1

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR" – ROLAND BARTHES

Unit structure :

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to familiarize the learners with the basic tenets of structuralist and poststructuralist literary theories. It also aims to impart the learners with the knowledge of Roland Barthes' views on text and authorship.

1.1 INTRODUCTION: SEMIOTICS, STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Semiotics is the science of signs, verbal and nonverbal. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, who uses the term "semiology" to describe his enterprise, a sign is composed of a signifier (an acoustic image) and a signified (a concept or meaning), the relationship between the two being arbitrary and conventional. Language is a system of differences without any positive terms. Semiotics holds that all linguistic and social phenomena are texts, and the object is to reveal the underlying codes and conventions that make them meaningful. Claude Levi-Strauss applies semiotics to cultural anthropology; Jacques Lacan applies it to Freudian psychoanalysis; Michel Foucault, to the history of disease, insanity, and sexuality; and Roland Barthes, to fashion, photography, wrestling, food, and so on.

Structuralism is a theory of literature that focuses on the codes and conventions that undergird all discourse and on the system of language as a functioning totality. This system which Ferdinand de Saussure calls langue, is "the whole set of linguistic habits which allow an individual to understand and to be

understood." Anticausal and antiphilological, structuralism deliberately ignores the historical origins of the various elements of language, the external context of linguistic acts, the agents who use language, and the individual speech acts themselves (parole). Structuralism sees language as a system of differences without any positive terms, embraces the arbitrariness and conventionality of the sign, brackets any consideration of the referent, and generates a vocabulary of oppositions, all of which are more or less synonymous: langue and parole, synchrony and diachrony, system and event, signifier and signified, code and message, metaphor and metonymy, paradigm and syntagm, selection and combination, substitution and context, similarity and contiguity. In each case, the first term is privileged. Although Saussurian linguistics is its paradigm, what is of interest is how structuralism analogically extends Saussure's terms into the analysis of literature. Roland Barthes provides a good example. "Literature" Barthes writes, "is simply a language, a system of signs. Its being [être] is not in its message, but in this 'system.' Similarly, it is not for criticism to reconstitute the message of a work, but only its system, exactly as the linguist does not decipher the meaning of a sentence, but establishes the formal structure which allows the meaning to be conveyed." Rather than interpreting the meaning or value of a work, the critic examines the structures that produce meaning. The intentionality of the author is thereby disregarded; language and structures – not the consciousness of an author or the willed verbal acts that emanate from it – generate meaning.

Poststructuralism is a critical theory that uses the concepts of Saussurian linguistics (sign, signifier, signified, langue, parole, and so forth) and the structuralist application of these terms to the study of literature as a system of signs for the purposes of subverting or deconstruction these concepts and centrality of meaning. Poststructuralism is a blanket term and refers to diverse writings such as the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, the late criticism of Roland Barthes, the psychoanalytic revisionism of Jacques Lacan, the feminist criticism of Gayatri Spivak, and so forth.

1.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roland Gerard Barthes was a renowned essayist and social and literary critic whose writings on semiotics – the scientific study of symbols and signs – helped establishing poststructuaralism and opened new avenues in literary theory. In 1976, Barthes became the first person to hold the chair of Literary Semiology at the Ecole de France. His outstanding works include *Writing Degree Zero*, *Mythologies*, S/Z and *The Pleasure of the Text*. Other leading

radical French thinkers such as Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida influenced or were influenced by Barthes.

Barthes' ideas are offered as alternatives to the methods of traditional literary studies and they have had a considerable following in the academic world of 1960s and 70s. According to Barthes, classical literary criticism has never paid any attention to reader as a subject who negotiates the signs in a text. He advocates for multi level – nearly playful – literary criticism based on the theoretical position that the structural elements of the text point to contradictions and paradoxes.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE ESSAY

Roland Barthes, a renowned poststructuralist is associated with deconstruction and semiology. Incidentally, poststructuralism, which is considered as an extension and re-working of structuralism, makes certain statements about language. It indicates that language is a slippery medium and hence no truth can be referred to in language. This argument is based on the theoretical premise that words, which are the signs in a language, may have definite number of signifiers but infinite number of signifieds. This theory indicates that no text can claim to have single meaning or theological meaning and that it is basically pluralistic, creating a semantic free play. One can say that poststructuralism generates a linguistic anxiety which calls into question all definite meanings. Roland Barthes, who started as a structuralist, eventually moved into this theoretical position. His major writings in the 1960s and 1970s question both structuralism and western philosophy which are controlled by binary logic. His seminal essay 'Death of the Author', written in 1968, is a classic example of his engagement with poststructuralism, semiotics and deconstruction.

Barthes, who belongs to the tradition of French Academic Criticism, questions the validity of literary history by asserting that the history of literature is often mistaken for the history of authors. He claims that lexias (small units of meaning/sense) carry many different meanings simultaneously on different levels as they are taken from different cultural sources. His basic argument is that text is not a site of definite meaning but a location wherein meanings blend and clash to generate a polysemi.

Barthes opens the essay with a quote from Balzac's novel, *Sarrasine* where the author offers a description of a "castrato disguised as a woman" (Lodge: 162): "This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries,her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious

sensibility." (Lodge:162) Barthes' concern here is with "Who is speaking thus" (163) in the novel: the "hero of the story" (163)? "Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of woman" (163) "Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity" (163)? "Is it universal wisdom" (163)? "We shall never know" (163), he responds for "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral space . . . where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost" (163). When "writing begins" (163), he argues, the "voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death" (163).

In other cultures, Barthes claims, the "responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his genius" (163). The concept of the author is historically-and culturally-specific, he argues, the product, that is, of a specific historical stage of a particular culture: the early modern period of Western Europe. The notion of the Author is "a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'" (164). It is, he contends, only "logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author" (164) who continues to predominate in "histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, . . . in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs" (164). The "image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions" (164). Literary criticism, he argues, still consists for the most part in seeking an "*explanation* of a work . . . in the man or woman who produced it" (164). Such a view is predicated upon the assumption that a literary work is "always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the *author* 'confiding' in us" (164).

Barthes argues that ancient literature never emphasized on the personality of author. He also explains how certain French writers were trying to unsettle the author from the centre of the text. He talks about Stephane Mallarme who had first tried to substitute author's power with the power of language. Mallarme had maintained that it is the language that speaks and not the authors. Barthes also mentions Paul Valery who had made an attempt to attack subjective interpretations of texts and also the critical thought based on the theory of interiority or self. He had mentioned that self, subjectivity or interiority, is a mere superstition as it is only a verbal condition. However, Barthes is severely critical of New

Criticism though this school of criticism is largely analytical and objective. He argues that New Criticism fails to remove the author from the study and identifies the text with the author. Barthes also comments on surrealism. He partly appreciates the surrealists' experiments with language though he believes that the surrealists' claim to subvert the code or norm of language cannot be accepted. Barthes' argument is that every writer is located within language and that no code can be subverted; it can only be played upon.

Equally important, the author is thought to "*nourish* the book" (164) and to be "in the same relation of antecedence to the work as a father to his child" (164), which is to say that he "exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it" (164). However,

> *writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say; rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense, in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered – something like the *I declare* of kings or the *I sing* of very ancient poets. (165)

Modern texts must be conceptualised, consequently, as 'Authorless'. In lieu of the Author, Barthes speaks of the "scriptor" (165) who neither precedes nor 'fathers' the text. Rather, s/he is born

> simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*. (165)

Barthes considers writing as linguistic process. He explains that linguistically author is never more than the instance of writing i.e. a writer becomes a writer only in the moments of using language. This also means that the relation between author and the text is not cause and effect. Barthes is of the opinion that language has no person or personal identity but only a subject. Subject is the one who uses language but not the one who creates language. Hence, Barthes' argument is that language can never implicate subjectivity, self, originality or genius. This would also mean that writing is a neutral exercise in language and the ideas generated in

a text are the ideas inherent in a language. Barthes makes the famous statement that an author is just the shadow of his book and instead of writer a scriptor is born. Scriptor can be an individual who inscribes others' text on a medium which is readily available.

As mentioned earlier, Barthes believes that text has no single meaning. This is largely because that once the text is written, it belongs to the domain of language. Since language doesn't belong to any individual, the text too doesn't belong to any individual. This would mean that the author loses the authorial control over the single meaning. Once the author loses the control over single meaning, the readers will be able to detect many meanings and even paradoxes and contradictions. This marks the metaphorical death of the author when the text disowns the author.

According to Barthes, a text which is a linguistic construct has a multi-dimensional space in which varieties of writings, taken from different cultural sources blend and clash. What Barthes means here is that when a writer uses language, he also draws upon the different voices, quotes and ideas which are there in the language itself. It also means that there are voices and text of other writers in every text that is written. This leads to the famous statement of Barthes – "Text is a tissue of quotations."

Barthes is also of the opinion that in the process of writing, the writer draws his ideas from different cultures and hence, the text is not a unified expression of meaning but possibly an inter-textual pastiche. Hence, he also believes that any claim to understand the text fully is unreliable. He argues that it is necessary to question the role of the critic in the light of this awareness. He indicates that conventional schools of criticism – biographical, romantic, or even New Criticism – try to discover the author beneath the text. Once the author is discovered, the critic believes that the text is explained. Barthes proposes a different approach and he says that literature and criticism are controlled by the author and, even worse, by the critic. The new sensibility that Barthes points out is that there is nothing to be deciphered in the text but it should be disentangled from the grasp of authors and critics.

The final argument in the essay is that a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination i.e. the reader ultimately becomes more important than the author. Reader, according to Barthes, is outside the domains of history, biography and psychology and shares only the language with the author. Such a reader is not concerned with the personality or the genius of the author. Finally, Barthes comes back to the quote from Balzac and says that these views are not of anyone in particular; their source is language itself.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Within the traditional schema of the literary work, the author is conceptualised as the father to the work. Barthes points out that it may in fact be the other way around. What we know about the author is less the origin of the text than the effect of what we read there. We cannot confirm the meaning of a text by reference to the putative life of the writer; indeed, what we know about the writer is precisely what we can deduce from the text. The text, paradoxically, gives birth to the writer in this way. Barthes concludes that the primary determiner of meaning in the text is the reader who does not just passively ingest the writer's intention. Rather, the reader is the active producer of meaning who arrests the play of signifiers in the manner that he or she sees fit.

1.5 KEY TERMS

Semiology, Polysemi, Intertextuality, Pastiche.

1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.I Say if the following statements are true or false
1. According to Roland Barthes, it is language and not the author, which controls the meaning in a text.
2. Barthes observes that every literary text has a definite meaning.
3. "Death of the Author" is an attack on traditional theories and criticism.

Q.II Define the following:
1. Poststructuralism
2. Pastiche
3. Semiology
4. Polysemi

Q.III Answer the following:
1. Explain the poststructuralist argument in Roland Barthes "Death of the Author"
2. What does Barthes mean by the expression "Death of the Author"? Discuss.
3. "Text is a tissue of quotations". Explain Barthes' statement in the light of the essay that you have studied.

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2

"SIMULACRA AND SIMULATIONS"– JEAN BAUDRILLARD

Unit structure :

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to familiarize the learners with the essay of Jean Baudrillard on simulacra and simulations. This unit also aims to make the learners understand Baudrillard's views on postmodernism, reality and society.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, technology and human ingenuity have made it possible to create all kinds of fakes and simulations that are so realistic. The process is already so far advanced that, today, a substantial part of our surroundings is made up of objects and images and people that appear to be something other than what they are.

The sheer number of simulations that now exist and their realism is inevitably changing not only our surroundings, but our psychology and behaviour. One of the most important changes can be found is the fact that we now routinely experience simulation confusion, in which we mistake realism for reality and think some of these fakes and simulations really are what they imitate. We experience simulation confusion when we receive an advertisement in the mail that is disguised as an official notice, and, at first, fall for it and assume it is an official notice. Many thinkers deem that simulation is a symptom of the postmodern society.

2.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (JEAN BAUDRILLARD)

Jean Baudrillard (1927 - 2007) was one of the foremost French literary theorists and intellectual figures of the contemporary era whose writings combine philosophy, social theory and cultural metaphysics. His writings reflect on the key events of the epoch. As a sharp critic of contemporary society, culture and intellectual climate, Baudrillard is considered as a major proponent of French postmodern theory. His prolific writing, reflected in more than 30 books, carry insightful commentaries on class, gender, race, structure of modern society, postmodern consumerism, the world of media and the technology-driven society; particularly interesting are Baudrillard's views on the impact of new media, information technology and cybernetic communication in the creation of a different social order.

Baudrillard has been identified as a cult figure in postmodern theory and his analysis of culture and philosophy has given him the status of an original theorist. He also associated himself with the French Left in the 1960s by opposing French and the US intervention in the Algerian and Vietnamese wars. His first book was *The System of Objects* (1968) followed by another work, *The Consumer Society* (1970). These early works of Baudrillard deal with semiology and they explain how objects are encoded with the system of signs and meanings that make contemporary media and consumer societies. These works also deal with advertising, packaging, display fashion, emancipated sexuality, mass media and culture in the wake of the multiplied commodities and the abundance of signs and spectacles. Baudrillard claims that commodities are bought and displayed for both their sign value and their use value.

Baudrillard also has an ambivalent relationship with classical Marxism. On one hand he has expressed the Marxian critique of commodity production and on the other hand he fails to discuss the potential of the working class in the consumer society.

Baudrillards “Simulation and Simulacra” announces a rupture between modern and postmodern societies. This essay marks his departure from modern social theory to indicate that the modern societies are organized around the production and consumption of commodities while postmodern societies are organized around simulation and the play of images and signs. He indicates that postmodernism is a situation in which codes, models and signs are the organizing forms of new social order where simulation rules. According to him, postmodern society is a society of simulation in which identities are constructed by the appropriation of images, codes and models. He also argues that

economics, politics, social life and culture are all governed by the mode of simulation. In Baudrillard's view, codes and models determine how goods are consumed and used, politics that unfold culture is produced and day to day life is lived. Baudrillard's vision of the postmodern universe is one of hyper reality in which entertainment, information and communication technologies provide more intense experiences than those of ordinary day to day life. According to him, the realm of hyper-real, created by media simulations of reality, amusement parks like the Disney Land, malls, consumer fantasy lands and TV Sports are more real than the real. In such a world, he observes, models, images and codes of hyper real come to control thought and behavior. He indicates that in the postmodern world, individuals escape from the 'desert of the real' for the ecstasies of hyper reality made by the computer, media and technology-driven experience. In this world, subjectivities are lost and the new form of experience emerges that renders previous social theories and politics irrelevant.

Other significant works of Baudrillard include *The Mirror of Production* (1973), *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1973), *Fatal Strategies* (1990), *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993), *The Transparency of Evil* (1993), and *Screened Out* (2002). With all these works, Baudrillard has raised a few questions on classical philosophy and social theory. These works have also proposed theoretical strategies on writing literary forms culture, modernity and postmodernity.

2.2 "SIMULACRA AND SIMULATIONS" – AN OVERVIEW

"Simulacra and Simulation", a path breaking philosophical statement by Jean Baudrillard was published in 1981. This work is known for linkages and signs and how they relate to the contemporary society. In this essay, Baudrillard argues that human beings have started replacing reality and meaning with symbols and signs and consequently, what is taken as reality is actually a simulation of reality. According to Baudrillard, simulacra refer to the signs of culture and communication media that create the reality human beings perceive. This reality is a world saturated with imagery, marked with audio visual media and commercial advertising. Baudrillard maintains that these simulacra of the real surpass the real world and thus become hyper real – a world that is more real than real, preceding the real. According to Baudrillard, apathy and melancholy dominate human perception in the world and they begin undermining Nietzsche's feeling of resentment.

Baudrillard illustrates his basic arrangement using a fable drawn from the work of Jorge Louis Borges. In it ,a map is created

in a great empire that is so detailed that it is as large as the empire itself. The actual map grows and decays as the empire itself is conquered and becomes a lost territory. When the empire crumbles, all that is left is the map. In Baudrillard view, it is the map that human beings are living in, the simulation of reality and it is a reality that is crumbling away from disuse.

The basic premise of Baudrillards simulacra and simulation is the statement –

> "the simulacrum is never that concedes the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true." (Baudrillard 429)

Incidentally, the concept of simulacra or simulacrum was already in circulation in French philosophical thought like that of Giles Deleuze before the publication of Baudrillards work. Baudrillard uses 'simulacra' to indicate material image which appears as something else without having the features or essence of that something. This concept is similar to plateau's objection to artistic representation that replaces the real. In his essay, Baudrillard makes the readers think as to what happens in a world which blocks all access to the real and in which only simulacra and simulations exist. It is also essential to understand the range of implications of the terms – simulations and simulacra. Merriam Webster dictionary defines simulation as a counterfeit or the imitative representation of the functioning of one system or process by means of the functioning of another. It is also defined as an examination of a problem not subject to direct experimentation. Simulacrum, Webster dictionary defines, as an image or representation or as an insubstantial semblance of something.

According to Baudrillard, simulation is the condition of the world in which we live. He maintains that simulations take over our relationship with real life, fostering a kind of hyper-reality which is a copy that has no original. He argues that this hyper reality happens when the difference between reality and representation collapses and we are not able to perceive an image as reflecting anything other than a symbolic exchange of signifiers in culture, not the real world. Baudrillard goes on to describe three different orders of simulacra. The first is in which the reality is represented by the image as a map represents the territory. The second order of simulacra is the one in which the distinction between reality and representation is blurred. The third order, he observes, is in which the relationship between reality and representation is replaced with the simulation. Reality thus is lost in favour of a hyper reality. To prove his point that the contemporary era is that of simulations, Baudrillard furnishes the examples of Disney Land and Watergate. He illustrates the point that these locations produce a hyper reality

that let us believe that we can tell reality from representation, the real from the imaginary and the copy from its original.

Though it is a debatable stand whether or not we live in a world of simulacra, the term is very important in the light of how we perceive medium. Baudrillard's belief is that the concept of simulation is vital in shaping our notion of the real and the original, revealing the preoccupation of media, not as a means of communication but as a means of representation. When media reach a certain advanced stage, they integrate themselves into daily 'real experience to such an extent that the unmediated sensation is indistinguishable from the mediator. Consequently, the simulation becomes confused with its source. However, Baudrillard reminds that simulation is different from the image and the icon in the active nature of its representation. What are represented are not copies of static entities but rather the process of feeling and experiencing themselves. Beginning as a primarily visual representation, the simulacrum (the image of a simulation) has been extended theoretically to indicate the contemporary media culture.

The terms simulation and simulacra have subtly different meanings. Oxford English Dictionary defines simulation as "the action or practice of simulation with intent to deceive". It also considers simulation "as a false assumption or a display, a surface resemblance or imitation of something." It also extends the definition by indicating that it is "the technique of imitating the behavior of some situation or process... by means of suitably analogous situation or apparatus".

All these definitions convey the ideas that simulation is a set of action and it is deceitful in its display. In comparison, simulacrum is defined in Oxford English Dictionary as "a material image, made as a representation of some deity person or thing". It is also defined "as something having merely a form or appearance of a certain thing without possessing its substance or proper qualities". The same dictionary expands the definition as "a mere image, a spacious imitation or likeness of something". These definitions indicate that like simulation, simulacrum bears a resemblance to the thing that it imitates only on the surface level, but contrary to simulation's mimicry of a process or situation, simulacrum is a static entity, a mere image.

Baudrillard writes that an effective simulation will not merely deceive one into believing in a false entity but rather signifies the destruction of an original reality that it has replaced. He observes:

> "to simulate is not simply to feign...
> Feigning or dissimulation leaves the

> reality intact... Whereas simulation threatens the difference between true and false, between real and imaginary" (Baudrillard: 1984: 237).

Baudrillard's view is that reality is so nebulous though rooted in terms like truth and real and an effective simulation will destroy it completely, leaving the deceived in a world without meaning. Simulation, for Baudrillard, brings human beings into a circular world in which the sign is not exchanged for meaning, but merely for another sign. He elaborates this point:

> …what if God himself could be simulated, that is to say reduced to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless... Never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself in an uninterrupted circuit. (Baudrillard: 1984: 239).

According to Baudrillard, what is simulated is what is mediated and vice-versa. Those experiences in real life that are explicitly presented as mediated are classified as a higher order of simulation, one which simulates simulating too falsely suggests a real that exists outside the surface of truth. Disney Land, according to him, is the prime example of this phenomenon. He explains:

> Disney Land is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when infact the Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of hyper real and off – simulation". (Baudrillard: 1984: 240).

For Baudrillard, as there is nothing that is not simulated, everyday experiences of human beings are mediated through simulacra.

Baudrillard reminds the readers that the experience in a hyper real world is one in which media are not simply located in their own sealed spaces, but dispersed around human beings, in all forms of experience. His point is that there is no longer any medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffused and diffracted in the real. What he means is that the medium is no longer presented to human beings as a medium (in the sense of a mediator) and the diffuseness of the medium means that what the individual believes to be real is never unmediated. Life in a mediated world, according

to Baudrillard, is now spectralised and the events are filtered by the medium, creating the dissolution of television into life and the dissolution of life into television.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Baudrillard's philosophy implicates that a system of empty signs which signal the destruction of original reality has permeated into human society and sensibility. He also reveals the anxiety for the impending death of the real. His essay gains its significance in the wake of media like internet and video games which have proliferated the copies of the original. Baudrillard's theory on simulation and simulacra throw light into the postmodern age, specially on its politics and aesthetics of representation.

2.4 KEY TERMS

Simulation, Simulacra, Hyper-reality. Mediation

2.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

QI True or False

1. Simulation, according to Baudrillard, is same as the image or icon.

2. Simulation unlike simulacra, involves mimicry.

3. Hyper-reality and simulation are distinct features of postmodern age, according to Baudrillard.

4. Baudrillard's view on simulation agrees with Plato's view on representation.

5. Simulation and simulacrum bear resemblance to the thing that it imitates only on the surface level.

QII Define the following terms:

1. Simulation
2. Simulacra
3. Hyper-reality
4. Late capitalism
5. Postmodern era.

3

"THE POLITICS OF THEORY: IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS IN THE POSTMODERNISM DEBATE" – FREDRIC JAMESON

Unit structure :

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to introduce the readers to Fredric Jameson's views on Postmodernism. The unit also aims to explain the Marxist perspective on Postmodernism.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a term that is used in a variety of art forms, and across domains and disciplines. It is used in the contexts of architecture, visual art, popular culture, fiction, literary theory and social sciences. Tim Woods in *Beginning Postmodernism* explains the aesthetics of Postmodernism. He defines Postmodernism as:

> Aesthetic self-reflexivity, in which artifacts explore their own constitution, construction and shape (eg: novels in which narrators comment on narrative forms, or paintings in which an image is left unfinished, with `roughed-in' or blank sections on the canvas). (Woods: p-7)

Plurality is considered to be the characteristic feature of postmodernism. Self, truth and vision appear to be pluralistic and fragmented in postmodern expression. Tim Woods explains this aspect of postmodernism in the contexts of reason and identity:

> Postmodernism pits *reasons* in the plural – fragmented and incommensurable – against the universality of modernism and the long standing conception of the human self as a subject with a single, unified reason. The subject is the space demarcated by the `I', understood as a sense of identity, a selfhood, which is coherent, stable, rational and unified. Based upon this sense of individuality ('individuus' is the Latin word for 'undivided'), it is believed that people possess agency and can use their capacities to alter, shape and change the world in which they live. (Woods: 9 - 10)

Postmodern Theory is largely suspicious of the notion of unified coherence self, which is considered to be the foundation of rationality. Hence, it no longer believes in ideology or belief system.

3.2 FREDRIC JAMESON

Fredric Jameson is a famous American theorist who has worked extensively on Literary Theory, Marxism, Culture Studies and the relationship between art forms and ideology. Jameson positions himself as a Marxist analyst who tries to locate, like Georg Lukacs, the ideological apparatus that operates within the literary movements like Modernism and Postmodernism. Jameson provides his neo-Marxist perspectives in his works – *Marxism and Form*, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* and *The Politics of Postmodernism.* Jameson tries to deviate from conventional European models of literary theory by extending his interest in various cultural expressions like television serials, films, painting and architecture.

3.3 "THE POLITICS OF THEORY: IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS IN THE POSTMODERNISM DEBATE:" AN OVERVIEW.

Fredric Jameson who has taught at several American academic centres including Harvard, Yale and Duke University, has been generally considered as a leading proponent of Marxism in America. His works also reveal his grasp on structuralist and poststructuralist theories. One of the major concerns in Jameson's writing has been postmodernism. He analyses postmodernism in terms of its features and its socioeconomic context of late capitalism. Jameson's theory is that postmodernism is a product of consumer society and it reflects the ideology of multinational capitalism. Jameson's essay, "The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in Postmodernism Debate", is one of three influential articles he has published on the theme of postmodernism and its ideology. This essay, first published in 1984, explores the paradox of postmodern art which seems to be capable of generating advocacy and appropriation from politically reactionary and progressive critics. Jameson provides an in-depth Marxist analysis of the aesthetics and ideology of postmodernism.

Jameson begins the essay with the statement that the problem of postmodernism is both aesthetic and political. He also states that postmodernism symbolizes a social system which is structured on consumer society and capitalism. To prove these arguments, Jameson analyses the logical possibilities of various theories on modernism and postmodernism and the structure of the new commercial culture from which postmodernism emerges.

Jameson is of the opinion that art forms which are classified under postmodernism such as poetry of John Ashbery, music of John Cage and the painting of Andy Warhol are so varied in techniques and experiments that they reflect the same fragmentation of modernism. He also analyses the new narratives of William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Read to suggest that they produce what might be called as nostalgia art. Jameson also considers postmodern architecture of Robert Venturi, Michael Groove and Charles Moore to prove the point that architectural postmodernism is not a unified period style but rather a wide range of allusions to the styles of the past.

Jameson also maintains that the debate on style is also a debate on the politics of postmodernism. Jameson reminds that, as Ihab Hasan points out, postmodern style could be considered as anti-modernist. Jameson's opinion is that certain theorists like Tom Wolfe and Charles Jencks who are pro-postmodernists believe that postmodernism subverts modernist ideology. He says that Wolfe

and Jencks attack the utopian impulses of modernism, critiquing the reactionary cultural politics of James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. In the hands of Wolfe and Jencks, along with those of Hilton Kramer, postmodernism liberates people of responsibility of classical modernism by celebrating superficiality. Their stand is that postmodernism is fundamentally anti-middle class. However, Jameson reminds the reader that these theorists cannot disengage themselves completely from capitalism. He points out that the foundation of postmodernism is the bourgeoisie itself. Though it tries to reject the middle class values, he says that postmodernism repudiates and entertains the middle class and hence it has a symbiotic relationship with the capital.

Jameson also considers the theoretical positions of Jurgen Habermas, Francois Lyotard, Manfredo Tafuri and Hilton Kramer to classify them into pro-postmodernists and anti-postmodernists. Jameson explains that Habermas' view of postmodernism springs from his conviction that modernism attacks the middle class sensibility. Though Habermas critiques the utopian spirit of modernism, he refuses to consider postmodernism as enlightenment. Hence, Jameson believes that Habermas is a pro-modernist and anti-postmodernist. According to Jameson, both Tafuri and Lyotard are political figures and they have a commitment to older revolutionary tradition. While Lyotard endorses the supreme value of aesthetic innovation as a form of revolution, Tafuri has a Marxist framework to analyze postmodern art. Jameson also reminds the readers that Tafuri, despite declaring the traditional Marxist tradition, has affiliation with post-Marxism like Lyotard has. According to Jameson, Tafuri's Marxism is pessimistic and his judgement on postmodernism is largely conditioned by this pessimism. By analyzing the political positions held by the various theorists, Jameson comes to the point that postmodernism should not be merely understood on aesthetic grounds but also on its cultural and historical context. However, he doesn't believe in making any absolute moralizing judgments on postmodernism but rather believes that ideological judgements on postmodernism are necessary. He states that a judgement on ourselves and on cultural productions will enable one to grasp a present historical period. Jameson also takes the theoretical engagements on postmodernism that overlooks the complacencies of postmodernism and salutes the new forms in postmodernism. He argues that it is relevant to assess postmodernism as a new cultural production or as a social reconstruction of late capitalism.

Jameson's view is that, in the architectural context, postmodernism has refused the high modernist space by generating a radical disjunction from the spatial context of traditional art. He states that postmodernist buildings celebrate the insertion into the heterogeneous fabric of commercial strip and fast-

food landscapes of the contemporary American cities. These buildings, with their commercial icons and spaces, renounce the high modernist claim to innovation. Jameson's point is that this new architecture with its populist outlook emerges from a new commercial culture – beginning with advertisements and moving on to the formal packaging of all kinds from products to buildings to bestsellers and films. Jameson also considers postmodernism as an aesthetic entity that effaces the traditional distinction between high culture and mass culture. He also argues that it creates illusions and fantasies as any capitalist endeavor would. Jameson believes that postmodernism tries to alter the realm of authentic experience by altering the surrounding environment. Such an effort to create philistinism of *schlock* and *kitsch*, of commodification and of Readers' Digest culture is an effort to create the illusions of a new object world. According to him, B-grade Hollywood films, the Las Vegas strip, airport paperback books of popular biography, science fiction or fantasy novel are all the crucial symptoms of the same process.

In the final reckoning, the problem of postmodernism for Jameson is only a manifesto of a cultural mutation or commercial culture. He also believes that the postmodernist claim of having created a depoliticized society is not acceptable. He maintains that it is necessary to resist the cultural positions of postmodernism to locate oneself properly in both the present and the past.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Fredric Jameson clearly reveals his concern for the society and his Marxist leaning in the analysis of postmodernism. He also shows a strong resistance to accept the point of thinkers like Lyotard and Ihab Hassan that postmodernism is a verifiable socio-cultural reality. He also emphasizes the point that postmodernism, like modernism, is a capitalist cultural product.

3.5 KEY TERMS

Late Capitalism, Multinational Capitalism, Consumer Capitalism, Postmodernism, *schlock* and *kitsch*

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1 Say if the following statements are true or false

1. Fredric Jameson, though supports modernism, attacks postmodernism on its ideological ground.
2. Postmodernism, according to Jameson, is as varied as modernism in its manifestation.

3. Fredric Jameson provides a Marxist interpretation of postmodernism.
4. Jameson believes that postmodernism creates a depoliticized society.
5. Jameson believes that postmodernism tries to alter the realm of authentic experience by altering the surrounding environment.

Q.II Define the following:

1. Late Capitalism
2. Modernism
3. Postmodernism

Q.III Answer the following:

1. How does Jameson make a Marxist assessment of the aesthetic and political aspects of postmodernism?
2. Explain how Jameson evaluates various theoretical positions on modernism and postmodernism in the essay.

Unit-4

"FEMINISM AND CRITICAL THEORY" –
Gayatri Spivak

Unit structure :

4.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this unit is to familiarize the readers with basic concepts and terms used in Feminist Literary theories. It also aims to impart the learners with the knowledge of Gayatri Spivak's views on Feminism, Marx and Freud.

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO FEMINISM

Feminism is considered as an organized movement, which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres. Feminists, in general, believe that women are oppressed mainly due to their gender in the dominant ideology or patriarchy. Patriarchy is a system, which oppresses women through its social, economic, political institutions and cultural practices. Men, to maintain greater power over women have created boundaries and obstacles for women. Patriarchy also perpetuates the oppression of minorities and homosexuals. Various schools of Feminism like Radical Feminism; Liberal Feminism, Cultural Feminism and Socialist Feminism have advocated drastic changes in the power relation between men and women.

Feminist theory is an extension of Feminism that tries to interrogate gender bias through theoretical engagement. Feminist theories have developed largely under three main categories:

a. Theories having an essentialist focus, which include Psychoanalytic Feminism.

b. Theories aimed at defining and establishing a feminist literary canon or theories seeking to re-interpret and re-vision literature, culture and history. This branch includes Gynocriticism and Liberal Feminism.

c. Theories focusing on sexual difference and sexual politics. This group includes Gender Studies, Lesbian Studies, Cultural Feminism, Socialist Feminism and Queer Theory.

Simon De Beauvoir's study, *The Second Sex,* is generally considered to be the origin of feminist literary theory. Though Beauvoir's work is attacked for a flawed perception of her own body politics, it is nevertheless considered as a ground breaking book of feminist theory that interrogates the 'othering' of women by Western philosophy. However, merely unearthing women's literature did not ensure a prominent place for feminist theory. Hence, subsequent feminist theories were engaged in assessing and questioning number of preconceptions inherent in a literary canon dominated by male beliefs. Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader* (1978), Elaine Showalter's *Literature of Their Own* (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) are just a handful of many critiques that question cultural, sexual intellectual and / or psychological stereotypes about women.

4.2 KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS IN FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY

A discourse in Feminism or a feminist interpretation of cultural text invariably touches upon certain terms and concepts that are popularized by various branches of feminist literary theory. A basic understanding of these terms and concepts is integral in the study of feminist approaches to literature and cultural expressions.

Feminist Critique

According to Elaine Showalter, Feminist Critique is an interpretation of text from the feminist perspective to expose clichés, stereotypes and negative images of women, generally focusing on male literary and theoretical texts. Feminist Critique also calls attention to the gaps in literary history that has largely excluded writings by women. This approach which dominated feminist criticism first emerged in the 1970s and is strongly linked to the decade's political agendas. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, for example, connects the mis-treatment of women in fiction by Henry Miller and others to the oppression of women in a patriarchal society. Showalter suggests that by continuing to emphasize writings by men, the strategy of Feminist Critique remained largely dependent on the existing models of interpretation.

The main interest of Feminist Critique is to explore the extent of patriarchal ideology in literature, namely to explore the material forms of social, economic and political discrimination of women. Further, it examines the representations of women and homosexuals to show how gender, in contrast to biological sex, is culturally constructed and how; therefore, masculinity and femininity are depicted in literature.

Ecriture Feminine

This concept was mainly developed in the work of French feminist, Helene Cixous. She defines it as writing from / by the female body. Founded in part on Jacques Derrida's linguistic theories, it is a revolutionary concept that tries to explode the oppressive structures of the conventional, androcentric (male-centred) language and thought. According to Cixous, what makes *ecriture feminine* strong is the subversive and excessive character of female sexuality; like feminine sexuality, it is multiple instead of single, diffused instead of focused, oriented towards process instead of goal. Celebrating multiplicity and openness, *ecriture feminine* breaks apart the binary oppositions that organize masculine writing: head / heart, active / passive, culture / nature, father / mother. However, *ecriture feminine* has met with certain objections because it often seems to define femininity as a quality inherent in female biology and essentially opposed to masculinity thereby reinforcing the very distinction it tries to dismantle. Yet in French, the adjective *feminine* is ambiguous – referring both to biological sex (the female) and to cultural / historical gender (the feminine) – and this ambiguity is also present in the references to *ecriture feminine* by Cixous and others. Though it frequently invokes the images of the female body, *ecriture feminine* is sometimes defined as a product of culture and history as per instance, the idea that women learn to speak with and through their bodies more than men do. Thus, it can also be applied to describe a style of women-centred writing.

4.3 INTRODUCTION TO GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

Nigel Wood, the co-editor of *Modern Criticism and theory*: *A Reader* (1988) has rightly pointed out that it is particularly difficult to characterize the thinking of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak(1942-).He holds the view that Spivak not only introduced deconstructive critical strategies into literary criticism but also developed wider cultural analysis. Her introduction to the translation of Jacques Derrida's *De la Grammatologie* into English (1967; trans. 1976, as of Grammotology) offers the most cogent Third World feminist insight into the deconstruction's political agenda. Spivak's allegiance to the semantic associations of the alienation of the voices of the Third World Women cannot be ignored because it

points out inherent possible antagonisms between feminist, marxist and deconstructive readings.

In her seminal essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak points out how an exclusively textual route towards understanding non-western customs is necessary to correlate to occidental patterns of understanding. In tune with this essay, varied perspectives are highlighted in her 1986 essay "Feminism and Critical Theory". In this essay, she positions herself outside the theoretical debate to get at the material forces that give rise to particular brand of feminism.

4.4 "FEMINISM AND CRITICAL THEORY": AN OVERVIEW

In "Feminism and Critical Theory" Spivak embarks upon a series of comments on a few essentialist notions of 'woman' by articulating her thoughts on the issues and relationships intersecting feminism with Marxism, psychoanalysis and deconstruction. She begins her essay by enlisting her notions on feminism within the ambit of poststructuralist critical discourse. Such an analysis holds importance because the issues emerging from the above mentioned disciplines continue to interest people and the configurations arising out of these ideas continue to change. The essay progresses in four sections. The first section deals with the talk she gave several years ago. The second section is reflects her earlier work. The third section holds an intermediate moment. And finally the fourth section incorporates the present. Each section reflects her strong insights on beliefs about various critical debates. Although the essay is short, it is loaded with comprehensive arguments on feminism and critical theory.

The first section of the essay deals with the problems of essentialsing definitions and its relations to women in critical discourses. She states that no definition can be applied to both the genders – the only alternative to definition can be that of a polemical or provisional one. As definition reshapes itself in varied circumstances, it should not be misinterpreted as a kind of dichotomy. As a deconstrucinist, Spivak calls for a debate on the very enterprise of redefining the premises of any theory in literary criticism. She comments: " One, no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one wants to, one could go on deconstructing the opposition between man and woman, and finally that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself" (Spivak: 495).

Spivak's concerns on the politics of production of language is reflected in this essay wherein she propounds that most critical theory sees the text as a discourse of human science wherein the problem of the discourse of human science isclearly visible. In this

way, Spivak indicates: “In the general discourse of humanities, there is a sort of search for solution, where as in literary discourse there is a playing out of a problem as the solution, if you like”. (P- 495)

This argument is further elaborated in the way that the human discourse can be articulated in three shifting ‘concepts’: “language, world and consciousness”.(p.495) Spivak makes a point by stating that any world is organized through language: an expression that we cannot possess, for we are operated upon by those languages. This category of language then, embodies the categories of world and consciousness even as it is determined by them. Spivak comments: “A safe figure, seemingly outside of the language – (speech) – writing opposition, is the text – a weave of knowing and not-knowing which is what knowing is. (This organizing principle- language, writing, a text- might itself be a way of holding at bay a randomness incongruent with consciousness)” (P-495).

Spivak further advocates that theorists consider Marxian theory as texts of labour, production, circulation and distribution and Freud as a psychoanalyst. However, she claims that it is necessary to understand human textuality as something which represents the world and the self. She states: “This human textuality can be seen not only *as* world and self, *as* the representation of a world in terms of a self at play with other selves and generating this represention, but also *in* the world and self, all implicated in an intextuality”(PP.495-496). Hence, such a concept of textuality should not necessarily reduce the world to just texts, linguistics texts, books, criticism and teaching. Spivak critiques the tendency of the critical pracices that take literary text as offering a solution whereas. in reality, one should be awre of unavailability of a unified solution. In Spivak’s view Marx’s or Freud’s interpretations are seen in terms of evidence and demonstration. Spivak thus comments: “They seem to bring forth evidence from the world of man or man’s self, and thus prove certain kinds of truths about world and self”.(p.496).However, Spivak reminds that their depiction of self and world are based on inadequate evidence and she counters by an idea asserting that, “I would like to fix upon the idea of alienation in Marx and the idea of normality and health in Freud.” (p-496)

According to Spivak, one way of understanding Marx is in terms of use-value, exchange-value and surplus value. Marx’s notion of use value is that which is directly consumed by the agent. Exchange value is what can be achieved in terms of either labour power or money. Surplus value is considered to be more worthy because in the process of abstraction through exchange – the buyer of labour’s work gets more (in exchange) than the worker needs for subsistence.

In this context, Spivak interestingly allegorizes the relationship of a woman within the above triad parameter –"use", "exchange" and "surplus". She illustrates the case of a traditional woman in a given social situation. On one hand she is the one who produces more than subsistence and becomes a source of continuous production for man or capitalist who owns her or his labour power. Another view she holds is that the mode of production of housework is also not capitalist, hence such an analysis could be paradoxical. On the other hand, in relation to the contemporary woman is the one who seeks financial compensation for housework by abstracting use value into exchange value. It is in this bargain, Spivak argues that the situation of domestic workplace cannot relate to Marxian theory, which is considered as 'pure exchange '. In Spivak's point of view, the Marxian exigency leads to two queries: "What is the use-value of unremunerated woman's work for husband or family? Is the willing insertion into the wage structure a curse or a blessing? It is in this context Spivak confronts as to how would then one fight this idea, which is universal and patriarchal, that wages in fact are the only means of value-producing work? Nor does she quite agree with the saying that " Housework is beautiful." (496-497) Moreover, what would be the implications of leaving women outside the purview of capitalist economy only. In lighter vein, she adds that "Radical feminism can here learn a cautionary lesson from Lenin's capitulation to capitalism." (p.497) that nothing is more interesting than the idea of externalization or alienation because within this framework of capitalist system "the labour process externalizes and the worker is considered as a commodity"(p.497).

Having broached upon the earlier ideas, Spivak feels the need to elaborate the notion of reproduction with Marxian paradigm. She argues that a womb makes the woman an agent in any theory of production .But in matrilineal and patrilineal societies, "The man retains legal property rights over the product of a woman's body. On each separate occasion, the custodial decision is a sentimental questioning of man's right. The current struggle over abortion right has fore grounded this acknowledged agenda" (p-497).

Spivak also expresses the view that time has come to rework the theory of production and to interrogate Marx's view that women and children make desexualized labour force. She then calls for rewriting rules of economy and social elthics from a feminist point of view and questions essentialisations and Marx's transgression in relation to where "rules for humanity and criticism of socialites are based on inadequate evidence". (p.497) She then suggests, "that if the nature and history of abbreviation, labour and the production of property are reexamined in terms of women's work and childbirth, it can lead in to a reading of Marx beyond Marx".(497-498)

Spivak then comes to an idea where she expresses that it is wiser to move beyond Marx to Freud who wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud's outstanding study of "imagined", anticipated and avoided pain made observations on subject's history and theory. In this connection, Spivak unearths the relatively untouched and undefined concepts such as womb-envy as against Freud's Penis-envy. It is here she places on record the importance of womb as "a tangible place of production"(P.498) where there is pain in productivity and normality without sentimentalizing the pain of the subject in relation to childbirth, because "The opposition of pleasure and pain is questioned in the physiological normality' of woman" (p.498) as subtly figures in Freud's texts. It is here Spivak comes in and says that if one deconstructs the pain of man and women it operates differently. She aligns with Luce Irirgaray and admits that since the "womb is a place of the carrier and the carried which needs correction". Spivak also charts "the itinerary of womb-envy in the production of a theory of consciousness" and points out how "the idea of the womb as a place of production is avoided both in Marx and in Freud" (p.498) with exception of the American neo-Freudian, Erich Fromm, a prolific critic of on Freud's legacy.

Spivak takes the argument forward on Freud and says that her task is not to reject the idea of penis-envy but to avail the idea of womb-envy to define human psychology and production in society. She says "In Freud, the genital stage is pre-eminently phallic, not clitoral or vaginal. This particular gap is significant. The hysteron remains the place which constitutes only the text of hysteria. Everywhere there is a non-confrontation of the idea of the womb as a workshop, except to produce a surrogate penis" (p.498).

Spivak says that these are certain ideas of the world and self that circulate out Freudian and Marxist theoretical bases which need to be examined. In this context, Spivak opines that one should not mistake the evolution of the ideas of the theorists, or the world only with the purpose of appreciating a literary text because certain kinds of notions preexist in the world and consciousness of even the most 'practical' critic. Hence, she opines: "Part of the feminist enterprise might well be to provide 'evidence' so that these great male texts do not become great adversaries, or models from whom we take our ideas and then revise or reassess them. These texts must be rewritten so that there is new material for the grasping of the production and determination of literature within the general production and determination of consciousness and society." (p.499) Here, she means that after all both men and women who produce literature have general ideas of the world and consciousness in them which they cannot define.

It is with this judgment, Spivak asserts that any literature written by male or female are also governed by the general ideas of

the world and consciousness to which they shouldn't essentialize them. She concludes the first section with a reasoned argument establishing that the general currency of the understanding of society will change if one continues to research women's writing and their past in this manner, Spivak states:

> The kind of work I have outlined would infiltrate the male academy and redo the terms of our understanding of the context and substance of literature as part of the human enterprise. (p.499)

At the beginning of second section of the essay, Spivak observes the missing element in the earlier remarks with regards to the dimension of race. Spivak renews her interest and calls for sensitivity to race, gender and class. She goes on to add that in the case of American feminist, the chief problem is in the matter of identification of racism as constituted in America. She observes that the object of investigation should be not only the history of Third World women, but "the production, through the great European theories, often by way of literature, of the colonial object"(p.499).

Spivak then observes that as long as "American feminists understand 'history' as a positivistic empiricism that scorns "theory" (p.499) and become ignorant of its own, then it is for the 'Third World' to revisit theories of the First world intellectual practices and develop a reading method that is sensitive to gender, race and class.

Spivak's enquiry into gender is based on the premise that "Freud today involves a broader critique by offering a critique of his entire project. It is a critique of not only of Freud's masculism but also of nuclear-familial psychoanalyst theories of the constitution of the sexed subject." (P-499) This critique extends to alternate models of concern with the production of colonial discourses as well as most Western feminist challenges to Freud. She also asserts that the extended or corporate family is a socio-economic organization which interweaves sexual constitution with historical and political economy.

Spivak appreciates the efforts of Giles Deluze to locate family romance within the ambit of politico-economic domination and exploitation. Spivak, in this regard, considers her critique to be an argument within larger familial situation.

In the later part of the essay, Spivak openly proposes for a 'discourse of the clitoris' (P-500). She comments:

> In this interest of the broadening scope of my critique, I should like to reemphasize that the clitoris, even

> as I acknowledge and honour its irreducible physiological effect, is , in this reading, also a short-hand for women's excess in all areas of production and practice, an excess which must be brought under control to keep business going as usual.(p.500)

Further, Spivak's attitude towards Marxism takes into account the historical antagonism between Marxism and Feminism. Marxists at best have either dismissed or patronized women's struggle. Although the history of European women has been an opposition to Bolshevik and social Democrat women, Spivak contests what is important is to understand the conflict between the suffrage movement or the union movement. Such a historical problem always persisted. Spivak's present essay is also related to the ideological development of the theory of the imagination in eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries and dictates that Marxism or Feminism cannot be separated from history. Further, Spivak claims that she is interested in class analysis of families. Her chief interest delves into reading of International feminism that which operates on production and realization of surplus value.

Spivak, then,makes a study on "domestic and political economies in order to establish the subversive power of 'women's work' in models in the construction of a 'revolutionary subject'(p.501). This study has been in relation to wage theory and women's work. She cites the example of Anotnio Negri, an autonomist who argued that "inevitable consumerism that socialized capitalism must nurture. Commodity consumption, even as it realizes surplus-value as profit, does not itself produce the value and therefore persistently exacerbates crisis. It is through reversing and displacing this tendency within consumerism, Negri suggests, that 'revolutionary subject' can be released". (p.501)

Spivak concludes the section of the essay by analyzing the discourse of race through history, politics, psychoanalysis, Marxist feminism that foregrounds the operations of the New imperialism. Spivak adds that it is her deconstructive view that resists essentializing the concepts of gender, race and class. Such a view will not allow her to establish a hegemonic 'global theory' of feminism. She feels that deconstruction doesn't open the way for feminists, the figure and discourse of women rather opened the way for Derrida as in Derrida's *Spurs*(first published as 'La Questions du Style' in 1975), Spivak argues:

> The early Derrida can certainly be shown to be useful for feminist practice, but why is it that, when he

> writes under the sign of woman, as it were, his work becomes solipsistic and marginal? What is it in the history of that sign that allows this to happen? (p.502)

Spivak keeps delving upon this question for sometime till she moves towards the third and fourth sections. The third section holds importance because it illustrates her preoccupation with some uneasy concerns about race and class - a list of illustrations from Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall* .She suggests:

> Reading literature 'well' is in itself a questionable good and can indeed be sometimes productive of harm and 'aesthetic' apathy within its ideological framing. My suggestion is to use literature, with a feminist perspective, as a 'nonexpository' theory of practice.(p.502)

Spivak illustrates, with a study on Drabble, how a women writer who undertakes an extreme situation, to answer the question as to 'Why does love happen?' She positions Jane, Drabble's protagonist in the most 'inaccessible privacy' and James watches over her in empty house as she regains her strength after birthing alone by choice. *The Waterfall* is supposed to be a story of Jane's love affair with James, who happens to be her cousin Lucy's husband. Drabble describes Jane as "dreadful with blood and sweat yet love blossoms"(503). This means Drabble is taking up the challenge of feminine positivity and yet creating it as the tool of analytical strength. Drabble, Spivak says, considers Jane provisional and self suspending, where she deceives Lucy, and makes the both the women rivals. Spivak fails to understand how Drabble considers the story worth narrating. Spivak contests: "Drabble manipulates her to examine the conditions of production and determination of microstructural heterosexual attitudes within her chosen enclosure. This enclosure is important because it is from here that rules come." (P-505)

Spivak comments that Drabble doesn't want to talk about race but sensitively lays her fingers on class. Her most important issue is sexual deprivation and not race or class. She also finds irony in Drabble creating a class bound yet analytical Jane which makes the plot doubtful and she mockingly refers it as ironical which is to be generated from ' outside the book'.(p.505). This means Drabble manipulates Jane's behavior within the framework of Jane's enclosure. Drabble admits that there are limitations to interpret any narrative the whole truth within a fictional form to the

'humanist academic'(p.506). Hence she had to change from the third person to first person narration. Spivak interprets this:

> What can a literary critic do with this? Notice that the move is absurdity twice compounded, since the discourse reflecting the constraints of fiction-making goes on then to fabricate another fictive text. Notice further that the narrator who tells us about the impossibility of truth-in-fiction – the classic privilege of metaphor – is a metaphor as well.(p.506)

Spivak explains that there is subversion of the 'truthful' language, that a speaker unwittingly can get rid of by being structurally unconscious and narrate without role-playing. Spivak takes a critical view of Drabble's third person narrator. Spivak concludes the third section of the essay by expressing that Drabble may have filled the space of the female consciousness with a particular eloquence, but fails to present problems of race and class, and the marginality of sex by her fictitious Jane. Spivak articulates:

> She engages in that microstructural dystopia, the sexual situation in extremis, that begins to seem more and more a part of women's fiction. Even within those limitations, our motto cannot be Jane's ' I prefer to suffer, I think' – the privatist cry of heroic liberal women; it might rather be the lesson of the scene of writing of *The Waterfall*; to return to the third person within its grounds mined under. (p-506)

In the fourth section of the essay, Spivak continues her tirade against the perceived comprehension of feminist students and colleagues in American academic with the production of literary texts, more so by women today. She exposes the politics of men in obstructing third world women in their wage enhancement. She illustrates a case of South Korean factory owned by Control Data, a Minnesota-based multinational corporation and says, "No one can deny the dynamism and civilizing power of socialized capital" (p-508). The search for greater production for surplus value is rooted through the conspiracy of corporate philanthropy and civilization at a humanistic ideological level. South Korea in this case is not a

recepient or agent of a socialized capital. Spivak adds a new dimension to her theoretical debate by expressing that “socialized kills by remote control” happened as Americans watched South Korean men decimate women although they denied it completely later. Spivak argues that, “however active in the production of civilization as a by-product, socialized capital has not moved far from the pre- supposition of a slave mode of production” (p-508).

Spivak relates another instance of Control Data’s radio commercials speaking of how its computers open the door to knowledge at workplace and home for men and women together. The acronym given to this computer system is PLATO. This means that one is given to think that this noble name represents ‘efficiency’ and ‘democracy’ in their endeavour to promote knowledge. Spivak reads into the underlying notion of the symbolic value of the acronym PLATO in their efforts for civilization. She states:

> The slave mode of production which underlay Athenian civilization necessarily found its most pristine ideological expression in the privileged social stratum of the city, whole intellectual heights its surplus labour in the silent depths below the *polis* made possible. (p-508)

Next, Spivak’s parable of argument leads one to a book- *La carte postale*- on philosophy as telecommunication (Control Data’s business) which used an unnamed, sexually indeterminate woman (control data’s victim) as a medium through which interprets the relationship between Socrates and Plato (Control Data’s acronym) traversing through Freud and beyond, wherein she comments, “Here deconstruction becomes complicit with an essentialist bourgeois feminism”. (p-509) She goes further by critiquing Control Data’s social service pages where Kit Ketchum, former treasurer of Minnesota was appointed again for commending Control Data for their commitment to employing and promoting women. It is here that Spivak doesn’t hasitate to add: “Bourgeois feminism, because of a blindness to the *multi*national theatre, dissimulated by ‘clean’ national practice and fostered by the dominant ideology, can participate in the tyranny of the proper and see in Control Data an extender of the Platonic mandate to women in general”. (p-509)

Spivak concludes the essay by explaining her brand of feminist deconstruction:

> Feminism lives in the master-text as well as in the pores. It is not the determinant of the last instance. I

> think less easily of 'changing the world' than in the past. I teach a small number of the holders of the can(n) on, male or female, feminist or masculinist, how to read their own texts, as best I can. (p-509)

4.5 CONCLUSION

Feminist Literary Criticism by and large revalues women's experience. It also examines representations of women, gender and sexuality in literature by men and women. Furthermore, it explores the question of whether there is a female language and a woman-centred way of thinking, experiencing and expression. Spivak rightly has expressed her views on the sexist and racist biases of literary theory and points out the limitation of the textual approach of Western literary theories on Third World subjects.

4.6 KEY TERMS

Gender, Sexuality, Feminist Critique, womb-envy, essentialism, humanistic academic.

4.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

QI. State whether the following statements are true or false

1. Spivak appreciates the western theoretical approaches to the Third World women.
2. Spivak's essay provides a feminist re-reading of Marx and Frued.
3. Spivak's essay deconstructs many essentialist definitions of women, gender and class

QII. Define the following
Deconstruction
Third World Femnism
Womb-envy
Commodity consumption

QIII Answer the following

1. Explain how Gayatri Spivak launches into a feminist deconstruction of theories on race, gender and class in "Feminism and Critical Theory"?
2. What are Spivak's views on Mark and Freud as revealed in Feminism and Critical Theory"?

5

"READING PROCESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH" – WOLFGANG ISER

Unit structure :

5.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this unit is to familiarize the reader with the basic concepts of Reader Response Criticism. It also aims to introduce Wolfgang Iser's views on reading process.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Reader-Response criticism is the systematic examination of the aspects of the text that arouse, shape, and guide a reader's response. According to reader-response criticism, the reader is a producer rather than a consumer of meanings. In this sense, a reader is a hypothetical construct of norms and expectations that can be derived or projected or extrapolated from the work and may even said to be embedded in the structure of the work. Because expectations may be violated or fulfilled, satisfied or frustrated, and because reading is a temporal process involving memory, perception, and anticipation, the charting of reader-response is extremely difficult and perpetually subject to construction and reconstruction, vision and revision.

Reader-response criticism, however, does not denote any specific theory. It can range from the phenomenological theories of Wolfgang Iser and Roman Ingarten – both of whom argue that although the reader fills in the gaps, the author's intentional acts impose restrictions and conditions – to the relativistic analysis of

Stanley Fish, who argues that the interpretative strategy of the reader creates the text, there being no text except that which a reader or an interpretive community of readers creates.

Writers such as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss make the core of the Constance School of Criticism that propagated Reader Response theories.

5.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR (WOLFGANG ISER)

Wolfgang Iser (22 July 1926 – 24 January 2007) was a German literary scholar who studied and worked in the universities of Heidelberg and Glasgow, where he started to take an interest in inter-cultural exchange. He is known for his reader-response theory. This theory began to evolve in 1967, while he was working in the University of Konstanz, which he helped to found in the 1960s. Together with Hans Robert Jauss, he is considered to be the founder of the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics. Reader-response theory shares many goals and insights with hermeneutics; both aim to describe the reader's contact with text and the author.

5.3 "READING PROCESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH": AN OVERVIEW

Wolfgang Iser is a leading member of Constance School of Reception Aesthetics which developed in the 1970s, placing the reader at the center of a literary text. Reception Aesthetics or Reader Response criticism maintains that reader is actively involved in the production of meaning. It is also based on two philosophical foundations – Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. Iser, along with Stanley Fish and Hans Robert Jauss, make this significant school of thought. The basic premise of Reader Response criticism is that to read a work, the readers need to be familiar with the literary technique and conventions which the work deploys. The readers must have some grasp of the codes of a literary work and they must also mobilize their general social knowledge to recognize these codes of a work. Reader response criticism also implies that the most effective literary work forces the reader into a new critical awareness with which his/her expectations and opinions are constantly modified. Iser is of the opinion that a literary work interrogates and transforms the beliefs the reader brings to it. He also argues that while the readers modify a text with their reading strategies, it simultaneously modifies them.

Iser's reception theory is based on a liberal humanist ideology – a belief that in reading, one should be flexible and open minded, prepared to put one's beliefs into question and allow them

to be transformed by the text. The theoretical base of Iser's seminal essay, "Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach", is Hermeneutics, a branch of philosophy which maintains that self is enriched from an encounter with the unfamiliar. Iser believes that every reading is such an encounter. However, he believes that readers do not encounter a text in a void: all readers are socially and historically positioned. Though Iser is aware of the social impact of reading, he chooses to concentrate on the psychology of reading and the aesthetic model of reading. This essay, which is a part of a full length study, *The Act of Reading*, published in 1978, is largely concerned with the literary text and the production of meaning in the context of the reader. While illustrating the phenomenological theory of reading, Iser establishes the point that there are two types of readers – the implied reader and the real reader. The implied reader is a part of the text itself i.e., the writer's anticipation of the intelligence of the reader. The real reader is one who fills the gaps in the text and undergoes a process of a self-correction in the experience of reading. Further, Iser argues that reading is a dynamic process wherein the text and the reader interact to create patterns of meaning. Phenomenology is the second theoretical base of this essay. It is a branch of philosophy which maintains that consciousness is intentional, that it is directed to an object. Further, phenomenology also upholds the view that to be conscious is to be conscious of something. Iser imports this view in his Reader Response theory and tries to establish the argument that reading is an intentional act of consciousness of the reader and this act makes it possible for the reader to be conscious.

Iser also uses what is called the Hermeneutic circle to explain the reading process. Hermeneutic circle could be explained as the reader's engagement with the parts and the whole of the text. Iser maintains that readers cannot understand any part of a text without understanding the whole, yet they cannot understand the whole without understanding its parts. According to him an answer to this puzzle is that readers reconcile part and whole through successively adjusted provisional understandings.

Iser establishes a point that a literary text should be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader's imagination because reading becomes an aesthetic experience only when it is active and co-creative. He says that the features of a text invite the readers to participate in a game of imagination. He maintains that more than the written part, the unwritten part of the text stimulates the reader's creative participation. According to him, the written text is only an outline or a gestalt which has to be animated by the co-creative reader. Iser's significant argument, in this essay, is that the structure of a text can never exercise complete control over reader's comprehension and the readers participate both in the production and the comprehension of the work's intention.

According to him, literary texts should contain conditions of actualization that will allow their meaning to be assembled in the responsive mind of the readers. Hence, he believes that the implied reader is a textual structure designed by the author. This concept implies that a literary text is a network of response-inviting structures which impel the reader to grasp the text in an active process. For Iser, text is a sequence of sign impulses which are received by the readers. He believes that reading is a process of inserting reader's idea into a process of communication. This means that it is the reader who creates the signified which is constantly modified with every new sentence – the correlate. Iser illustrates this dynamic process of reading by analyzing the reader's positions in Henry Fielding's novel, *Tom Jones*. He argues that, in this novel, a reader creates a signified which is not often denoted by the signifier. By doing so, the reader creates a basic condition of comprehension. Iser also explains how reading is a process of self-correction wherein a signified is formulated by the reader which is subsequently modified. For instance, Iser explains that in *Tom Jones* readers initially think that Squire Allworthy has a sound sense of judgement as he rewards Tom with promotion every time when the latter does a good work. However, in a sudden act of impulse, Allworthy terminates Tom's services on flimsy evidence of theft. At this point, readers will have to modify their opinion of Squire Allworthy. This kind of a text which plays with expectations and opinions of a reader is really interactive in nature. According to Iser such a reading is cybernetic as it involves a feedback of information throughout the sequence of changing situational frames. Iser explains reading as the process in which smaller units of meaning progressively merge and gather meaning, so that meaning gathers meaning in a kind of snowballing process.

Iser also explains the Hermeneutics structure of reading. According to him, all structures or sentences do not lead to the fulfillment of reader's expectation but to their continual modification. He says that the reader's position in a text is at the point of intersection between retention and protention. Retention is a memory of what is already read and protention is the expectation or anticipation of the sentences to come. Each sentence prefigures and then becomes the background for the next one and thus necessarily be modified.

The sequence of sentence in a literary text partly frustrates the expectations aroused by it. In doing so, each sentence also has a retroactive effect on what has been already read. What has been read shrinks in the memory to become the background which should also condition a new correlate. In reading, there is a constant interplay between modified expectation and transformed memories. Iser explains that the text itself does not formulate expectations and their modifications; they are done by the readers.

To explain this point, he goes deeper into the process of reading or interpretation. A literary text is made of sequent sentences or correlates. Each correlate creates a hollow section by itself. It is connected to the next correlate which is partly anticipated by the reader. A correlate also has a retrospective section which answers the expectations aroused by the preceding sentence. These correlates indicate a Hermeneutic structure which plays out a conundrum of the parts and the whole.

Iser also explains that reading is a process in which the aesthetic object is constantly structured and restructured by the reader. According to him, the response-inviting structures of a text create the implied reader. These structures in literary text make meaningful gaps or spots of indeterminacies such as symbols, metaphors and implied meaning. The actual reader brings his/her experiences to concretize the text. Concretization is thus the readers' conscious efforts to fill the spots of indeterminacies. However, Iser believes that the reader holds in mind not only the expectations on the basis of memory of events and characters but also these expectations are constantly modified as the text advances.

"Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" is thus an essay in which Iser concentrates rigorously on the act of reading itself – on the gradual unfolding process in which a reader assimilates and incorporates the various levels of a text. In this essay, Iser combines phenomenology, hermeneutics, formalism, semiotics and the psychology of reading.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Reader Response criticism brings to the fore the dynamic role played by the reader in the production of meaning of a text. It also promotes an enquiry into the process of reading on the basis of the understanding of the reader's psychology. Today, it is applied to all kinds of texts including literature, film and the visual arts.

5.5 KEY TERMS

Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, Retention, Protention, Concretization.

5.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.I Say whether the following statements are true or false.

1. The basic premise of reader response criticism is that to read a work, the readers need to be familiar with the literary technique and conventions which the work deploys.
2. Iser believes that the implied reader is a textual structure.
3. Iser also explains that reading is a process in which the aesthetic object is constantly structured and restructured by the writer.
4 The actual reader brings his/her experiences to concretize the text.
5. Concretization is the readers' unconscious efforts to fill the spots of indeterminacies in the text.

Q.II Define the following:

1. Hermeneutics
2. Phenemenology
3. Concretization

Answer the following:

1. Consider the role of Wolfgang Iser in the development of Reader-Response criticism with special reference to "Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach."
2. Discuss how Wolfgang Iser explains the phenomenological structure of reading process?
3. What does Iser mean by the term concretization? Explain its significance in the theory of reading.

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6

"RESONANCE AND WONDER" – STEPHEN GREENBLATT

Unit structure :

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to provide the learners with a basic understanding of New Historicism. Its objective is also to impart the learners with Stephen Greenblatt's views on cultural poetics and the historicity of cultural artifacts.

6.1 STEPHEN GREENBLATT

Stephen Greenblatt is Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University. Also General Editor of *The Norton Shakespeare*, he is the author of many insightful works, including *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern; Shakespeare's Freedom*; *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*; *Hamlet in Purgatory*; *Practicing New Historicism*; *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*; and *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. He has edited seven collections of criticism, including *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, and is a founding coeditor of the journal *Representations*. His honours include the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize for *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, the Distinguished Humanist Award from the Mellon Foundation, the Wilbur Cross Medal from the Yale University Graduate School, the William Shakespeare Award for Classical Theatre, the Erasmus Institute Prize, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and the Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of California, Berkeley. He was president of the Modern Language Association of America and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American

Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Stephen Greenblatt is also one of the founders of New Historicism, a set of critical practices that he often refers to as "cultural poetics". His works have been influential since the early 1980s after he introduced the term, ‘New Historicism’. Greenblatt’s works such as *Learning to Curse* and *Shakespearean Negotiations* examine how cultural practices such as marriage, religion and language are negotiated and exchanged in Shakespearean plays, indicating how the individual agency of the playwright mingles with the socio cultural mood of the time. Greenblatt's fascination with history and the minute details of culture soon caught the imagination of many other scholars working on different historical periods, leading to the increasing popularity of culturally and historically-minded studies in the 1980s and 1990s.

6.2 NEW HISTORICISM

New Historicism which is also referred to as Cultural Materialism in Britain, is composed of a group of critics interested in recovering lost histories and in exploring the mechanisms of production, distribution and exchange in culture. New historicists draw upon many disciplines such as political science, anthropology and literature. Terms like circulation, negotiation, profit and exchange explain how culture including literature is informed by the values of the market. New Historicism is also concerned with questions of power and culture, exploring the link between society and culture or the connection between the supposedly autonomous self and the political institutions which produce that self. New historicists reject the western tendency to write history from the top down or in grand narratives. Instead, they are more concerned with 'little narratives' and how they participate in the consolidation of the status quo. New historicists also argue that all levels of society share in the circulation of power through the production and distribution of cultural and social texts. Power, they argue, does not reside somehow 'above' lawyers, politicians and the police but rather follows a principle of circulation whereby, everyone participates in the maintenance of existing power structures. Apart from Stephen Greenblatt, Hayden White and Pierre Bourdieu are considered to be the noteworthy new historicists.

The term ‘New Historicism’ was first clearly explained by Wesley Morris in his work, *Towards a New Historicism*, published in 1972. Morris indicates that the human subject is a construct of cultural practices and history is an ideological construction. The New Historicists also believe that reading of the past is conditioned by a desire to position oneself in the present.

Traditional historians ask questions like 'what happened?' and 'what does the event tell us about history?' In contrast, new historicists ask 'how has the event being interpreted?' and 'what do interpretations tell us about the interpreters?' Thus New Historicism resists the notion that history is a series of events which have a linear relationship and it holds that historians are subjective interpreters of what they observe.

New Historicism focuses on the way literature expresses – and sometimes disguises – power relations at work in the social context in which the literature was produced, often this involves making connections between a literary work and other kinds of texts. Literature is often shown to 'negotiate' conflicting power interests. New Historicism has made its biggest mark on literary studies of the Renaissances and Romantic periods and has revised motions of literature as privileged, apolitical writing. Much New Historicism focuses on the marginalization of subjects such as those identified as witches, the insane, heretics, vagabonds, and political prisoners.

6.3 "RESONANCE AND WONDER": AN OVERVIEW

New Historicism or cultural poetics was a literary and cultural study which emerged in the 1980s largely due to the writings of Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore, Wesley Morris, Alan Sinfield and Clifford Geertz. It was a term coined by Greenblatt around 1980 to suggest "the historicity of the text and the textuality of history." New Historicism begins with the Marxian theoretical premise that life is a historical reality though a work of art may be autonomous. It considers that a work of art is the product of negotiation and the modes of cultural productions in a society. Traditional history deals with what happened. New historicism is not merely about the past. It considers that there is no history but only representation of history. It is more historicist than historical.Clifford Geertz defines New Historicism as the study of history from below. Very often New, Historicism is considered as an extension of Marxist Criticism because it is inspired by the theories of Raymond Williams and Michel Foucault who had studied culture in terms of the circulation of power.

New Historicism can be considered as a study of power relationships embedded in cultural artifacts. It addresses issues like production, circulation and reception of cultural products. It also explains the term exchange – the cultural give and take of objects, institutions and discourses between generations or cultures. New Historicism indicates that discourses are dynamic and they negotiate with one another. It also deconstructs the distinction between history and literature: history is considered as text and

literature is considered as cultural artifact, having its own miniature history.

Stephen Greenblatt's "Resonance and Wonder" is a chapter taken from his seminal text, *Learning to Curse* (1990).This essay which sketches the basic premises of New Historicism helps the readers to look into the cultural and historical bases of art. Greenblatt begins the essay by stating that cultural artifacts give a deceptive impression that they are fixed in time and space. He says that every artifact has its miniature history and this history evokes a vision of its cultural production. He says that cultural artifacts transmigrate and move from one use (zone of display) to another and from one place to another. He illustrates this argument by tracing the eventful journey of Cardinal Wolsey's hat which is kept in the library of Christ College, London. He explains that the hat has a history of its own as it had passed through different hands and different ownership before reaching the library. Firstly, he explains how Cardinal Wolsey used to carry the hat ceremoniously as a symbol of his religious power. Greenblatt also explains how subsequently the hat was passed on to Bishop Burnet, Burnet's son, his housekeeper, Countess Abermarle, famous British politician, Walpole and the great Shakespearean actor Charles Kean, and subsequently to his daughter and finally to the Christ College Library. He also says that the hat is doubly significant because Kean used to play the role of Cardinal Wolsey wearing the original hat. This anecdote of the hat also proves the point that cultural artifacts move from one zone of display to another. Cardinal Wolsey's hat has migrated from being a part of Catholic symbol of power to theatrical costume and finally to a museum piece. Greenblatt says that material referent – hat or a book – is only a tiny element of the culture. He says that by the time Cardinal Wolsey's hat reached the library, it had lost its political significance and yet as a cultural artifact it radiates an amount of cultural energy and evokes a miniature history of its own.

Greenblatt explains the transmigration as process through which objects, gestures, rituals and fashions are moved from one zone of display to another. He also argues that art and artifacts are the products of historical transactions and they carry the marks of history and human intervention on them. Greenblatt illustrates the transmigration of cultural practice with an analysis of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights Dream*. He explains that in this play, the fairy king Oberon appears after the wedding and he declares that he would bless the beds of the three newly married couples. Oberon also explains that this ritual would ward off moles, harelips and other physical deformitiesin the babies they may beget. Greenblatt reminds that this scene is witty allusion to the traditional catholic blessing of the bride-bed with holy water – a ceremony which was attacked by English Protestants. Greenblatt

shows how Holy water changes into dew drops and the Catholic ritual is changed into a theatrical comedy by Shakespeare to mock the Catholic practice.

Greenblatt observes that art and artifacts cannot be studied without their contexts. He reminds that the decontextualized analysis of art began with New Criticism and Formalism. He says that New Historicism describes the embeddedness of cultural objects in the contingencies of history. He also explains the difference between historicism and new historicism. He observes that in historicism and traditional history, there is a belief that processes are at work in history that man can do little to change. He says that this formulation evacuates human agency and New Historicism uses "man" in particular sense – as a subject whose identity is conditioned by class, gender religion, race and nationality. New Historicism, Greenblatt maintains, explores simultaneously how history conditions man and how man alters history. The second point of distinction between Historicism and New Historicism is in the attitude towards the past. Historicism upholds the view that historians must avoid all value judgments in the study of past and former cultures. Greenblatt indicates that New Historicism, in contrast, is cultural criticism and it critiques past and the cultures. The third point of distinction is in the approach of the past. He says that in Historicism demands an unconditional veneration of the past whereas in New Historicism has its interest in the unresolved conflicts and contradictions of history and the cultures. He says that New Historicism is concerned with the margins of a culture as much with its centre.

Stephen Greenblatt also explained the key terms – cultural negotiation and exchange. Negotiation is a process of historical debate between different cultural practices when they come face to face. Exchange is a give and take of cultural practice and artifacts between two cultures after negotiation. Subsequently, Greenblatt defines the two operational terms of the essay – 'Resonance' and 'Wonder'. He says that wonder is a term borrowed from formalism. It indicates the power of an object to stop the viewer on tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness caused by amazement. Resonance is defined as the power of an object to evoke the cultural forces from which it has emerged to cross the formal boundaries of art and to communicate culturally with the viewer. Greenblatt indicates that the concern of new historicism is with resonance – to trace the historical circumstances of production and consumption of artifacts.

Further, Greenblatt observes that artifacts carry the 'marks' of human intervention on them. Marks indicate how an artifact was used by different generations. He says that these marks create very rich resonance. He also indicates that even accidents create marks

and resonance. According to him, resonance can be found in destruction, absence and unexpected survival of cultural artifacts. He illustrates this point by explaining the case of the State Jewish Museum of Prague. He explains how a synagogue is converted into a museum and how it becomes a memory complex. Greenblatt indicates that one of the rooms of the museum preserves Tora, silk and religious materials of Jews and this space resonates heavily with the other rooms which carry the paintings of Jewish artist Karl Fleischmann and some jagged paintings of children who were held in the camp of Terezin before they were massacred by the Naizis. He says that these paintings carry tremendous cultural significance as the last expressions of the few Jewish individuals. Greenblatt also brings to notice the charcoal marking on a shabby wall of another room in the museum and reminds that even the wall with such markings of Jews has great resonance because most of them were later killed by the Nazis.

Greenblatt also indicates that proximity to cultural space can create aesthetic significance for certain objects. He explains how a coke-stand which imitates the structure of Nahoch Mul Pyramid and which is placed at the entrance of the pyramid in Yucatan peninsula and a reminder of Pre-Columbian Maya civilization, Coba in Mexico has certain artistic values. He believes that if the coke-stand could be shifted to Museum of Modern Arts (MOMA), New York, it would be considered as a piece of art and not a coke-stand.

Finally, Greenblatt spells out the basic perspective of New Historicism. He says that it is a desire for cultural resonance. He also indicates that the objectives of New Historicism – to try and convert wonder with secure knowledge and to renew the marvellous at the heart of the resonant.

6.4 CONCLUSION

Stephen Greenblatt has argued in this important essay that the art of the Renaissance could only be understood in the context of the society from which it has sprung. His approach – New Historicism – draws from history, anthropology, Marxist theory, poststructuralism, and psychoanalysis and in the process, blow apart the academic boundaries insulating literature from the world around it. “Resonance and Wonder,” charts the evolution of that approach and provides a vivid and compelling exploration of a complex and contradictory epochs.

6.5 KEY TERMS

Circulation
Negotiation
Profit and exchange
Embeddedness
Cultural artifact
Transmigration of art
Marks
Resonance
Wonder

6.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

I) State whether the following statements are true or false:

1) New historicism is merely about the past. True/False.

2) It considers that there is no history but only representation of history. True/False.

3) It is less historicist than historical. True/False.

4) Greenblatt says that cultural artifacts transmigrate. True/False.

5) Greenblatt indicates that the concern of historicism is with resonance. True/False.

II) Define:

a) Historicism
b) New Historicism
c) Transmigration of art
d) Cultural artifact
e) Cultural negotiation

3) Answer briefly:

a) What is the difference between Historicism and New Historicism, according to Stephen Greenblatt?

b) Explain what Greenblatt indicates by Resonance and Wonder in the context of New Historicism.

c) What was Greenblatt trying to explain through the anecdote of Wolsey's hat?

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7

"CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA"– STUART HALL

7.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this essay is to sensitize students to postcolonial issues like identity and Diaspora and to enable them to understand the process of identity formation and to appreciate Hall's model of Caribbean identity.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1997) is a discussion on the discourse of culture based on his own historical background. The focus of this essay is the formation of identity within a historical and discursive framework. It examines the experience of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean and the narratives of displacement. Hall looks broadly at the issues relating to identity. He observes that far from being fixed, identity should be seen as a ""production" which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, and not outside, representation." Hall brilliantly pinpoints the absolutely central role of culture – and representation in particular – in constituting identities-in-process, far from assuming a direct or simple relationship between what we think we perceive and what we think we know about people.

7.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1932, Stuart Hall shifted to England with his mother in 1951 and lived in Bristol. Being a socialist, in the 1950s, he collaborated with fellow sociologists to launch two radical journals, *The New Reasoner* and the *New Left Review*. In 1957, he joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Hall edited the *New Left Review* (1959-1961) and taught Media Studies at Chelsea College. In 1964, he co-authored *The Popular Arts* and joined the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. In 1968, he became director of the Contemporary Cultural Studies unit. In 1979, Hall was appointed as professor of sociology at the Open University from where he retired in 1997 and was appointed to the Runnymede Trust's commission on the future of multi-ethnic Britain.

Hall's books include *Situating Marx: Evaluations and Departures* (1972), *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (1973), *Reading of Marx's 1857 Introduction to the Grundrise* (1973) , *Policing the Crisis* (1978), *The Hard Road to Renewal* (1988), *Resistance Through Rituals* (1989), *Modernity and Its Future* (1992), *The Formation of Modernity* (1992), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996), *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997) and *Visual Culture* (1999).

7.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

Stuart Hall's richly allusive but elliptical essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" represents an epistemic shift where recent attempts to conceptualise Caribbean culture are concerned. He argues that films and other forms of visual representations invariably discuss the black subject and problematize his/ her cultural identity. In this work, he attempts to address the issues of identity, cultural practices, and cultural production.

In this essay, Hall considers the nature of the "black subject" (Braziel: 392) who is represented by "film and other forms of visual representation of the Afro-Caribbean (and Asian) 'blacks' of the diasporas of the West" (Braziel: 392). "Who is this emergent, new subject of the cinema? From where does he/she speak?" (392). Referring to the seminal work of Émile Benveniste, he contends that what

> "recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own

> experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place." (392)

Hall's argument is that rather than thinking of identity as an "already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent" (392), one should think instead of "identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (392).

Hall points out that there are two principal ways of thinking about (cultural) identity. The traditional model views identity in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. . . . This 'oneness', underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence of 'Caribbeanness', of the black experience. It is this identity which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express. . . . (393)

Hall mentions that the "rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Frantz Fanon once called a 'passionate research'" (393) and that such a "conception of cultural identity played a crucial role in all postcolonial struggles" (393). However, he questions whether such a view merely entails "unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid" (393). For him, it is better to envision a "quite different practice" (393), one based on "not the rediscovery but the *production* of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past" (393). Such a viewpoint would mean that this is an "act of imaginative rediscovery" (393), one which involves "imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas" (394) and leads to the restoration of an "imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past" (394). Africa, he stresses, is the "name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked" (394).

The second model of (cultural) identity which Hall mentions acknowledges the "critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (394). From this point of view, cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (394).

Inspired by the works of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Hall argues that cognizance must be taken of the "ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation" (394). Hall stresses that it is one thing to "position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm" (394). Hence, from this perspective, it must be acknowledged that cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. (395)

Cultural identities, Hall reminds, are the "unstable points of identification . . . which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" (394).

Influenced by Derrida's notion of différance, Hall posits that it is possible to "rethink the positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identities in relation to at least three 'presences', to borrow Aimé Césaire's and Léopold Senghor's metaphor: *Présence Africaine*, *Présence Européene*, and *Présence Américaine*" (398), none of which can ever be fully present (presence is deferred). Drawing upon both the spatial and temporal metaphors which Derrida employs, Hall is implicitly comparing Caribbean society to a sign within a wider sign-system, a signifier located along the chain of signification and, by extension, a text which is linked 'intertextually' to other region-texts.

Hall argues that an "Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available" (398) to Caribbean persons only in the 1970s through an "indigenous cultural revolution" (398), through the "impact on popular life of the post-colonial revolution, the civil rights struggles, the culture of Rastafarianism and the music of reggae" (398). These and related factors made possible or became the "metaphors, the figures or signifiers of a new construction of

'Jamaican-ness" (398). These and similar cultural endeavours "signified a 'new' Africa of the New World, grounded in an 'old' Africa: . . . this Africa, as we might say, . . . as a spiritual, cultural and political metaphor" (398): this is the "Africa we must return to – but by 'another route': what Africa has *become* in the New World, what we have made of 'Africa': 'Africa' – as we retell it through politics, memory and desire" (399). From this point of view, Africa "'has acquired an imaginative or figurative value that we can name and feel'. Our belongingness to it constitutes what Benedict Anderson calls an 'imaginary community'" (399). This 'Africa' is a necessary part of the "Caribbean imaginary" (399): the displacement which has marked the region has given rise to a "certain imaginary plentitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning" (402).

Hall's notion of diasporic identity is one based upon différance and hybridity. It rejects old "imperialising" (401) and "hegemonising" (401) forms of "'ethnicity'" (401). Gesturing to the ongoing problem of the Palestinian homeland, he argues that his model does not conceptualise the securing of identity solely "in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other peoples into the sea" (401). It is "defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity . . . *hybridity*" (402). Hall claims to offer a "different way of thinking about cultural identity" (402) by theorising identity "as constituted, not outside but within representation" (402) and hence of cinema or literature "not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (402). Hall ends by citing the relevance to his model of identity of Benedict Anderson's redefinition of the community as "distinguished, not by their falsity/genuiness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (402).

7.3.1 The Black Subject in Third Cinema

Third Cinema, Hall argues, is a filmmaking approach that subverts cinematic codes, embraces revolutionary ideals and combats the passive film-watching experience of commercial cinema. Stuart hall uses the example of "Third Cinemas" and points out how cinema does not essentially reflect the existing status of identity. He calls attention to their role in promoting the Afro-Caribbean identities of the Diasporas of the West by producing representations which constantly constitute the third world's people as new subjects against their representations in the Western dominant regimes. He explains how visual representations deny the black subjects new positions from which to speak about themselves. Hall argues that cultural identities are never fixed or

complete in any sense. They are not accomplished, already-there entities which are represented or projected through the new cultural practices. Rather, they are productions which cannot exist outside the work of representation. They are problematic, highly contested sites and processes. Identities are social and cultural formations and constructions essentially subject to the differences of time and place. Then, when the black subject speaks of anything, they are essentially positioned in time and space and more importantly in a certain culture. Hall claims that it is therefore important to investigate the subject of cultural identity and representation.

7.3.2 Two Positions of Cultural Identity

One of the major arguments in the essay is that there are two principal ways of thinking about (cultural) identity:

The first way of looking at cultural identity attempts to define it as a single, essential black Caribbeanness which sees the Caribbean as one homogeneous culture to which all Afro-Caribbeans belong. There is an attempt to understand the common history and the fixed shared culture that can be excavated from beneath layers of depravity and social exclusion. This is the traditional way by which postcolonial societies have come to terms with themselves and have asserted themselves. In this way, cultural identity is taken to be singular and collective simultaneously. As postcolonial struggles are centred on their conception of cultural identity, Hall suggests that taking recourse to Frantz Fanon's suggestion of 'passionate research' to enable rediscovery of this identity is important. But, what worries Hall is the fear that the rediscovery would be limited to the unearthing of the past. What Hall feels more pertinent is to go beyond rediscovery to imaginatively produce an identity by retelling the past so that the gaps, in the narration of past history regarding their dispersal and fragmentation during the change of their status from natives to that of enforced diasporas, can be bridged and they can re-feel a sense of completion. Hall refers to a*poria* in identity. Aporia means placing a claim in doubt by developing arguments on both sides of an issue. In the terminology of deconstruction, *aporia* refers to a final impasse or paradox, the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself. In the essay, Hall opines that the great aporia that lies at the centre of a black subject's cultural identity is Africa and the lack of clarity in their understanding of their roots there.

The second way of thinking about cultural identity to which Hall subscribes is based on the fact that the cultures that arrived from Africa were originally extremely different from each other, having come from different tribes and having different gods and cultures. Moreover, Africa and India are not monolithically united entities and each island is profoundly different from the others.

What is more intriguing is that not all were subjected to the same degree of otherness. For instance, those from the metropolitan centres get a different treatment as compared to the rest. Hall provides the islands of Martinique and Jamaica as examples of this cultural difference in relation to each other, noting that the “richer, more ‘fashionable’” Fort de France contrasts with the “visibly poorer” Kingston. Difference, therefore, persisted in and alongside continuity and it was only the shared trauma of slavery that united them. This dialogic of difference and commonality has always defined the African Caribbean culture. While he acknowledges that a common history has unified us across our differences, this common history “does not constitute a common origin, since it was, metaphorically as well as literally, a translation” (396). Hall notes that there is a need to record the moments of significant changes in the trajectory from the point when they arrived to the point where they have become something else in their present due to intervention of history. He prefers to view cultural identity as something that is not “an essence but a *positioning*” (395). Hall’s use of the term positioning refers not only to the idea that cultural identity can be viewed as rooted in a history, whether common or detached, but also as something positioned or placed both from within the culture and from outside of the culture; the term positioning also refers to geographical positions and boundaries at which and in which cultural identity is rooted.

Hall insists that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past." As it is important to recognize their common African past, Hall feels it is equally important to realize the differences between that past identity and their present Afro-Caribbean identity. For this purpose, Hall suggests that their identity be traced along the two axes of similarity or continuity and difference or rupture. Grasping the truth of the second axis is what Afro-Caribbeans find more challenging, as it is difficult for them to come to terms with this play of difference within identity and discontinuity within continuity. Understanding this dimension of cultural identity formation is difficult as it demands the understanding that identity is always in a state of flux.

7.3.3 Hall's Model of Caribbean Identity

Hall puts forth that although the colonialization has brought in to play a number of binary oppositions like past/ present and them/ us, according to Derrida this cultural play being much more complex cannot be thus represented. This is because the boundary between the binary oppositions is porous and keeps changing, depending on the question asked, and the place and time. Hall makes use of Derrida’s notion of ‘différance' and contends that meaning is forever "deferred" or postponed in binaries through an endless chain of signifiers. The play of 'differance' within identity,

thus becomes possible. For instance, presence/absence of Africa makes it a signifier of new conceptions of Caribbean identity. In other words, by tracing their roots to find Africa at some point, they would discover new meaning of their black, brown or mulatto skin. So, meaning continues to unfold . . . beyond the arbitrary closure which makes it, at any moment, possible. . . There is always something left over" (396).

Derrida also talks about 'trace' to refer to a "mark of the absence of a presence, an always-already absent present", Hall uses this aspect to enable Caribbeans to rethink the positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identities. He refers to at least three 'presences' in the Afro-Caribbean identity. These dominant presences or traces are:

1) Presence Africaine which is the site of the repressed. This presence implies that what once was is no longer true as it has changed. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the past but this is not possible until the West desist from continuing to represent Africa in the same way as it was years ago.

2) Presence Europeene which is the site of the colonialist. This presence includes issues of power and how the Europeans have positioned black in visual representation in dominant discourse. The dominant have the power to represent the other's identity through constructed images but this needs to be resisted.

3) Presence Americaine also known as the New World which is the site of cultural confrontation. Hall describes this presence as an empty place where many cultures meet and collide. This New World is therefore itself the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference, which makes Afro-Caribbean people already people of a diaspora.

Thus, Hall establishes the argument that Caribbean identity is internally and culturally pluralized as it is more a matter of differential signification and aporia than a matter of presence.

7.4 CONCLUSION

In this essay, Stuart Hall argues that the cultural practices and visual representation of the Afro-Caribbean black subjects from positions of enunciation need to be investigated. He discusses two kinds of identity, one of being which proposes a sense of unity and commonality and the other as 'becoming', which points out the gaps in the Afro-Caribbean subjects' identity formation. Hall, then, proceeds to argue that although the first one is truly important for these subjects, it is the second one which highlights their

postcolonial predicament. Hall uses Derrida's concept of differance to point out the influence of the traces of the three presences – African, European, and American – in the Caribbean to demonstrate the Caribbean identity as diaspora identity.

7.5 KEY TERMS

differance, diaspora, enunciation, ethnicity, hybridity, hegemony, identity, traces

7.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.I Say whether the following staments are true or false
1. The meaning of 'differance' is difference.
2. The Caribbean identity can be said to be a Diasporic identity.
3. Hall's essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" represents the American cause.
4. Hall sympathises with the Palestinian quest for the holy land.
5. Hall argues that cinema should not function like a second-order mirror and only reflect what already exists.

Q.II Define the following terms:
1.Differance
2.Enunciation
3. Traces
4.Aporia
5.Third Cinema

Q.III Attempt the following:
1. How is identity defined by Stuart Hall? What has identity to do with subject position? Why is it both being and becoming?

2. How does Hall describe the hybridity of Caribbean identity as a mixture of the African, European and American identities?

3. What, according to Sturat Hall, is Diaspora identity? Explain.

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8

"LITERARY STUDIES IN AN AGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS" – CHERYLL GLOTFELTY

Unit structure :

8.0 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to provide the readers with an interface of Cheryll Glotfelty's views on Ecocriticism. The unit also aims to outline the development of ecological approaches to literature, in the light of Glotfelty's essay.

8.1 INTRODUCTION: ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach that is known by a number of other designations, including Green Cultural Studies, Eco-poetics and Environmental Literary Criticism. Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in the mid-1990s: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. In comparison with other types of politically inclined criticism, there has been hardly any dispute about the moral and philosophical aims of Ecocriticism. Glotfelty's definition in *The Ecocriticism Reader* is that "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment", and one of the inherent objectives of the approach is to regain professional dignity for what Glotfelty calls the "undervalued genre of nature writing". Lawrence Buell defines Ecocriticism "as [a] study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to

environmentalist praxis". The respect and concern for nature and other species on earth is integral to this theory.

In an article that extends Ecocriticism to Shakespearean Studies, Simon Estok argues that Ecocriticism is more than "simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analyzing the function–thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise – of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds". This statement affirms the functional approach of the cultural ecology branch of Ecocriticism which establishes the analogies between ecosystems and imaginative texts and speculates that such texts have an ecological function in the cultural system.

8.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: CHERYLL GLOTFELTY

Cheryll Glotfelty, a renowned Sanford professor of the Humanities was instrumental in developing studies in environmental literature, ecocriticism and women's literature. She has also coordinated different courses in ethnicity, gender, animals in literature, in addition to her Ph.D. from Cornell University, New York. Along with Laurence Buell and Harold Fromm, she is considered as a founder of Ecocriticism. She was the co-founder and president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). Glotfelty has also organized seminars on Ecocriticism and Theory; Regionalism and Bioregionalism; Literature of the Wild; Representing the Other – Animals in Literature; Environmental Justice Literature and Theory; and Ecofeminism. Fascinated by the Great Basin, Nevada, and influenced by theories of bioregionalism and reinhabitation, Glotfelty has dedicated herself in recent years to "digging in" and "giving back" to the region. Her edited collection, *Literary Nevada: Writings from the Silver State* (2008) is a monumental 831 pages comprehensive anthology of Nevada literature. Its goal is to highlight Nevada's rich literary heritage and to cultivate a love of place among residents. Her most recent book, co-edited with Tom Lynch and Karla Armbruster, is *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* (2012), which proposes to think about place and planet from an ecological perspective.

8.3 "LITERARY STUDIES IN AN AGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS": AN OVERVIEW

Glotfelty's seminal essay, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" is an introduction to what might be called as a source book on environment-literature synergy – *The Ecocriticism*

Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology, published in 1996. This introduction provides a simplified definition of Ecocriticism, in addition to the proper classification of articles included in the book. Glotfelty considers Ecocriticism as the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment and she argues that Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered perspective on literary studies. This introduction is a powerfully conceived essay that also traces the development in ecological approaches to literature.

Glotfelty begins the essay with the observation that contemporary literary studies are in a state of flux because literary scholarship responds to the contemporary pressures such as Marxism, Feminism and Gender Studies. However, she reminds the readers that though there are adequate representations of many social and theoretical developments in literary studies, there are not enough reflections on environmental crisis. She argues that even in the 1970s and 1980s race, class, gender have been the favourite topics in literary criticism and no major writings on earth and earth's life support system under stress have been adequately represented. To illustrate this point, she analyses an anthology of literary criticism published in 1980s to show how the writers have conspicuously omitted environmental perspective in literary studies. Glotfelty also reminds the readers that such an omission would only create a contradiction in sensibility as the newspaper headlines of the same period abound in issues like oil spills, lead poisoning, waste dumping and global warming. Glotfelty's point is that till the 1990s American Studies had not taken the environmental angle to literature very seriously. According to her, this neglect is largely due to the fact that there were not enough jobs, societies and discussions on 'literature and the environment.' She also observes that it was only in the 1990s that ecological literary studies had emerged as a recognizable critical school in the American academic worldy studies. However, Glotfelty does not believe that ecologically informed criticism is something absolutely new. She says that it is possible to trace the legacy of Ecocriticism under various branches of scholarship such as American Studies, Regionalism, Pastoralism, and Human Ecology. However, she is of the opinion that all these efforts failed to gain unity as there were not enough universities offering the courses on Environmental Literature. Glotfelty credits critics such as Frederick Waage and Alicia Nitecki for working on environmental literary studies in the 1980s and writers such as Harold Fromm, Glen Love and Scott Slovic for doing the same in 1990s. She also acknowledges the impact of declaring 1990s as the decade of the environment on Ecocriticism.

Perhaps, the most significant part of this essay is Glotfelty's effort to define and explicate Ecocriticism. As mentioned earlier, Glotfelty defines Ecocriticism as a study of relationship between

literature and the physical environment. She also adds to the scope of this term with a series of questions – "Do men write about nature differently than women do? How has the concept of wilderness changed over a period of time? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture?... How is science itself open to literary analysis?" With these questions, Glotfelty tries to connect literary studies, Gender Studies, environmental imagination and the ecoconsciousness of the writers.

After defining Ecocriticism, Glotfelty discusses in detail the characteristic features of Ecocriticism as a critical practice. She is of the opinion that the cross-fertilization between literary studies and environmental activism is essentially dependent on disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, ethics and science. According to her, ecological criticism is built upon the premise that human culture is connected to the physical world and Ecocriticism explores the interconnection between nature and culture. She says that Ecocriticism has one foot on literature and the other on land, negotiating between human and nonhuman. Another feature that Glotfelty points out is how Ecocriticism is different from other critical approaches by expanding the scope of the word, "world" in the context of the writer's texts and the world. Glotfelty argues that the "world" in Ecocriticism is not merely the social sphere in which the writer lives but rather the entire ecosphere. Glotfelty also explores the basic belief in Ecocriticism, the first law of ecology proposed by Barry Commoner – "everything is connected to everything else". Another feature of Ecocriticism, Glotfelty believes, is that there is a global system in which energy, matter and ideas interact. Glotfelty also reviews the contribution of Joseph Meeker while explaining another feature of Ecocriticism – "the study of biological themes and relationships in literary works". Glotfelty also considers the desire to contribute to environmental restoration as another significant feature of Ecocriticism. She also considers the multiple names used for this study as another characteristic feature. She indicates that the terms such as Eco-poetics, Environmental Literary Criticism and Green Cultural Studies not only stand for different names of Ecocriticism, but also its interdisciplinary nature.

Glotfelty is of the opinion that the impact of environmental crisis on humanities has been reflected in literary studies. She makes a survey of the recent developments in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, theology and literary criticism to show how humanities have drawn upon environmental studies. In anthropology, she reminds that culture and geography are studied together to illustrate the impact of geography on human culture. Psychology, she observes has evolved to a point, wherein mental health is studied in the backdrop of environmental conditions. Similarly, Glotfelty points out that philosophy, specifically in its sub

fields like Environmental Ethics, Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism has generated new understandings on identity, self, gender and ethics. Theology too, Glotfelty observes, has changed to consider environment as a religious issue and in re-evaluating how various religions treat earth as something sacred. Literary criticism, she says, has imported values and approaches from all these disciplines of humanities to raise a few earth-centered questions on value, meaning, tradition and language that contribute to environmental thinking.

One of the most insightful observations in Glotfelty's essay is a way in which she draws parallels between the development of feminist literary studies and Ecocriticism. She observes that Feminism as a literary practice developed in three stages – the study of how woman is represented in literature, the study of the tradition of women's writing, and the theoretical phase. Glotfelty explains the development of Ecocriticism with similar stages. In the first phase, she says, the critics were engaged in the study of how nature is represented in literature by scrutinizing the images of cities, animals, rivers and mountains – various environmental images. In the second phase, critics were trying to locate the tradition of nature writing in the works reflecting ecological awareness. In this context she says that American writers like Willa Cather, Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker received much attention. While explaining the third stage, the theoretical phase, Glotfelty observes that recent theories on Ecocriticism characterize this phase.

In the final part of the essay, Glotfelty explains the design and classification of articles which follow. She also provides prefatory notes on the three sections under which the articles in the book are organized – “Ecotheory: Reflections on Nature and Culture”, “Ecocritical Considerations of Fiction and Drama” and “Critical Studies of Environmental Literature”. Glotfelty also indicates that the articles in these three sections contribute actively in making a source book on Ecocriticism. According to her, the first segment has articles which deal with technology and nature, the aesthetic impact of nature and environmental post-structuralism which are based on the theories of Michel Foucault and Edward Said. The second segment of the book, she says, is largely an expansion of Joseph Meeker's work *The Comedy of Survival*. She observes that the articles, in this segment, analyze in an ecocentric way forms like tragedy, comedy and fiction. The final segment, she argues, is the real refreshing tonic of the book which reconsiders the value of nature-oriented literature. The articles included, in this section, indicate a shift from ego-consciousness to ecoconsciousness and the awareness of women's nature writing. Glotfelty concludes the introductory note by stating that her book, besides giving a comprehensive reading list, is also affordably

priced to help the growing community of scholars engaged in ecological literary studies. This path-breaking introduction by Glotfelty brings to the readers a pressing point that writing and reading literature in an era of environmental crisis and resource crunch should be considered as extensions of conservation and environmental activism.

8.5 CONCLUSION

Glotfelty considers Ecocriticism as a field of enquiry that examines and upholds works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations. Her essay underlines the importance of bio-regionalism, ecoconsciousness and earth-centered approach in writing and thinking.

8.6 KEY TERMS

Ecocriticism, eco-centric, environmental activism, ecoconsciousness, environmental imagination, Regionalism, human ecology, wilderness, Environmental ethics, Deep Ecology

8. 7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.I Say if the following statements are true or false

1. Glotfelty roots for the link between literature and environmental activism.
2. Glotfelty compares the development Ecocriticism with that of Feminism.
3. Glotfelty proposes a study human culture in the context of physical world.

Q.II Define the following:

1. Ecocriticism
2. Ecoconsciousness
3. Regionalism

QIII. Answer the following:

1. Explain how Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered perspective to literary studies.
2. “Ecocriticism is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment”. Discuss with reference to Glotfelty’s essay.
3. Discuss in detail the characteristic features of Ecocriticism as a critical practice.

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Question Paper

Time : 3 hours Maximum Marks: 100

Instructions
Answer five questions, selecting a minimum of two questions from each section

All questions carry equal marks

Section !

Q.1
(a) Discuss Aristotle's views on mimesis as revealed in *Poetics*.

OR

(b) Explain how Dr. Johnson analyses both the merits and demerits of Shakespeare like a true critic, in "The Preface to Shakespeare."

Q.2
(a) How does Coleridge establish the argument in "Biographia Literaria" that the language of the rustics cannot possibly accommodate all the themes in poetry?

OR

(b) What are Shelley's views on harmony in language, metre, imagination, wisdom and pleasure as the elements of poetry?

Q.3
(a) What are S.N.Dasguta's views on the classical Sanskrit critics who have commented on Rasa theory? Explain.

OR

(b) How does S.K.De establish the argument that Alankaras (Poetic figures) are merely different aspects of vakrokti ? Discuss.

Q.4
(a) Explain, how Cleanth Brooks proves that Paradox was the basis of Romantic poetry, Metaphysical poetry and Neo-classical poetry , in "The Language of Paradox"?

OR

(b) Explain, with the help of illustrations, Victor Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarisation as explained in his essay, "Art as Technique"

Section II

Q.5
(a) How does Roland Barthes remove author from the center of a literary text? How does he explain a post structuralist semantic free play in his essay, "The Death of the Author"?

OR

(b) Jean Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulations" holds forth the argument that the new age experiences are conditioned by nostalgia, simulation and the hyperreal. Elucidate.

Q.6
(a) What, according to Fredric Jameson, are the problems and paradoxes of post modernism? How does Jameson make a Marxist evaluation of postmodernism in "The Politics of Theory: Ideological positions in the post modernism debate"?

OR

(b) How does Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak examine the various schools and practices of feminism in "Feminism and the Crititcal Theory"?

Q.7
(a) Explain how Wolfgang Iser combines Phenemenology and Reading Response Theory in "Reading Process: A Phenemenological Approach"?

OR

(b) How does Stephen Greenblatt define 'Resonance', 'Wonder', and 'New Historicism' Explain the major argument of the essay "Resonance and Wonder".

Q.8
(a) Explain how Stuart Hall brings together the concerns of Post colonial Criticism, Culture studies and Diaspora studies in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora."

OR

(b) Cheryll Clotfelty's "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" explain the legacy and concerns of environmentally informed literary criticism. Discuss.

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