



- Study of Poetry

- Mathew Arnold

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- Wrote extensively on social and cultural issues, religion, and education
- □ Father of modern literary criticism
- □ Foremost poets and critics of the 19th century



- Arnold's most famous piece of literary criticism is his essay "The Study of Poetry." In this work, Arnold is fundamentally concerned with poetry's "high destiny;" he believes that "mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us" as science and philosophy will eventually prove flimsy and unstable



- At the root of Arnold's argument is his desire to illuminate and preserve the poets he believes to be the touchstones of literature, and to ask questions about the moral value of poetry that does not champion truth, beauty, valour, and clarity



- According to Arnold, The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay.
- There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve
- .Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry



- Victorian Criticism
- Art and Morality: Art for Art's sake-Carlyle Ruskin : Moral view should be the benchmark to judge the work of literature. Art should be for the betterment of life.
- Art and Aesthetic pleasure: Art for Art's sake-Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde: Aesthetic and artistic delight should be the benchmark to judge the work of literature. Art should be for delight and pleasure of mankind



- Mathew Arnold – The Critic
- The business of criticism, is not to find fault nor to display the critic's own learning or influence, but it is to know „the best which has been thought and said in the world“ and by using this knowledge to create a current of fresh and free thought.
- The Study of Poetry: The first essay in the 1888 volume was originally published as the general introduction to T.H. Ward's anthology, The English Poets ( 1880)
- His Classicism: He did not like the spasmodic expression of Romanticism. He advocated discipline in writing and recommended the classical writers.

- He says-We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto.
- More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry .If we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment.





- A Moralist
- As a critic Arnold is essentially a moralist, and has very definite ideas about what poetry should and should not be. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas, he says, is a poetry of revolt against life, and a poetry of indifference to moral ideas is a poetry of indifference to life.



- According to Arnold, Homer is the best model of a simple grand style, while Milton is the best model of severe grand style.
- Dante, however, is an example of both.
- □ I think it will be found that that the grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with a severity a serious subject.
- □ Aristotle says that poetry is superior to History since it bears the stamp of high seriousness and truth. If truth and seriousness are wanting in the subject matter of a poem, so will the true poetic stamp of diction and movement be found wanting in its style and manner. Hence the two, the nobility of subject matter, and the superiority of style and manner, are proportional and cannot occur independently.
- Arnold took up Aristotle's view, asserting that true greatness in poetry is given by the truth and seriousness of its subject matter, and by the high diction and movement in its style and manner, and although indebted to Joshua Reynolds for the expression grand style, Arnold gave it a new meaning when he used it in his lecture *On Translating Homer* (1861): □



- Future of Poetry
- The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, our race, as time goes on, will find an even surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken. But for poetry, the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches emotion to the idea,; the idea is a fact. The strongest part of our religion, to-day is its unconscious poetry. "We have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete, and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry



- Poetry is Criticism of Life-
- Arnold asserts that literature, and especially poetry, is, 'Criticism of life'. - In poetry, this criticism of life must conform to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty Truth and seriousness of matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitutes a criticism of life



- Key components of Poetry
- Thus, the superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner



- Even Chaucer, in Arnolds 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

- Return to Classical values
- Arnold believed that a modern writer should be aware that contemporary literature is built on the foundations of the past, and should contribute to the future by continuing a firm tradition.
- Quoting Goethe and Niebuhr in support of his view, he asserts that his age suffers from spiritual weakness because it thrives on self-interest and scientific materialism, and therefore cannot provide noble characters such as those found in Classical literature.
- He urged modern poets to look to the ancients and their great characters and themes for guidance and inspiration. Classical literature, in his view, possess pathos, moral profundity and noble simplicity, while modern themes, arising from an age of spiritual weakness, are suitable for only comic and lighter kinds of poetry, and don't possess the loftiness to support epic or heroic poetry. Arnold turns his back on the prevailing Romantic view of poetry and seeks to revive the Classical values of objectivity, urbanity, and architectonics. He denounces the Romantics for ignoring the Classical writers for the sake of novelty, and for their allusive writing which defies easy comprehension



- Touchstone Method– His general principles was - the "Touchstone Method" – which introduced scientific objectivity to critical evaluation by providing comparison and analysis as the two primary tools for judging individual poets.–
- Thus, Chaucer, Dryden, Pope, and Shelley fall short of the best, because they lack "high seriousness". Arnolds ideal poets are Homer and Sophocles in the ancient world, Dante and Milton, and among moderns, Goethe and Wordsworth.– Arnold puts Wordsworth in the front rank not for his poetry but for his "criticism of life".





- Fallacies of Real Estimate—
- Arnold while giving his touchstone method makes reader aware about the fallacy in judgment. He is of the view that historical fallacy and personal fallacy mars the real estimate of poetry.
- While expressing his views of the historic, the Personal, the Real he writes that ‘... in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read.
- But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious’.

# On Chaucer



- Arnold praises Chaucer's excellent style and manner, but says that Chaucer cannot be called a classic since, unlike Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, his poetry does not have the high poetic seriousness which Aristotle regards as a mark of its superiority over the other arts.

# On Dryden and Pope



- we can regard Dryden as the glorious founder, and Pope as the splendid high priest, of the age of prose and reason, our indispensable 18th century. Their poetry was that of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Arnold says that Pope and Dryden are not poet classics, but the prose classics of the 18th century.

# On Thomas Gray



- As for poetry, he considers Gray to be the only classic of the 18th century. Gray constantly studied and enjoyed Greek poetry and thus inherited their poetic point of view and their application of poetry to life. But he is the scantiest, frailest classic since his output was small.

# On Robert Burns



- Like Chaucer, Burns lacks high poetic seriousness, though his poems have poetic truth in diction and movement.● Also like Chaucer, Burns possesses largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity. But instead of Chaucers fluidity, we find in Burns a springing bounding energy.
- Chaucers benignity deepens in Burns into a sense of sympathy for both human as well as non-human things, but Chaucers world is richer and fairer than that of Burns.● Sometimes Burns poetic genius is unmatched by anyone. He is even better than Goethe at times and he is unrivalled by anyone except Shakespeare.

# On Shakespeare



- • Praising Shakespeare, Arnold says In England there needs a miracle of genius like Shakespeare's to produce a balance of mind. This is praise tempered by a critical sense. In a letter he writes. I keep saying Shakespeare, you are as obscure as life is.●
- In his sonnet On Shakespeare he says;● Others abide our question. Thou are free./ We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,/ Out- topping knowledge.

# Criticism of his viewpoint



- Arnolds criticism of life is often marred by his naive moralizing, by his inadequate perception of the relation between art and morality, and by his uncritical admiration of what he regarded as the golden sanity of the ancient Greeks.– For all his championing of disinterestedness, Arnold was unable to practice disinterestedness in all his essays.–
- In his essay on Shelley particularly, he displayed a lamentable lack of disinterestedness. Shelley’s moral views were too much for the Victorian Arnold.– In his essay on Keats too Arnold failed to be disinterested. The sentimental letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne were too much for him. But Arnolds insistence on the standards and his concern over the relation between poetry and life make him one of the great modern critics

# Criticism of his viewpoint



- • George Saintsbury: *A History of English Criticism*: “all literature is the application of ideas of life and to say that poetry is the application of ideas to life under conditions fixed for poetry, is simply a vain repetition.
- • T.S.Eliot: ‘His observation that ‘poetry is criticism of life’ is repeating Aristotle. Nothing novel is contributed as a critic.’





- Thank you  
for your patient listening

# Literary Criticism-Tragedy and Comedy

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# Tragic and Comic Atmosphere:

The atmosphere of tragedy is dull and serious.

Comedy deals with mirthful and light.

“Purges the emotions through pity and terror”.

Pure Tragedy and pure Comedy.

Two elements are intermingled.

Comic interludes in tragedies, short time.

Tragedies may begin happily and end unhappily. Begin with unhappily and end happily.

Realities of life.

Gloomy in tragedy and bright in comedy.

Both gives pleasure.

Tragedy gives pleasure in a lofty order.

Level far above the petty interests and troubles of everyday life. It feels exalted, rather than distressed.

According to Milton's: “Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail or knock the breast”.

# Tragedy purified the feelings, comedy refined the conduct;

- One raised morally and spiritually, social failings.
- Tragedy was supposed to fulfill on the Athenian stage.
- The Story, in tragedy as in comedy, is usually allowed to convey its own moral, though it sometimes stated at the end of the play by one of the characters.
- Wrong does not triumph.
- Good comes out of evil.
- The chorus represents the violent physical action.
- The Romantic tragedy is built on a different plan.
- Romantic tragedy is written not a set pattern.
- The Homer tragedy specializing in scenes of violence and cruelty.
- The Heroic tragedy deals with the exploits
- The she Tragedy from a central female figure.
- The Domestic tragedy aims at the portrayal of middle class life.

# Types of Comedy:

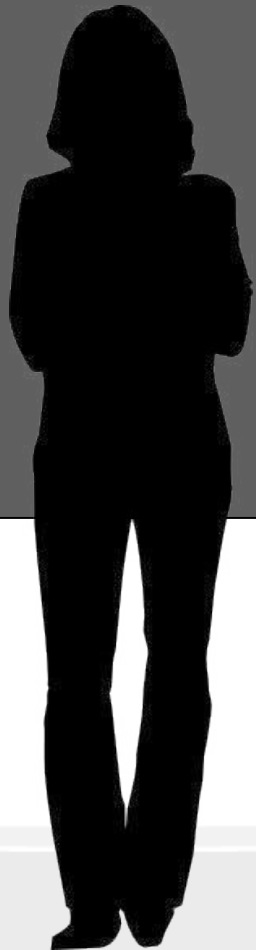
- Comedy may be classical or romantic: classical by Ben Jonson Restoration play writers
- The Romantic by Shakespeare.
- The humour comedy of Ben Jonson; The Restoration comedy of Intrigue, the comedy of manners.
- The gentel comedy ridiculing society, life sentimental comedy persenting melodramatic.
- Comedy of dialogue, makes action and incidents.
- The language and atmosphere remain away from the ordinary life.
- Verse both tragedy and comedy.
- Shakespeare's comedies are written in blank verse.
- Verse came to be reserved for tragedy.
- Comedy confined to prose.
- Naturalism was ultimately victorious
- Modern drama is generally in prose art form.

# Types of Tragedy:

- Tragedy can be classified into two types:
- From or structure and matter or theme.
- Tragedy has assumed only two forms: classical and Romantic.
- The main features of the classical type, three unities and the chorus.
- The three units are unity of action, place and time
- The plot should either be pure tragic or pure comic and no sub-plot.
- The chorus is the noteworthy elements in Greek Tragedy.
- It consisted of a body of actors.
- The chorus report what happened from time to time.
- Remained fairly remote from ordinary life

# Literary Criticism-Feminist Criticism

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# Presentation Outline



Feminism and feminist criticism



Feminist criticism and **the role of  
theory**



Feminist criticism and **language**



Feminist criticism and  
**psychoanalysis**




Woman's role: *Wuthering Heights*

Questions


Works cited






# Feminism and feminist criticism

- The “women’s movement” of the 1960s: a renewal
  - ✓ Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792)
  - ✓ Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929)
- The direct product of the women’s movement of the 1960s
- The movement realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature
  - ✓ Not an off-shoot or a spin-off from feminism
  - ✓ But one of its most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes



# Feminism and feminist criticism

- The representation of women in literature: socialization
  - ✓ Toril Moi's explanation
    - Feminist: A political position
    - Female: A matter of biology
    - Feminine: A set of culturally defined characteristics
  - ✓ 19<sup>th</sup>-century fiction: the focus of interest is on the heroine's choice of marriage partner, which will decide her ultimate social position.
- 1970s: exposing "mechanisms of patriarchy"
  - ✓ The cultural "mind-set" in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality (male writers constructed typical images of women)
  - ✓ Elaine Showalter: "andro-texts" → "gynotexts"



# Feminism and feminist criticism

- 1980s
  - ✓ Feminist criticism became much more eclectic (drew upon other criticism)
  - ✓ Attacking male versions of the world → Exploring the nature of the female world and outlook.
- Elaine Showalter: the history of women's writing
  - ✓ Feminine phase (1840-1880): imitated
  - ✓ Feminist phase (1880-1920): maintained
  - ✓ Female phase (1920 onwards): looked particularly at...
- Three particular areas: theory, language, psychoanalysis




# Feminist criticism and the role of theory

- A major division within feminist criticism has concerned disagreements about the amount and type of theory.
  - ✓ **Anglo-American version of feminism**: more skeptical about recent critical theory, and more cautious in using it. (close reading and explication of individual literary texts)
  - ✓ **English feminist criticism**: tends to be “socialist feminist” in orientation. (cultural materialism and Marxism)
  - ✓ **French feminists**: language and psychology (the literary text is never primarily a representation of reality.)




# Feminist criticism and language

- Do women have any specific language form?
- Virginia Woolf: language use is gendered
- A “woman’s sentence”: the clauses are linked in looser sequences, rather than carefully balanced and patterned as in male prose.
- Helene Cixous, French theorist: *écriture féminine*
  - ✓ It is associated with the feminine, and facilitating the free play of meanings within the framework of loosened grammatical structures.



# Feminist criticism and psychoanalysis

- Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969)
  - ✓ it condemns Freud as a prime source of the patriarchal attitudes against which feminists must fight.
- Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974)
  - ✓ a defense for Freud against Millett.
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)
  - ✓ "One is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman."

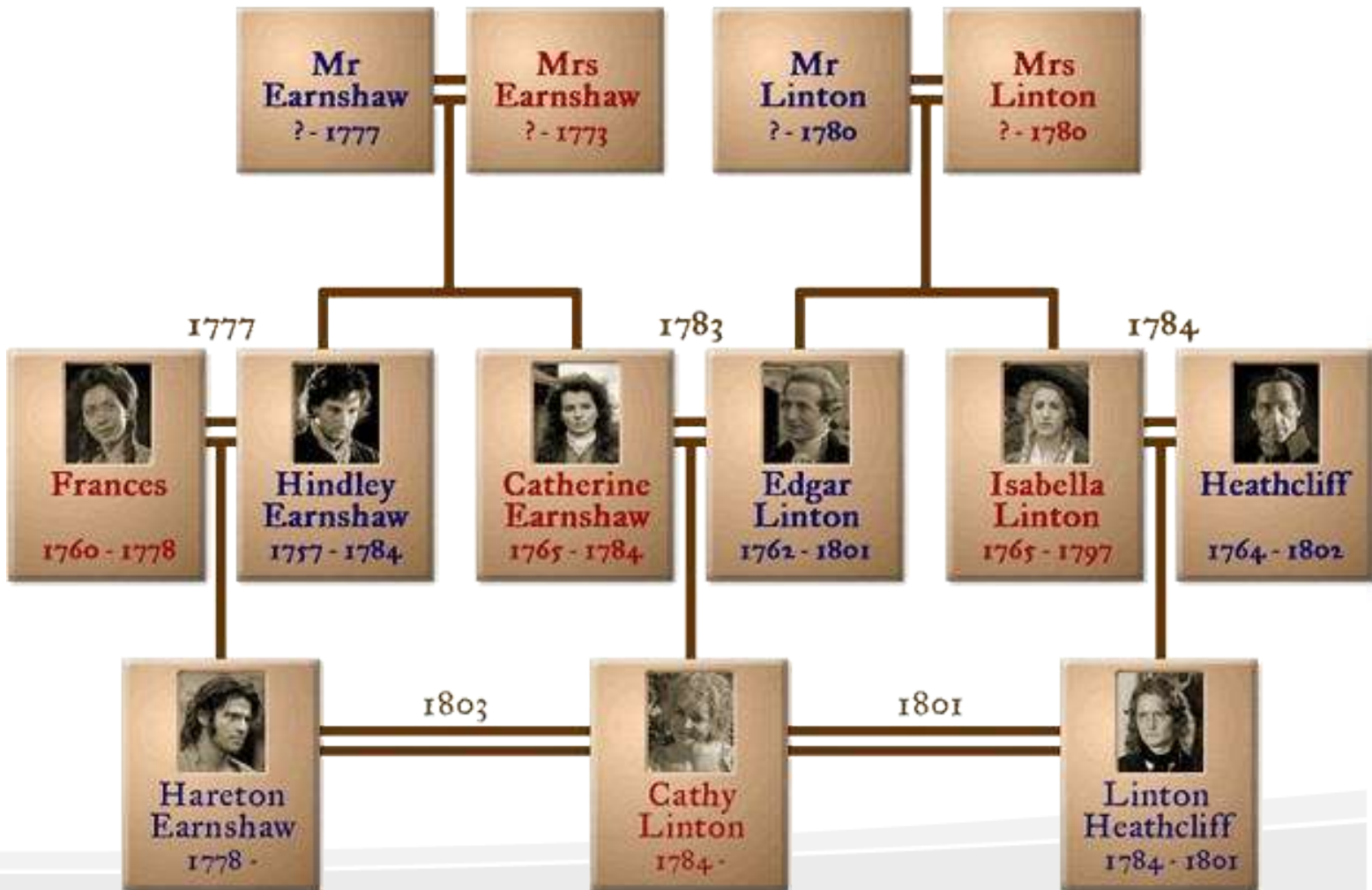


# Woman's role: *Wuthering Heights*

- Gilbert and Gubar's strategy with Bronte's novel: a female version of the male form
  - ✓ **In male form**: the **hero**'s growth to manhood is traced, as a process of "**triumphant self-discovery**", whereby an identity is discovered and a mission in life conceived and embarked upon.
  - ✓ **In female form**: the **heroine**'s growth to womanhood records a process of "**anxious self-denial**", this being the "ultimate product of a female education."



# Woman's role: *Wuthering Heights*



# Woman's role: *Wuthering Heights*

- Catherine: she does not know her own name, and therefore cannot know either who she is or whom she is destined to be.
- The process: “social castration”
  - ✓ Leave behind all her instinctive preferences, signified by the Heights
  - ✓ Take on an alien attitude, signified by Thrushcross Grange
  - ✓ In order to achieve acceptability and femininity...



# Woman's role: *Wuthering Heights*

- The marriage with Edgar Linton: locks Catherine into a social system which denies her autonomy
- In Thrushcross Grange: Catherine represses her desire and stays in “reason”
- The return of Heathcliff: the return of her true self's desires





# Questions

- Do women/men have any specific language form?
- Do you agree that women are “defined” or “constructed” by society/men? If not, then who/what defines women? (language?)
- Are the terms such as “male/female”, “hero/heroine”, “history/herstory” the products of feminism? Do they strive for a gender balance in language?
- If a man concerns about female issues, and makes great contributions in this field, can he be called as a “feminist”? (*The Guy’s Guide to Feminism* by Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman) (ex. abolitionist)

