab al-Badi), and the aesthetic theories of philosophers from ancient philosophy through the 18th and 19th centuries are important influences on current literary study. The theory and criticism of literature are, of course, also closely tied to the history of literature.

The modern sense of "literary theory," however, dates only to approximately the 1950s, when the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure began strongly to influence English language literary criticism. The New Critics and various European-influenced formalists (particularly the Russian Formalists) had described some of their more abstract efforts as "theoretical" as well. But it was not until the broad impact of structuralism began to be felt in the English-speaking academic world that "literary theory" was thought of as a unified domain.

In the academic world of the United Kingdom and the United States, literary theory was at its most popular from the late 1960s (when its influence was beginning to spread outward from elite universities like Johns Hopkins, Yale, and Cornell) through the 1980s (by which time it was taught nearly everywhere in some form). During this span of time, literary theory was perceived as academically cutting-edge, and most university literature departments sought to teach and study theory and incorporate it into their curricula. Because of its meteoric rise in popularity and the difficult language of its key texts, theory was also often criticized as faddish or trendy obscurantism (and many academic satire novels of the period, such as those by David Lodge, feature theory prominently). Some scholars, both theoretical and anti-theoretical, refer to the 1970s and 1980s debates on the academic merits of theory as "the theory wars."

By the early 1990s, the popularity of "theory" as a subject of interest by itself was declining slightly (along with job openings for pure "theorists") even as the texts of literary theory

were incorporated into the study of almost all literature. As of 2004, the controversy over the use of theory in literary studies has all but died out, and discussions on the topic within literary and cultural studies tend now to be considerably milder and less acrimonious (though the appearance of volumes such as Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent, edited by Nathan Parker with Andrew Costigan, sought a resurgence of the controversy). Some scholars draw heavily on theory in their work, while others only mention it in passing or not at all; but it is an acknowledged, important part of the study of literature.

**I About**

One of the fundamental questions of literary theory is "what is literature?" - although many contemporary theorists and literary scholars believe either that "literature" cannot be defined or that it can refer to any use of language. Specific theories are distinguished not only by their methods and conclusions, but even by how they define a "text". For some scholars of literature, "texts" comprises little more than "books belonging to the Western literary canon.

The principles and methods of literary theory apply to non-fiction, popular fiction, film, historical documents, law, advertising, etc., and in the related field of cultural studies. Some scholars within cultural studies treat cultural events, like fashion or football riots, as "texts" to be interpreted. By this measure, literary theory can be thought of as the general theory of interpretation.

Since theorists of literature often draw on a very heterogeneous tradition of Continental philosophy and the philosophy of language, any classification of their approaches is only an approximation. There are many types of literary theory, which take different approaches to texts. Even among those listed below, combine methods from more than one of these approaches (for instance, the deconstructive approach of Paul de Man drew on a long tradition of close reading pioneered by the New Critics, and de Man was trained in the European hermeneutic tradition).

Broad schools of theory that have historically been important include historical and biographical criticism, New Criticism, formalism, Russian formalism, and structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism, feminism and French feminism, post-colonialism, new historicism, deconstruction, reader-response criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism.

**II Literary Theory**

It should become clear, however, that Garnett is also operating with certain theories of literature. No criticism is innocent of theory, and what is at times called 'literary criticism' is often largely theory (Sidney's Defence of Poetry, Pope's Essay on Criticism, Wordsworth's "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads, and so forth).

a. Garnett believes that art is an exact representation of life, however one that is selected and arranged to elucidate truths. He praises the work for the precision with which it portrays what is, but also for a 'method' which brings to light that which is hidden. There are apparently two views of representation here, and of the nature of 'art': art represents, or art uncovers. It is not unusual for a critic to operate from different, even conflicting, theoretical positions, and in this case the conflict is as Flaubert long ago pointed out endemic to Realism: realism claims to represent the truth but in order to do so it necessarily selects and arranges, hence distorting the world as empirically experienced, and inflecting the 'truth' (as empirically conceived) with certain criteria of selection and arrangement.

b. As an elucidation of things hidden Garnett sees this text as a psychological masterpiece, also as an astute analysis of a cultural conflict. There is a theory of the social function of literature here, and (as an enablement of that function) of literature as heuristic: literature does not merely teach by delighting (Horace, "Epistle to the Pises") or by saying "what oft was thought. but ne'er so well expressed" (Pope, "Essay on Criticism"); rather it discloses truths which otherwise would not be available but which are necessary if we are to live justly and to understand ourselves.

c. In understanding literature as having heuristic powers Garnett reads with a certain model of human nature in mind, and with a certain model of social order. Were the article to be read by someone who did not understand the emerging theories of psychoanalysis, for instance, the ideas of the relation of our conscious and unconscious life (or even the existence of our unconscious life), the idea that we are governed by instincts and motives we only obscurely understand, then the Garnett's reading, and his grounds for valuing the text, might not be understood or accepted as valid.

d. Similarly there is a politics in Garnett's reading, and a position in relation to imperialism; in fact he claims, and claims it apparently as a strength, that there is no political motivation to the text. This leads us to the perception that Garnett does not read literature of colonization with suspicion, does not think in terms of the language and sensibility of the Other, does not interrogate imperialist values -- or gender values, for another. Reading Heart of Darkness in that manner requires of set of theoretical conceptions and assumptions Garnett did not have.

e. To return to the heuristic value, while Garnett does not claim that literature is the only way this uncovering of truth can be achieved, his faith in the eminence of this function is implicit, as are some of the reasons for this eminence (its representational power, its rhetorical force, its freedom from any interest other than the truth). There is an implicit valuation of literature as means of conveying truth, that is to say.

f. Garnett sees the work as proceeding from the intention of the author, and it effects as relying on capacities and attentions (hence the intention) to the audience. While this may seem unexceptional, there are operative assumptions here which could affect his reading, and his valuation. Garnett does not ask what psychic complexities allowed Conrad to see what he sees, he does not ask if the discursive formations which Conrad occupied inflected or occasioned his text, he assumes that language is responsive to the author's wish, that the reader receives the message the author sends and hence the reader's reception is conditioned only by a willingness to attend, he assumes that while there are hidden meanings in personal and social formations, there are none in textual formations, so what the text means is itself unproblematic and its representational power is unblemished.

g. As well, an understanding of Garnett's theoretical position will comprehend why the review should have been taken seriously at the time, and so seriously since as to be often reprinted. Part of this will have to do with the institutions which regulate the publication, promotion, sales and valuation of texts, so that the reader of the theoretical assumptions of Garnett's piece will see that Garnett, a socially and culturally influential literary figure, is publishing in a review which proclaims the relation between the institutions of education

and of 'literature,' Academy and Literature. Only a certain audience would have read this, and why Garnett chose to publish there rather than in the popular press, as well as the title of the publication, are themselves important statements about his understanding of what 'literature' is and ultimately about what its social functions in society are.

Consequently one can simply critique or approve Garnett's literary criticism and feel one has done one's job, but only if one chooses to ignore (or simply so fully agrees with as not to perceive) the theoretical positions on which his reading is based. Otherwise one must begin not with a critique of the criticism but with an attempt to understand and to articulate its theoretical assumptions.

**III Theory Itself**

While interrogating the theoretical assumptions, however, one ought to be aware of the difference between "Literary Theory" as a subject, and "theory itself." Literary Theory is, as Deleuze and Guattari remark in A Thousand Plateaus, an arrangement of ideas within a demarked space: one has the author, the reader, the text, society, etc, and a theoretical position will articulate the importance and the nature of the various relations among them. This is disciplined and disciplining theory, theory ready to hand for the practice of literary criticism, theory as practiced and approved by the regulatory bodies of the 'discipline.' One then has a 'theoretical position' from which, or through which, one acts, as a 'reader-response' theorist, or a 'psychoanalytic' theorist, or whatever. Theory Itself, on the other hand, is always one step off, is not to hand for criticism, because it is attempting to assess the assumptions and implications of the demarked space (why it is demarked, by what process, what the demarkation suggest, on what grounds and for what reasons these are authorized, and so forth). The practice of theory itself is self-reflexive, for it includes an examination of the grounds of one's own practice, authority, and goals.

The study of literary theory as we understand it occupies a site of struggle between these two locations, "Literary Theory" and "theory itself," between the attempt to locate literature in relation to its 'components', on the one hand, and an attempt to understand the ontological, epistemic, axiological and praxic nature and implications and assumptions of the very phenomenon of 'literature' as a cultural formation and practice. One can read

Garnett's piece as a valuation of the text, one [must] can read it for its theory of literature, and/or one can [must] read it as an exercise of theory, in which case one must interrogate one's own assumptions, the very act one is engaged in, the categories one applies, the significance of the act.

**Schools of literary theory**

Listed below are some of the most commonly identified schools of literary theory, along with their major authors. In many cases, such as those of the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the authors were not primarily literary critics, but their work has been broadly influential in literary theory.

Aestheticism - often associated with Romanticism, a philosophy defining aesthetic value as the primary goal in understanding literature. This includes both literary critics who have tried to understand and/or identify aesthetic values and those like Oscar Wilde who have stressed art for art's sake.

- Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, Harold Bloom

American pragmatism and other American approaches

- Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Richard Rorty

Cognitive Cultural Studies - applies research in cognitive neuroscience, cognitive evolutionary psychology and anthropology, and philosophy of mind to the study of literature and culture

- Frederick Luis Aldama, Mary Thomas Crane, Nancy Easterlin, William Flesch, David Herman, Suzanne Keen, Patrick Colm Hogan, Alan Richardson, Ellen Spolsky, Blakey Vermeule, Lisa Zunshine

Cultural studies - emphasizes the role of literature in everyday life

- Raymond Williams, Dick Hebdige, and Stuart Hall (British Cultural Studies); Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno; Michel de Certeau; also Paul Gilroy, John Guillory

Darwinian literary studies - situates literature in the context of evolution and natural selection

Deconstruction - a strategy of close reading that elicits the ways that key terms and concepts may be paradoxical or self-undermining, rendering their meaning undecidable

- Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Gayatri Spivak, Avital Ronell

Gender (see feminist literary criticism) - which emphasizes themes of gender relations

- Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Elaine Showalter

Formalism - a school of literary criticism and literary theory having mainly to do with structural purposes of a particular text

German hermeneutics and philology

- Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Erich Auerbach

Marxism (see Marxist literary criticism) - which emphasizes themes of class conflict

- Georg Lukács, Valentin Voloshinov, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin,

Modernism

**New Criticism** - looks at literary works on the basis of what is written, and not at the goals of the author or biographical issues

- W. K. Wimsatt, F. R. Leavis, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren

New Historicism - which examines the work through its historical context and seeks to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature?

- Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose, Jonathan Goldberg, H. Aram Veeser

Postcolonialism - focuses on the influences of colonialism in literature, especially regarding the historical conflict resulting from the exploitation of less developed countries and indigenous people's by Western nations

- Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Declan Kiberd

Postmodernism - criticism of the conditions present in the twentieth century, often with concern for those viewed as social deviants or the Other

- Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Maurice Blanchot

Post-structuralism - a catch-all term for various theoretical approaches (such as deconstruction) that criticize or go beyond Structuralism's aspirations to create a rational science of culture by extrapolating the model of linguistics to other discursive and aesthetic formations

- Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva

Psychoanalysis - explores the role of consciousnesses and the unconscious in literature including that of the author, reader, and characters in the text

- Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Harold Bloom, Slavoj Zizek, Viktor Tausk

Queer theory - examines, questions, and criticizes the role of gender identity and sexuality in literature

- Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michel Foucault

Reader-response criticism - focuses upon the active response of the reader to a text

- Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, Norman Holland, Hans-Robert Jauss, Stuart Hall

Russian formalism

- Victor Shklovsky, Vladimir Propp

Structuralism and semiotics - examines the universal underlying structures in a text, the linguistic units in a text and how the author conveys meaning through any structures

- Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jurij Lotman, Antti Aarne, Jacques Ehrmann, Northrop Frye and morphology of folklore

Eco-criticism - explores cultural connections and human relationships to the natural world

Other theorists: Robert Graves, Alamgir Hashmi, John Sutherland, Leslie Fiedler, Kenneth Burke, Paul Bénichou, Barbara Johnson

The concept of emergence has been applied to the theory of literature and art, history, linguistics, cognitive sciences, etc. by the teachings of Jean-Marie Grassin at the University of Limoges(v. esp.: J. Fontanille, B. Westphal, J. Vion-Dury, éds. L'Émergence -- Poétique de l'Émergence, en réponse aux travaux de Jean-Marie Grassin, Bern, Berlin,

etc., 2011; and: the article "Emergence" in the International Dictionary of Literary Terms (DITL).

**LITERARY CRITICISM**

**I Literary criticism** is fundamentally the estimation of the value of a particular work or body of work on such grounds as: the personal and/or cultural significance of the themes and the uses of language of a text; the insights and impact of a text; and the aesthetic production (or, performance) of the text; particularly as these areas are seen to be mutually dependent, supportive or inflective. The word 'criticism' has ordinary-use negative connotations, and to an extent that is right: for literary criticism is part of the disciplining of discourse generally and of what is considered literature in particular. One patrols the boundaries of good writing, admitting or excluding, determining what should be thought about a text, and why, what personal and cultural value should be placed on it.

Judgments of value are not simple, however. They require that one consider what constitutes value, what the personal and social value of literature is, what the value of 'the aesthetic' is. And they require that one interpret the text. As texts judged to be of high literary value tend to be marked by complexity and even ambiguity, and to yield diverse interpretations, judgment may ultimately require a theory of interpretation, or at least careful attention to the question of what constitutes, guides, and legitimates interpretation.

**II: Theory**

Theory is the process of understanding what the nature of literature is, what functions it has, what the relation of text is to author, to reader, to language, to society, to history. It is not judgment but understanding of the frames of judgment.

**III: theory itself**

Theory, however, particularly as "a theory of X," tends to operate within a frame of values and expectations itself. Full understanding requires one think as fully as possible about the sets of expectations, assumptions and values of theory and theorizing, and this (always incompletable) exercise we think of as theory itself.

**IV: Literary Studies**

In this discussion, we skip consideration of literary studies, which Roman Jakobson we think rightly in his famous essay "Linguistics and Poetics" insists must be differentiated from literary criticism. "Literary studies" refers to knowledge about the facts of the case as they illuminate the meaningfulness of texts -- facts of authorship, biography, influence, aesthetics, the pressures and modulations of contexts, rewriting and publication, historical interpretation, and so forth.

**Literary Criticism**

In looking at the piece on Heart of Darkness by Edward Garnett reproduced below as literary criticism, we can discuss whether he is right about the value of the work and about the themes of the work. Is Garnett's judgment correct? Are the bases of his judgment an accurate description of the qualities of the text? The text in question is an unsigned review by Garnett in Academy and Literature 6, December 1902.

["Youth" and "The End of the Tether," stories published with "Heart of Darkness"] will be more popular than the third, "Heart of Darkness," "a study of the white man in Africa," which is most amazing, a consummate piece of artistic diablerie..... We...hold "Heart of Darkness" to be the high-water mark of the author's talent....

"Heart of Darkness," to present its theme bluntly, is an impression, taken from life, of the conquest by the European whites of a certain portion of Africa, an impression in particular of the civilizing methods of a certain great European Trading Company face to face with the "nigger." We say this must because the English reader likes to know where he is going before he takes his art seriously, and we add that he will find the human life, black and white, in "Heart of Darkness" and uncommonly and uncannily serious affair. If the ordinary reader, however, insists on taking the subject of a tale very seriously, the artist takes his method of presentation more seriously still, and rightly so. For the art of "Heart of Darkness" -- as in every psychological masterpiece -- lies in the relation of the things of the spirit to the things of the flesh, of the invisible life to the visible, of the sub-conscious life within us, our obscure motives and instincts, to our conscious actions, feelings and outlook.

Just as landscape is implies the artist catching the exact relation of a tree to the earth from which it springs, of the earth to the sky, so the art of "Heart of Darkness" implies the catching of infinite shades of the white man's uneasy, disconcerted, and fantastic relation with the exploited barbarism of Africa; it implies the acutest analysis of the deterioration of the white man's morale, when he is let loose from European restraint, and planted down in the tropics as an "emissary of light" armed to the teeth, to make trade profits out of the "subject races." The weirdness, the brilliance the psychological truth of this masterly analysis of two Continents in conflict, of the abysmal gulf between the white man's system and the black man's comprehension of its results, is conveyed in a rapidly rushing narrative which calls for close attention on the reader's part. But the attention once surrendered, the pages of the narrative are as enthralling as the pages of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment. The stillness of the sombre African forests, the glare of sunshine, the feeling of dawn, of noon, of night on the tropical rivers, the isolation of the unnerved, degenerating whites staring all day and every day at the heart of Darkness which alike meaningless and threatening to their own creed and conceptions of life, the helpless bewilderment of the unhappy savages in the grasp of their flabby and rapacious conquerors [note the use of Conrad's language and imagery] -- all this is a page torn form the life of the Dark continent -- a page which has been hitherto carefully blurred and kept away from European eyes. There is no "intention" in the story, no parti pris, no prejudice one way or the other; it is simple a piece of art, fascinating and remorseless, and the artist is but intent on presenting his sensations in that sequence and the arrangement whereby the meaning or the meaninglessness of the white man in uncivilized Africa can be felt in its really significant aspects....

This is literary criticism in that it is a valuation of the writing and the subject matter. It is the high-water mark of Conrad's talent, Garnett says, and along the way he attempts to explain why this is so. The style, the subject matter, and the treatment of the subject, is described. This is a "masterpiece," and Garnett tells use wherein the "art" lies. It lies in the qualities of perception and of writing, in the analysis as well as in the presentation of the subject. It is a psychological masterpiece, an enthralling representation of reality, a rapidly rushing

narrative, and an astute treatment of a cultural phenomenon. Garnett classifies it by comparison with a work which had (in Constance Garnett's translation) recently burst on the English cultural scene, and was acknowledged to be a work of great psychological and dramatic power, Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment; and he contrasts it implicitly to less powerful descriptions, and to descriptions which have political or social rather than simply representational motives. As literary criticism, one can contest his valuation, and/or the grounds of his valuation, of the work.

**Literary Theory and Criticism**

Literary theory in a strict sense is the systematic study of the nature of literature and of the methods for analyzing literature. However, literary scholarship since the 19th century often includes-in addi even instead of literary theory in the strict sense-considerations of intellectual history, moral philosophy, social prophecy, and other interdisciplinary themes which are of relevance to the way humans interpret meaning. In humanities in modern academia, the latter style of scholarship is an outgrowth of critical theory and is often called simply "theory." As a consequence, the word "theory" has become an umbrella term for a variety of scholarly approaches to reading texts. Many of these approaches are informed by various strands of Continental philosophy and sociology.

Literary criticism is the study, evaluation, and interpretation of literature. Modern literary criticism is often informed by literary theory, which is the philosophical discussion of its methods and goals. Though the two activities are closely related, literary critics are not always, and have not always been, theorists.

Whether or not literary criticism should be considered a separate field of inquiry from literary theory, or conversely from book reviewing, is a matter of some controversy. For example, the Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism draws no distinction between literary theory and literary criticism, and almost always uses the terms together to describe the same concept. Some critics consider literary criticism a practical application of literary theory, because criticism always deals directly with particular literary works, while theory may be more general or abstract.

Aristotle's Poetics (Greek:, c. 335 BCE) is the earliest-surviving work of dramatic theory and the first extant philosophical treatise to focus on literary theory. In it, Aristotle offers an account of what he calls "poetry" (a term which in Greek literally means "making" and in this context includes drama-comedy, tragedy, and the satyr play-as well as lyric poetry, epic poetry, and the dithyramb). He examines its "first principles" and identifies its genres and basic elements. His analysis of tragedy constitutes the core of the discussion. Although Aristotle's Poetics is universally acknowledged in the Western critical tradition, Marvin Carlson explains, "almost every detail about his seminal work has aroused divergent opinions."

The work was lost to the Western world and often misrepresented for a long time. It was available through the Middle Ages and early Renaissance only through a Latin translation of an Arabic version written by Averroes.

**Core terms**

- Mimesis or "imitation", "representation"
- Catharsis or, variously, "purgation", "purification", "clarification"
- Peripeteia or "reversal"
- Anagnorisis or "recognition", "identification"
- Hamartia or "miscalculation" (understood in Romanticism as "tragic flaw")
- Mythos or "plot"
- Ethos or "character"
- Dianoia or "thought", "theme"
- Lexis or "diction", "speech"
- Melos or "melody"
- Opsis or "spectacle"

**Content**

Aristotle's work on aesthetics consists of the Poetics and Rhetoric. The Poetics is specifically concerned with drama. At some point, Aristotle's original work was divided in two, each "book" written on a separate roll of papyrus.Only the first part-that which focuses

on tragedy-survives. The lost second part addressed comedy. Scholars speculate that theTractatus coislinianus summarizes the contents of the lost second book.

Aristotle distinguishes between the genres of "poetry" in three ways:

- **Matter**

  Language, rhythm, and melody, for Aristotle, make up the matter of poetic creation. Where the epic poem makes use of language alone, the playing of the lyre involves rhythm and melody. Some poetic forms include a blending of all materials; for example, Greek tragic drama included a singing chorus, and so music and language were all part of the performance.

- **Subjects**

  Also "agents" in some translations. Aristotle differentiates between tragedy and comedy throughout the work by distinguishing between the nature of the human characters that populate either form. Aristotle finds that tragedy treats of serious, important, and virtuous people. Comedy, on the other hand, treats people who are less virtuous, who are unimportant, undignified, laughable Aristotle introduces here the influential tripartite division of characters in superior to the audience, inferior or at the same level .

- **Method**

  One may imitate the agents through use of a narrator throughout, or only occasionally (using direct speech in parts and a narrator in parts, as Homer does), or only through direct speech (without a narrator), using actors to speak the lines directly. This latter is the method of tragedy (and comedy): without use of any narrator.

Having examined briefly the field of "poetry" in general, Aristotle proceeds to his definition of tragedy:

Tragedy is a representation of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the [various] parts [of the play] and [represented] by people acting and not by narration, accomplishing by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions.

By "embellished speech", We mean that which has rhythm and melody, i.e. song. By "with its elements separately", We mean that some [parts of it] are accomplished only by means of spoken verses, and others again by means of song (1449b25-30).

Tragedy consists of six parts which Aristotle enumerates in order of importance, beginning with the most essential and ending with the least:

- **Plot (mythos)**: Refers to the "structure of incidents" (actions). Key elements of the plot are reversals, recognitions, and suffering. The best plot should be "complex" (i.e. involve a change of fortune). It should imitate actions arousing fear and pity. Thus it should proceed from good fortune to bad and involve a high degree of suffering for the protagonist, usually involving physical harm or death. Actions should be logical and follow naturally from actions that precede them. They will be more satisfying to the audience if they come about by surprise or seeming coincidence and are only afterward seen as plausible, even necessary.

  When a character is unfortunate by reversal(s) of fortune (peripeteia), at first he suffers (pathos) and then he can realize (anagnorisis) the cause of his misery or a way to be released from the misery.

  character (ethos) It is much better if a tragical accident happens to a hero because of a mistake he makes (hamartia) instead of things which might happen anyway. That is because the audience is more likely to be "moved" by it. A hero may have made it knowingly (in Medea) or unknowingly (Oedipus). A hero may leave a deed undone (due to timely discovery, knowledge present at the point of doing deed ...).

**Main character should be**

- **Good** - Aristotle explains that audiences do not like, for example, villains "making fortune from misery" in the end. It might happen though, and might make the play interesting. Nevertheless, the moral is at stake here and morals are important to make people happy (people can, for example, see tragedy

  because they want to release their anger)

- **Appropriate**-if a character is supposed to be wise, it is unlikely he is young (supposing wisdom is gained with age)
- **Consistent-**if a person is a soldier, he is unlikely to be scared of blood (if this soldier is scared of blood it must be explained and play some role in the story to avoid confusing the audience); it is also "good" if a character doesn't change opinion "that much" if the play is not "driven" by who characters are, but by what they do (audience is confused in case of unexpected shifts in behaviour [and its reasons, morals ...] of characters)
- **"Consistently inconsistent"-**if a character always behaves foolishly it is strange if he suddenly becomes smart. In this case it would be good to explain such change, otherwise the audience may be confused. If character changes opinion a lot it should be clear he is a character who has this trait, not a real life person - this is also to avoid confusion
- **Thought (dianoia)**-spoken (usually) reasoning of human characters can explain the characters or story background ...
- **Diction (lexis)**: Refers to the quality of speech in tragedy. Speeches should reflect character, the moral qualities of those on the stage.
- **Melody (melos)**

  The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors. It should be an integral part of the whole, and share in the action
- **Spectacle (opsis)**: Refers to the visual apparatus of the play, including set, costumes and props. Aristotle calls spectacle the "least artistic" element of tragedy, and the "least connected with the work of the poet (playwright). For example: if the play has "beautiful" costumes and "bad" acting and "bad" story, there is "something wrong" with it. Even though that "beauty" may save the play it is "not a nice thing".

  He offers the earliest-surviving explanation for the origins of tragedy and comedy:

  **John Dryden**

  It was Dr. Johnson who first called Dryden **the father of English** criticism and his view has been supported by almost every critic from Sainsbury to T. S. Eliot. It is for the first time in Dryden's works that criticism becomes aware of itself and analyses its object with sympathy and knowledge. Dryden is the first English critic who took to criticism seriously

and thought deeply over all the problems connected with literature. Though his criticism is also scattered, he has written almost on all the literary problems, like the nature and function of poetry, dramatic art, epic, satire, translation, respective merits of rhyme and blank verse. He has given us brilliant appreciations of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher and Ben Jonson.

Dryden was also the father of comparative criticism in England. R. A. Scott James says that Dryden opens a new field of comparative criticism. The method followed by Dryden's predecessors was to compare modern literature with the ancient Greek and Latin literature. They were of the opinion that Homer and Virgil were the best models for all times and in all languages. But Dryden does not follow this method, He judges each work of art on merit, and believes that tastes and temperaments differ from age to age and nation to nation. He adopted a very rational attitude. While analyzing the merits and demerits of any writer, he places him in comparison with some other ancient or modern writer. He was the first critic in England to analyze English and foreign plays and examine their comparative merits and demerits. The best examples of his comparative criticism are the comparisons between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy and between Homer and Virgil between Ovid and Chaucer, and between Chaucer and Boccaccio in the Preface to the Fables.

Dryden was also the first critic to make use of the historical method of criticism, He regards literature as a mirror of society reflecting faithfully the characteristic of the age. The literature of each nation depends on the temper, genius and climate of that nation, and therefore we should not judge the literature of one country by the rules of another. He says: "What pleased the Greeks, would not satisfy an English audience." Therefore, he argues, we should judge literature in its proper historical perspective, taking into consideration all the changes that took place in a particular age.

Dryden recognizes the truth that literature is not static but a dynamic process. The most important quality of Dryden as critic is his liberal outlook on literature. He is the pioneer of liberal classicism. He lived at a time when people relied completely on the classical rules. Dryden himself admired the ancient writers and accepted many of their principles. But he

was never a servile imitator and he changed the classical rules when he did not agree with them or found them unfit for modern conditions. He refuses to be cowed by the French playwrights and critics. His liberal classicism is seen in his defense of tragic-comedy. He finds no reason why tragi-comedy should be forbidden only because it mingles mirth with serious plot. He recognizes that blind adherence to the unities often has a cramping effect, and results in absurdities. Their violation on the other hand, often results in greater variety and copiousness of plot. Dryden is most penetrating, racy and rational and most delightful when he breaks free from the rules and trusts his own judgments.

The English writers imitated the French writers and followed the principles of regularity and order and the spirit of good sense in their prose, drama and poetry. Dryden did not like the slavish imitation and asserted and elaborated the merits of English drama over and above the French drama.

The next great characteristic of Dryden as a critic is his openness of mind, his desire and ability to pass unbiased judgment on all literary questions that came up before him. He was no revolutionary in taste and it was not his purpose to throw overboard all the accepted critical canons of his day.

Another great merit of Dryden's criticism is that it is informal and intimate. He carries his learning lightly and establishes with the minimum of effort that sympathize between reader and writer so essential for the understanding of true work of art.

With all the merits there some defects have also been noted in Dryden's criticism. It has been pointed out that Dryden is inconsistent, betrays imperfect knowledge, and sometimes gives too much concession to tradition and classical authority. Dr. Johnson was the first to note these limitations of Dryden. He pointed out the inconsistency in Dryden's attitude to rhyming plays and his lack of scruple and even logic in refuting hostile critics or in defending some licence of his own. There were also occasional inaccuracies in his statements as when employing Alexandrines in his Homer.

**Wordsworth**

It has been generally supposed that Wordsworth's theory of poetic language is merely a reaction against, and a criticism of, 'the Pseudo Classical' theory of poetic diction. But such

a view is partially true. His first impulse was less a revolt against Pseudo-classical diction, "than a desire to find a suitable language for the new territory of human life which he was conquering for poetic treatment". His aim was to deal in his poetry with rustic and humble life and to advocate simplicity of theme. Moreover, he believed that the poet is essentially a man speaking to men and so he must use such a language as is used by men. The pseudo classicals advocated that the language of poetry is different from the language of prose while Wordsworth believes that there is no essential difference between them. The poet can communicate best in the language which is really used by men. He condemns the artificial language. Thus William Wordsworth prefers the language really used by common men.

Wordsworth's purpose, as he tells in the Preface was, "to choose incidents and situations from common life", and quite naturally, he also intended to use, "a selection of language, really used by men". He was to deal with humble and rustic life and so he should also use the language of the rustics, farmers, shepherds who were to be the subjects of his poetry. The language of these men was to be used but it was to be purified of all that is painful or disgusting, vulgar and coarse in that language. He was to use the language of real men because the aim of a poet is to give pleasure and such language without selection will cause disgust.

The use of such a simple language has a number of advantages. The rustic language in its simplicity is highly emotional and passionate. This is more so the case when these humble people are in a state of emotional excitement. It is charged with the emotions of the human heart. Such a language is the natural language of the passions. It comes from the heart, and thus goes direct to the heart. In other words, through the use of such a language essential truths about human life and nature can be more easily and clearly communicated. It is more 'philosophical' language in as much as its use can result in a better and clearer understanding of the basic truths. But in city life emotions are not openly expressed.

Wordsworth was going to write about simple life so he writes in simple language and for this he adds metre. In his opinion, the language of poetry must not be separated from the

language of men in real life. Figures, metaphors and similies and other such decorations must not be used unnecessarily. In a state of emotional excitement, men naturally use a metaphorical language to express themselves forcefully. The earliest poets used only such metaphors and images as result naturally from powerful emotions. Later on, poets used a figurative language which was not the result of genuine passion. They merely imitated the manner of the earlier poets, and thus arose the artificial language and diction of Pseudo-classics. A stereotyped and mechanical phraseology thus became current. The poet must avoid the use of such artificial diction both when he speaks in his own person, or through his characters.

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction is of immense value when considered as a corrective to the artificial, inane, and unnatural phraseology current at the time. But considered in itself it is full of a number of contradictions and suffers from a number of imitations. For one thing, Wordsworth does not state what he means by language. Language is a matter of words, as well as of arrangement of those words. It is the matter of the use of imagery, frequency of its use, and its nature, Wordsworth does not clarify what he exactly means by 'language'.

Coleridge was the first critic to pounce upon Wordsworth's theory of language and to expose its weaknesses. He pointed out,

**first,** that a language so selected and purified, as Wordsworth suggests, would differ in no way from the language of any other men of common sense. After such a selection there would be no difference between the rustic language and the language used by men in other walks of life.

**Secondly,** Wordsworth permits the use of metre, and this implies a particular order and arrangement of words. If metre is to be used, the order of words in poetry is bound to differ from that of prose. It does so differ in the poetry of Wordsworth himself. So Coleridge concludes that there is, and there ought to be, an essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.

**Thirdly,** the use of metre is as artificial as the use of poetic diction, and if one is allowed, it is absurd to forbid the use of the other. Both are equally good sources of poetic pleasure.

**Fourthly**, Coleridge objected to the use of the word real. He writes:

"Every man's language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. For, 'real', therefore, we must substitute, 'ordinary' or lingua communis.**"Fifthly,** Coleridge pointed out that it is not correct that the best parts of our language are derived from Nature. Language is letter-moulded. The best words are abstract nouns and concepts. If the poet wants to use the rustic language, he must think like the rustics whose language is curiously inexpressive. It would be putting the clock back. Instead of progression it would be retrogression.

Wordsworth's theory of language has strong weaknesses, but its significance is also far-reaching. O. Elton concludes his discussion of the subject with the following admirable words:

"Wordsworth, led by his dislike of, 'glossy and unfeeling diction' ... was led to proclaim that speech as the medium desired; that he guarded this chosen medium not indeed from his own misapplication of it, but ... proved its nobility in practice; that he did not clearly say what he meant by, 'language', or see the full effect upon the diction by the employment of metre; that he did not rule out other styles ... he did not touch on their theoretic basis; and that in many of his actual triumphs, won within that sphere of diction which he does vindicate."