INTRODUCTION

WESTERN POETICS

Though it has never been considered that critics of poetry should be successful practitioners of the art they criticize, a vast majority of poets have also been critics Aristophanes, Horace, Dante, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Poe and T. S. Eliot. Generally, each age in literary history has its own individual approach, but there are no fixed principles of criticism to be applied indiscriminately to the works of all ages and writers.

The literature of criticism is not small or negligible. Its chief architects from Aristotle onwards, have often been among the first intellects of their age. Yet it is difficult to arrive at some consensus of an agreed code of fixed principles of criticism which may be presented with a view to evaluating the literature of all ages, and of all writers. Still, the basic fact remains the same that literary criticism with some embarrassing exceptions is a single activity running through Plato to Eliot. Its history is the story of successive critics offering different answers to the same questions, and catering to the needs of their
respective ages, the critics have also added something valuable to the texture of the general critical thought. Allen Tate says, "The permanent critics are the rotating chairman of a debate, only the rhetoric of which changes from time to time." The total genre of literary criticism is said to constitute one organic whole. Wimsatt and Brooks also express the same view, they write: "The first principle on which we should insist, is that of continuity and intelligibility in the history of literary argument." The view is also supported by George Saintsbury, Atkins and Rene Wellek.

Criticism is the exercise of judgement on works of literature began almost simultaneously with literary creation. Criticism is born of questioning, it subjects everything to the closest scrutiny and is a scientific approach to its subject to understand and interpret it fully. In Europe the art of criticism began in ancient Greece. Exactly when it began can not be said for certain, but it is certainly closely connected with that great intellectual awakening which was heralded by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Socrates and Aristophanes. The intellectual awakening of fourth and fifth century B.C. in Athens, became the center of literary and critical activity, Plato and Aristotle were the most important critics. This being the earliest phase of criticism forms the background to all the subsequent literary

1. Allen Tate : Quoted by George Watson- The Literary critics, p.11.
2. Wimsatt & Brooks- Literary Criticism p. vii
inquiry.

The awakening resulted in scholars and learned men discussing freely religion, philosophy, morality, politics, art and literature. Aristophanes was the first to apply his mind to a critical consideration of literature. In his comedy 'The Frogs' he initiates for the first time, the most valuable discussion on such subjects as language, craftsmanship, morality and merit in art and literature. The questions he raised, and observations he made, in the exploration of the hidden and the dormant in poetry and drama, not only engaged the attention of subsequent critics in his own country but are of interest even today. With him begins the first regular criticism of the western world, although the critic had not disintegrated himself from the creative artist. Thus there are lines of great critical significance in the epics of Homer and the Frogs has several passages of penetrating critical inquiry. Afterwards, the laurels of regular criticism are shared by scholars of the eminence of Plato, Aristotle and Longinus in Greece; Horace, Cicero and Quintilian in Rome. However it was only with Plato that criticism became a vital force in the ancient world.

Plato, the celebrated disciple of Socrates was the first conscious literary critic, who has put his ideas in a systematic way in his 'Dialogues' He founded his Academy in 387 B. C., and taught his pupils philosophy, mathematics, natural
sciences, jurisprudence and practical legislation, Plato wrote his
great books here the Dialogues—— Ion, Lyses, Gorgias and
Symposium Phaedrus and Republic. His views on art and
literature are scattered all over his works, he was not a professed
critic of literature thus his critical observations are not embodied
in any single work. In his Ion and Republic stray references are
found and at places he has expressed his views forcefully and at
length, which are not only interesting but are also of great
historical significance. In his earlier works Plato took the poet as
a possessed creature, not using language in the way that normal
human beings do, but speaking in a divinely inspired frenzy. Later
Plato changed his mind and declared poetry as pure inspiration,
a notion that has had a long history, has gone through many
modifications and which even survives today. The poet speaks
divine truth: he is divinely inspired like prophets. Poetry is not a
craft that can be learned and practiced at will, as it is the result
of inspiration—— the divine, speaking through the poet. He
believed that poetry cannot be relied upon as it is not the result
of conscious, considered judgement but the out come of the
irrational and impulsive within us.

Plato’s theory of imitation finds expression in his
Republic Book X in which he gives an elaborate statement on his
views on imitation. According to him if true reality consists of the
ideas of things, of which individual objects are but reflections or
imitations, then anyone who imitates those individual objects—is imitating an imitation, thus producing something which is still further removed from ultimate reality. Therefore not only are the arts once or twice but thrice removed from truth they are also the product of futile ignorance. He failed to realize that the art is the artist’s impression of reality, and not a mechanical representation of it. Further he did not realize that poetry is not servile imitation or copying it is creative. It is the poet’s view of reality that we get from him and not reality itself. Plato failed to understand the nature of poetic truth or truth of idea.

Plato’s attack on poetry and his theory of poetry, was meant to demonstrate the practical superiority of philosophy over poetry, and much of his criticism is thus in the nature of special pleading and is governed by the social and political conditions of his age. Still his criticism has much significance, he gave direction to later criticism and the suggestive and stimulating quality of his writings remains unsurpassed to this day. He finds poetry immoral, emotional and unintellectual. According to him poetry is not conducive to social morality as the poets narrate tales of man’s pleasant vices, causing a demoralizing effect on the society. They deprave public taste and morality by telling lies about gods and great heroes as they are represented as corrupt, immoral, dishonest, indeed subject to all the faults and vices of humanity. He believes that even Homer militates against
reverence for the gods, and the allegorical meaning, if there is any, is certainly beyond the reach of the young. He believed that philosophy alone is the proper subject of study, as poets and dramatists appeal to the baser instincts of men, their love of the sensational and the melodramatic.

Plato also criticizes poetry on emotional grounds as reason is kept in abeyance and full sway is given to the emotions. Poetry thus has a debilitating effect, it leads to loss of balance, with feelings unrestrained by either reason or principle. He condemns poetry in Republic X, for the poets, "they feed and water the passions instead of drying them up and let them rule instead of ruling them as they ought to be ruled, with a view to the happiness and virtue of mankind."

Plato attacks poetry on intellectual ground as well; poets have no knowledge of truth, for they imitate appearances and not the truth of the things, illusion instead of reality. He emphasizes that beyond the world of senses there is another world—— the world of ideal reality where concepts like truth, virtue, beauty etc. exist in an ideal form. Thus his attack on poetry is on intellectual, emotional, utilitarian and moral grounds, and he demonstrates its uselessness and its corrupting influences. He ends his charges against poetry by saying that in an ideal state, "no poetry should be admitted save hymns to the gods and
panegyrics on famous men. "The poets are to be honored, but banished from his ideal state.

Plato for the first time emphasizes that organic unity is essential for success in all arts. He not only desires the unity and completeness that is provided by a suitable, beginning, middle and an end, but also a harmonious inter-relation of the different parts. Artistic unity means that no part should be changed or omitted without an injury to the whole work. He is the first to emphasize the doctrine of artistic unity. He also originated the classification of poetry into forms or style. His remarks on comedy mark the beginning of the theory of ludicrous in antiquity. However he is against excessive laughter on the ground that it leads to violent reactions. Speaking about the function of poetry he is of the view that it is not merely the giving of pleasure, but it is also of the moulding of human character and bringing out of the best that is latent in the human soul. He lays a lot of emphasis on the form of the literary creation. He condemns incongruities of style, melody and rhythm, and also the ridiculous mixture of tragic and comic effects. He lays down high standards for literary criticism and believes that the tastes of the general public cannot determine literary standards.

Plato's greatest achievement lies in the fact that he grasped the first principles, the fundamentals, with unerring
certainty. He was fully alive to the need of a logic of art, the organic unity of arts, and laid great stress on clear thinking as necessary for artistic creation. He was the first to recognize the mysterious power of poetry vitality and its power of communicating truths. He regards poetry as an influence, moulding character rather than as a means of imparting moral instructions and doctrines. Viewing his work as a whole, it may be said that with him literary theory really begins, he made later criticism possible, he set men thinking, gave inspiration and direction to critical effort and supplied ideals for generations to come. He was something more than a pathfinder, he stands for something positive and constructive in the critical sphere.

Any defence of poetry against Plato, would have to first tackle the argument that it is an inferior imitation of imitation, proceed to show that poetic gift derives from a uniquely significant human faculty and finally demonstrate that if poetry arouses passion it is only in order, in the long run to allay it or discipline it. The triple task is brilliantly achieved by Aristotle the great disciple of Plato in his "Poetics". He took up the challenge to show that poetry was not only pleasant but also useful for man and society. He emphasizes the value and significance of poetry in moulding the character of the individual. The Poetics is a systematic exposition of the theory and practice of poetry, a well-balanced reasonable answer to Plato's charges against
poetry. Aristotle takes up hints and suggestions from his master teacher—re-interprets them, and imparts new meaning and significance to Plato’s concepts.

The Poetics is a fragmentary, incomplete work of literary criticism and deals with tragedy, comedy and epic poetry. It contains twenty-six chapters and forty-five pages. It is mainly concerned with the philosopher’s theory of tragedy. It has been suggested that Aristotle wrote the Poetics as a reply to Plato’s scathing denunciation of poetry as false, unreal and harmful. While writing Poetics Aristotle had the author of Republic in mind, though nowhere in the Poetics he mentions the name of Plato, yet all the while he seems to be refuting Plato’s charges. Professor Abercrombie thinks “that almost certainly the Poetics is Aristotle’s counter-blast to Plato’s celebrated condemnation of poetry on a pursuit unworthy of man’s intellectual dignity, and radically vicious in its effect.” Atkins also finds Aristotle “merely careful to frame a reply to Plato’s indictment; and with this he is apparently for the most part content.”

The Poetics is a defense against the attacks of Plato, who set out to reorganize human life; Aristotle a better psychologist than Plato set out to reorganize human knowledge. Plato was a transcendentalist and had the temperament of an
artist; Aristotle a scientist, a biologist, an experimentalist, who arrived at his principles through observation and analysis, introducing ‘Categories’ and classification in literary creation. Plato—an idealist believed that the phenomenal world is but an objectification of the ideal world, which is real. The phenomenal world is but a shadow of this ideal reality, it is therefore, fleeting and unreal. Aristotle on the other hand, believed in the reality of the world of senses. The world is real, and it must form the basis of any scientific or systematic study, and it is on the basis of the study and observation of particular realities that general principles can be induced. Thus Aristotle moves from the real to the ideal, from the particular to the general. His methods are inductive taking him in this respect to the opposite pole from Plato.

No two individuals could differ more widely in their objectives and methods of work than do Plato and Aristotle; and out of this difference result their different attitudes towards poetry Plato’s language is poetic and charming; that of Aristotle is dogmatic and telegraphic. It is the language of private, personal notes of an intelligent teacher rather than that of a finished product. Aristotle makes full use of the terminology and doctrines of Plato, develops or confutes them, and on the basis provided by them develops theories of his own. Plato was a more original
genius; Aristotle more comprehensive and systematic.

Plato was the first to use the word, imitation in connection with poetry; Aristotle took the word from his master, but breathed a new life and soul into it. Plato considered imitation merely as a servile copy of nature, he likened poetry to painting, and according to him poetry imitates only surface appearances, as does a painter. It goes to the credit of Aristotle that he makes imitation an aesthetic faculty. The aesthetic meaning of imitation is 'representation' of a natural object, an artist presents an imaginative re-construction of life, and artist presents an image of the impressions made by an object on his mental surface. Imitation in poetry is what we mean by technique, it is confined entirely to the poetic activity within the art itself: it describes the connection between poetic impulse and poetic language. Imitation is his word for the technique by which the poet finally achieves communicable expression of his imaginative inspiration. Butcher says, "Fine art passes beyond the bare reality given by nature, and expresses a purified form of reality disengaged from accident, and freed from conditions which thwart its development." Aristotle interpreted imitation as a creative process, which transforms reality into something new and much higher. He brought the emotions within the range of imitation. According to Aristotle, poetry imitates not only the externals, but also internal emotions and experiences. It can imitate men as
they are, or better and worse. Poetry is not concerned with what is, but with what ought to be. Poetry gives us an idealized version of reality. Aristotle stressed that an artist imitates because he gets pleasure in imitation and this faculty is an inborn instinct in man. When Aristotle says that the aim of art is to provide pleasure, he is perhaps laying the foundation of art for art's sake. But for Plato the purpose of a work of art is not to provide pleasure alone, but also to teach us, art in his view has a moral aim, he denounced poets as corrupters of mankind, but this view does not hold ground to-day. Professor Abercrombie observes, "Aristotle's way of interpreting poetic imitation is possibly the most valuable of all his contributions to aesthetic theory. At any rate, it put the theory on perfectly secure and solid foundations." According to Aristotle, the poet works according to the law of probability or necessity, not according to some chance observation or random invention.

Aristotle is the first to use the term Katharsis in connection with tragedy, and this part of the Poetics is highly original and moving. We get no corresponding theory in Plato. This theory of Katharsis enables Aristotle to demonstrate the healthy influence which poetry, in general and tragedy, in particular, exercise over the emotions. Plato regarded the emotions as undesirable and so advocated their repression, a better psychologist than Plato he believed that there is more to be gained by educating the emotions than by repressing them. The
doctrine of Katharsis is central to this argument and Aristotle through this theory stresses the need for emotional outlets. Lucas says, "Doubtlessly, Aristotle was saner in this than Plato with his phobia of emotion." Emotions may be controlled and guided, but they must not be suppressed. Plato pleaded on behalf of philosophy, and his purpose was to show that philosophy is superior to poetry, and so philosophy must replace poetry in the school. But according to Aristotle, poetry is to be preferred both to history and philosophy, as it is more philosophical and superior to history; for poetry tends to express the universal while history the particular. Inspite of short comings the Poetics remains one of the greatest contribution to literary and critical theory, one of those rare books that have had lasting influence on the minds of men. In it we see Aristotle as the first of the systematic theorists, an early exponent of the historical and psychological methods; incidentally, a pioneer in the business of sane literary judgement; so that, alike, in the theory and practice of criticism the work stands at the beginning of things, developing and extending the findings of Plato. "Even to-day the Poetics continues to be studied and prescribed as text book in schools and colleges all over the world, from California to Calcutta," says F.E. Lucas. This is so because, Aristotle has formulated once for all the great first principles of dramatic art, the canons of dramatic logic which a dramatist can ignore only at his peril. T.S. Eliot is right when he
calls Aristotle a man of, "universal intelligence" i.e. one who could apply his intelligence to anything.

Around the first century B. C. the center of literary and cultural activity shifted from Alexandria to Rome, the capital of Roman empire. With the Augustan age there dawned a golden age of poetry and literary criticism. Various factors contributed to the flowering of literary and critical activity during the era. The king Augustus Caesar was a great patron of art and literature and it was an era of peace full of nationalism and the literary men wanted to equal, if not actually excel, the achievement of ancient Greece both in literature and criticism. The age was made brilliant by the achievement of such literary figures as Virgil, Ovid, Tribulles and Horace. Horace was the greatest of Roman critics. With him a fresh beginning in criticism was made, and it was with him that a new tradition began. Atkins says that he called to the minds the standard of classical art, while directing their steps back to the poetry of antiquity; and he undoubtedly stands out as the most influential of Roman critics, one who achieved results of a lasting kind, and was to rank in stature with Aristotle at the Renaissance. He was a markedly conscious artist, and made constant efforts to perfect his own art, he had a definite theory of his own. He was introduced by the poets Virgil and Varius to Maecenas, thus he came in contact with a variety of cultured minds, keenly alive to the immediate literary
problems. Throughout his poetry, for instance there runs a critical strain, a criticism that is, of contemporary manners, morals politics, and thought; and the theme of literature naturally does not escape this treatment. Literary pronouncements, of great significance, are to be found even in Horace’s political works such as his satires and Epistles, his main critical theories are to be found in his Epistle to Pisos or the Ars Poetica a work which equaled Aristotle’s Poetics in its influence during the Renaissance. Apparently, Ars Poetics seems formless and unsystematic but a closer examination reveals a definite and well marked scheme of treatment. It is a body of rules and principles which intending poets will find useful in their composition. It opens with Horace’s stress on the need of observing organic unity and propriety. According to him poetry is not mere imitation. It is creative, poets are free to use their imagination, but they must remain true to life, freedom must not degenerate into license, otherwise the result would be sheer absurdity. The choice of a sound subject matter is essential for the source and fountain head of good writing, he says that he who chooses his subject wisely, will find that neither words nor lucid arrangement will fail him, and the subject should be simple and consistent, as suited to the powers of the writer. Horace deals with the ‘form’ in the abstract and “form” in the concrete extensively in the second part of his Ars Poetica. After a brief note
on the arrangement of material, he proceeds to deal at length with poetic style or expression, commenting in detail on poetic diction, on the "composition" or arrangement of words, specially in metrical form, and finally on the styles and "tones" appropriate to the different dramatic genres and characters. In his treatment of drama he deals with "form" in a more concrete manner. Horace has a high conception of the vocation of a poet, and says for success in it both Nature and art are necessary, as regards the function of poetry, Horace follows the general, classical view that poetry should both teach and delight with greater stress on teaching than on delight. Though critical achievements of Horace could not arrest the literary decadence at Rome nor did he inspire a revival of artistic glories of Greece, yet its influence was felt in the Middle Ages; and at the Renaissance the Ars Poetica became one of the great text books to men turned for the teaching of antiquity on literature. It became the basis of arguments in defence of poetry, suggestions for the treatment of literary language as well as a body of rules for the creation of poetry. In innumerable ways it shaped and coloured the new critical doctrines—the Humanistic formula of "following the ancients." The most important name in the history of criticism next to Aristotle is Horace. Ars Poetica broadcast the seed of Poetics over every literature in Europe, and what the history of criticism owes to Horace is quite inestimable. His influence has
been so wide because his teaching is the fruit of the experience of one which himself a great artist had a clear conception of poetic principles, and who expressed them in exquisite and memorable phrases.

"On the Sublime" by Longinus is a critical document of great worth and significance, it is unfortunate that it has come down to us in an imperfect form. Large portions are missing, and there are frequent and extensive gaps. It has been calculated that as much as one third of the original document is missing, thus we have only a part of the actual work, but what we have, is sufficient to make plain the intention of its author. The document, imperfect as it is, contains such abundance of good things, that it must be considered as one of the choicest pieces of criticism that have come down to us from antiquity Longinus by 'sublime' means 'elevation' or 'loftiness' all that raises style above the ordinary, and gives to it distinction in its widest and truest sense, this distinction was present in the earliest Greek masterpieces which gives them their permanent value. Thus by sublimity Longinus means, 'a certain distinction and excellence in composition.' The effect of this quality is not mere pleasure but 'transport;' i.e. to say it works like a charm carrying irresistibly away with it, all readers and hearers. The effect is as immediate as it is subtle, to quote his own words, "sublimity flashing forth at the right moment, scatters everything before it like a
thunderbolt, and at once displays the power of an orator in all its plentitude.” Passages like these have led R.A. Scott James to call Longinus, “the first romantic critic.”

On the Sublime also deals with a host of other incidental matters. Says Wimsatt and Brooks, “one of the most extraordinary features of the essay is the variety of criteria, the number of approaches to poetry, which it manages to include; not only the main three, the transport of the audience, the genius of the author, the devices of the rhetoric — but in passing the democratic idea that great poetry is that which pleases all and always, and again a further variation on the subject-object relation, the most spectacular or operatic part of the essay, the idea of physical grandeur as the counter part of psychic. “According to Longinus the decline and degradation of literature results not from the rise of democracy and collapse of monarchy, but from a degradation and corruption of the human soul, people have grown greedy, corrupt, materialistic, shameless and insolent, and so art and literature suffered. He constantly illustrates his views with reference to the works of the Greek and Roman masters, thus, throwing fresh light on such matters as critical standards and critical methods.

Longinus displays a rare breadth and catholicity of outlook, and a mind disinterested and free from prejudice. His
estimates are essentially just, and have been upheld by posterity. More important, according to Atkins are those judgements that aim not at assessing, but at interpreting. Literary values; those appreciation of Longinus that enlighten and stimulate, and enable us to read with quickened intelligence. Gibbon calls such passages as the finest monuments of antiquity. Such passages are criticism of the highest kind, for they are based on sound psychological grounds, and result from conscious analysis and delicate imaginative sympathy. Longinus stands high as a judicial critic and he takes account of the three separate literatures, yet more significant still is his anticipation of modern criticism, in those interpretations of his which lead to a more intimate understanding of ancient art, and reveal in the clearest light his appreciation of the essence of literature. There is much in his treatise that is borrowed from earlier writers, but there is also much that is original and illuminating and is of permanent and universal significance. He is original, in the importance which he attaches to emotion, imagination and beauty of words. For him literature is not a mechanical craft, but a thing of the spirit, of imagination, of feeling and of the gift of communication. He thus becomes a pioneer in the field of aesthetic appreciation of literature, he advocates a turn to the standards, and above all the spirit, of the classical Greeks, he directs again and again to the attention from the technical to the more elusive and spiritual side
of literature. He nowhere alludes to Katharsis but believes that literature works through, emotion and in this conception of aesthetic function he approaches more nearly to modern ideas than did any of his predecessors.

The laurels of regular criticism are shared by scholars of the eminence of Plato, Aristotle and Longinus in Greece, Horace, Cicero and Quintillian in Rome. After Dante, in the thirteenth century, literary criticism broadens its geographical base; crosses the frontiers of Italy; passes through France; and comes to England. The efforts of the Tudor trio Cheke, Ascham, Wilson in the initial stages, and that of Sidney and Ben Jonson in the later decades of the sixteenth century, go a long way in laying the foundations of English literary criticism.

Renaissance criticism in its complexion and nature is diverse and derivative. The Graeco-Roman classicists and Latin rhetorician provide guidance and inspiration. The stress is on the necessity of submission to a code of conduct both on the part of the writer and critic. The writers advocate freedom and moderation in imitating ancient models, their style and technique. The Renaissance criticism establishes the noble traditions of imaginative literature as well as it revives interest in the classics of antiquity. It also ensures a dignified place for the poet and prescribes for regulated creative activity based on the models of
the ancients, at the same time it advocates freedom to art and literature, in developing themselves in a natural way, as conditioned by local and indigenous tastes. The Restoration period marks a new era in the realm of English criticism. It is known for catholicity of taste and breadth of outlook. Dryden known as the father of English criticism is its main exponent and sets the fashion for its future course. His practical criticism has a permanent value and represents certain qualities which are of great value, interest to the students of literary criticism, thus he occupies a unique position and is free and unbiased in the display of critical spirit, he blends in himself the rare qualities of imaginative sympathy, critical insight and literary skill. His capacity to penetrate and see merits in all literary camps, irrespective of their affinities with diverse schools of thought, amply displays his flexibility in the matters of critical judgements. In an age of new influences of science and philosophy, Dryden shows a great sense of balance and propriety. He maintains an equilibrium between the local and the foreign, the old and the new, and the modern and the neoclassical.

The early eighteenth century shows the height of neoclassicism, the key word was "Follow Nature", which is interpreted in different ways by different critics. The impact of neoclassicism in England was different from that felt in France and Italy. The most acceptable reasons for this difference are
— influence of Shakespeare and other Renaissance dramatist, the liberalism of Dryden and the wide popularity which the Longinian “Concept of Sublimity” had acquired by this time, other factors are also directly or indirectly responsible for the growing liberalism. The influence of Reynolds, Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, Beattie and Burke and other men of letters of the age is widely experienced. In their works we note an increasing emphasis on instincts as better and wiser guides than reason, emotional appeal of art is strongly advocated, the theory of “Association of Ideas” strengthens the philosophical base of Imagination, and the growth of scientific spirit and the development of historical consciousness weaken the notion of strict adherence to ancient names and authority. Art as such becomes more dynamic and is regulated by the standard and taste of the national genius. Thus the period starting with Dryden and ending with Dr. Johnson, marks an important epoch in the history of literary criticism. It highlights an ever-increasing interest in literature and initiates serious discussion on its scope form and functions.

It is rich both in creative and critical output, the age is also very significant in the way it first pre-occupies itself and then wriggles out of the hotly-debated controversy of the ancients versus the moderns. From the mid seventeenth century reason is the watch word that sways the entire field of literary activity, but in the later half of the eighteenth century, romantic
exuberance of the Elizabethans tends to assert itself once again. It may be interpreted as a sort of systematic reaction against the restrictions of the Augustan age. Till we came to Dr. Johnson, Neo-classicism undergoes major decomposition owing to the pulls of disintegration from within, and the pressures of new ideas from without, thus substantive advances are made in the directions of the Romantic Revolt that burst out in the nineteenth century.

The publication of the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads marks the culmination of a new outlook, in the development of English literary criticism,—Romanticism is the name applied to the new change. The epithet romantic had been in vogue in the continent since long, but it assumed dimensional significance through the discussions of Schlegel and Madame de Stael, the two terms 'classical' and 'romantic' have come to stay as distinctive literary schools. Like romantic poetry, romantic criticism also has demonstrated its potentiality, and opposes all regimentation in literature that left nothing to freedom and Nature. It was marked with homogeneity and profundity, it evaluated literature—a piece of art by its end rather than by its means, whereas the neoclassical critics judged literature in the light of such standards as social propriety or moral purity. The romantic critics started assessing poetry with regard to the poets minds and its inner working. Coleridge propounds the theory of "willing
suspension of disbelief”, Keats refers to the “negative capability of the poet.” Wordsworth speaks of the “tranquilized emotions”, while Hazlitt theorises on “sympathetic identification”. Till now, literary judgement is more a matter of knowledge than of “opinion.” But the revolt unfolds new vistas not of reason, but of imagination. The foundations of a new aesthetics are laid where “knowledge” becomes subservient to opinion, and impressions are made the vehicles of critical evaluation. There is a fundamental difference between the new aesthetics and the preceding one. The renaissance criticism excepting that of Sidney in England, is mainly humanistic. It is preoccupied with linguistic and rhetorical bias. The neoclassic criticism which succeeds it, does in no way prove itself better. The problems of style and language still dominate the minds of the critics, rules, not, principles dictate the supremacy of authority. The romantic aesthetics promises a new basis of appreciation. The whole conception of Beauty, its nature and sources undergo a radical change. Art and its appeal acquire new colours rooted deeply in psychology, philosophy and metaphysics. The pioneer of the new aesthetic outlook is the distinguished German group of the three—Lessing, Herder and Goethe. Later on Kant, Schlegel and Schelling embodied a whole philosophy and gave it a subtlety and depth of its own. The mention of Rousseau’s name is also very important to complete the list. To him the whole romantic
revolt stands in allegiance, for providing it an emotional respectability and a colourful originality. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution aroused aspirations not experienced so far. They created a craving for freedom and fraternity, which in their turn generated a chain of reaction, and even of revolt against the shackles of so called authority. The European Continent became surcharged with an indomitable spirit of inquiry and an unprecedented longing for independence. Art and literature do not remain unaffected, and as a result, the rules and regulations of Aristotle, Horace, Boileau and Le Bossu are questioned. Even the literary dictator—— Dr. Johnson declares that "no man as yet ever became great by imitation."

The romantic aesthetics touches new horizons of evaluation. It is basically different from all other modes of criticism, It is distinguished by its own characteristics, and its primary source of inspiration is Longinus. The romantic criticism shows a shift from the "mimetic" to the subjective and the expressive criticism, it probes into such metaphysical questions as "the origin and appeal of poetry," and recognizes the principal imagination, working at the core of each individual writer and his work. Its very nature is fundamental and creative and is impressionistic in form and character. It is highly philosophical and abounds in psychological bias. It discards all linguistic and rhetorical considerations, which we see persisting throughout
renaissance and neoclassic techniques of criticism.

Wordsworth's position as a pioneer and leader of Romantic Revival is universally recognized, he makes a powerful plea against the so called 'wit-writing" of the eighteenth century. He is opposed to the neoclassical method of evaluating a work of art by the standards of the ancient models. He propounds a new theory both about form and content of poetry, and makes emotions the core of poetic perfection. His advocacy of powerful emotions either displayed spontaneously or tranquilized through a process of recollection adds, a new meaning to the metaphysical interpretation of poetry and its sources.

Wordsworth occupies an outstanding position in the new aesthetics of romanticism. His place is with Dante as far as he makes bold assertions on the problems of language and style. The born poet is distinguished from other men particularly by his inheritance of intense sensibility and susceptibility to passion. A poet, as Wordsworth said, differs from other men because he is endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness—a man pleased with his own passions and volition, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him .

In Wordsworth's theory the essential passions and unelaborated expressions of humble people serve not only as the subject matter of poetry, but also as the model for the spontaneous overflow of the poets own feelings in his act of composition.

To the question—— nature of the poet, Wordsworth's answer is that he is "a man speaking to men, different from others not in kind, but merely in the degree of sensibility, passion and power of expression." Hence, where the poet speaks through the mouth of his own characters, the subject will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions. On those occasion where the poet speaks to us in his own person and character, he also feels, and therefore speaks, as the representative of the uniform human nature.

Wordsworth was as certain as any neoclassic critic was that poetry must produce immediate pleasure. Wordsworth conceived of the poet's social function no less gravely than had Spenser or Milton before him. He wrote to Sir George Beaumont, 'every great poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing.' The poet he says writes under the necessity 'of giving pleasure;' and in his defence of Robert Burns, Wordsworth attributed to poetry a double aim,

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which in a phrase that was already archaic, he denominated ‘to please and to instruct.’ And each of his own poems he tells us in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, ‘has a worthy purpose.’ But this purpose Wordsworth makes clear, in the art of composition itself, is neither deliberate nor doctrinaire. Wordsworth maintains that, instead of telling and demonstrating what to do to become better, poetry by sensitizing, purifying and strengthening the feelings directly make us better. A great poet, he said sought, ‘to rectify man’s feelings — to render their feelings more sane, pure and permanent.’ He said that one man is superior to another in so far as he is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants, so that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability in one of the best services in which, at any period a writer can be engaged.

Coleridge’s place as a critic is far superior to that of Wordsworth, both in depth and originality. He may be considered the most shining luminary amongst the great critics England has produced. Coleridge believed that poetry, as the instinctive utterance of feeling, must have seemed to early man a more natural and less remarkable language than prose; it was the language, passion and emotion; it is what they themselves spoke and heard in moments of exultation, indignation etc.⁵ Though romantic critics disagreed violently on the merits of

primitive poetry, most of them accepted the hypothesis, that it had its inception in passionate utterances—— rather than as Aristotle had assumed, in an instinct for imitation. It is Coleridge who under the influence of German metaphysicians gives to literary criticism a deep philosophical basis. His highest success lies in the fact that he makes criticism a science. Hence psychology, philosophy now tends to bear great influence upon literary criticism. He explores new horizons of inspiration and creation. His distinction between 'Imagination' and 'Fancy', and its further classification into Primary and Secondary Imagination are the high marks of all his creative philosophy. He strongly protests against the earlier interpretations of Imagination which according to him are nothing but mechanistic. Fancy according to Coleridge, is more of the nature of a mechanical operator. Its main function is to juxtapose the images. Imagination on the other hand has something more vital to perform. Its main function is to fuse all images underlying each organic perception into an organic whole, — in other words, the operation of Imagination lies in visualizing all things as one, and one in all things. Moreover Coleridge's aesthetic principles are closely related to his practical criticism. Poetry is competent to express emotions chiefly by its resources of figures of speech and rhythm by means of which words naturally embody and convey through meaning and sound the feelings of the poet.
It is essential to poetry that its language be spontaneous and genuine, not a contrived and stimulated expression of the emotional state of the poet. On this depends also the general romantic use of spontaneity, sincerity and integral unity of thought and feelings, as the essential criteria of poetry, in place of their neoclassical counterparts: Judgement, truth and the appropriateness with which diction adheres to the speaker the subject matter and literary form.

Coleridge’s doctrine of the willing suspension of disbelief is cited by modern proponents of the view that truth or falsity is irrelevant to poetic statement; and indeed, the logical and psychological concepts are natural correlates. Coleridge defined a poem as proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth, and he chided Wordsworth for destroying the fundamental distinction, in some of his poems, not only between a poem, but even between philosophy and works of fiction, by proposing truth for its immediate object instead of pleasure. In his Shakespearean criticism, Coleridge adds new dimensions to the evaluation of drama and poetry. As a critic of fundamentals, Coleridge’s place is by the side of Aristotle and Longinus.

After the publication of Wordsworth’s Preface in 1800 Coleridge wrote to Southey in 1802 that, “although

Wordsworth's preface is half a child of my own brain, I rather suspect that somehow or other, there is a radical difference in our theoretical opinions concerning poetry. Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth was the fruit of some fourteen years of meditation on the topic.

In opposition to Wordsworth, Coleridge expressly defines a poem in such a way as to make meter an essential attribute. He thus separates the poem not only from works of science or history but, from works of fiction which are written in prose. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded, 'A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth, and from all other species it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with and distinct from each component part.'

By defining a poem as a means to an 'object', 'purpose' or 'end', Coleridge, quite in the tradition of neoclassical criticism, establishes the making of poems to be a deliberate art, rather than the spontaneous overflow of feelings. In an earlier lecture, he had put the matter in such a way as to bring in the expression of feeling, but under subordination to deliberate

purpose: “It is the art of communicating whatever we wish to communicate, so as both to express and produce excitement, but the purpose of immediate pleasure; and each part is fitted to offer as much pleasure as is compatible with the largest sum in the whole.”

Coleridge employed the Neoplatonic concept of the natura naturans, in his On Poesy of Art, a dynamic principle which operates not only behind the particulars of the external world, but also in the mind of man. The artist must copy, not the natura naturater, but the 'essence' which is within the thing. 'We may note also how this idea coincides with that of Aristotle in regard to the true nature of “imitation”, that is not the external semblance of things but the essence of spirit of it that the poet "imitates."

'The component parts of a poem, including the feelings it expresses, are so many means for achieving the definite aim of pleasure; and meter in this context of discussion is regarded as 'a studied selection and artificial arrangement for the purpose of affording the optimal pleasure in each part of a poem'. Meter is not, however as Wordsworth and many earlier theorists had maintained, merely a supernumerary charm, for in a harmonious or organized whole the change in any part involves

an alteration of the rest, hence, ‘if meter be super-added, all other parts must be made consonant with it.’ ‘I adduce—— the principle,’ Coleridge says later on in the argument, ‘that all parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts.’

Coleridge says: ‘Poetry, Mr. Wordsworth truly affirms, does always imply passion, and every passion has its characteristic modes of expression.’ But in addition, ‘the very fact of poetic composition itself is, and is allowed to imply and to produce, an unusual state of excitement, which of course justifies and demands a correspondent of difference of language.’

In sum, Coleridge holds that the greatest poetry is, indeed, the product of spontaneous feeling, but feeling which, by a productive tension with the impulse for order, sets in motion the assimilative imagination and organizes itself into a conventional medium in which the parts and the whole are adopted both to each other and to the purpose of effecting pleasure.

Coleridge demonstrates how poetry can be natural yet regular, lawful without being legislated and rationally explicable after the fact although intuitive at the moment of

composition, by replacing the concept of rules imposed from outside by the concept of the inherent laws of the imaginative process: ‘Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art ——. The rules of imagination are themselves the very power of growth and production.’11 “In this passage, Coleridge equates the orderliness of imaginative process with the process of growth. When we come back to Coleridge’s theory we see that the ‘nature’ that Coleridge unlike Wordsworth, ultimately appeals to it, art is basically a biological nature. Coleridge’s concept of poetic creativity—— that self-organizing process, assimilating disparate materials by an inherent lawfulness in to an integral whole —— borrows many of its characteristic features from the conceptual model of organic growth.

It was above all in his exploration of this new aesthetics of organism that Coleridge, more thoroughly than Wordsworth, was the innovative English critic of his time.

It was the trio comprising Wordsworth, Coleridge and Hazlitt that directs the new revolution in literary criticism in England, thus our assessment of the romantic aesthetics would perhaps be incomplete without William Hazlitt. All the three have something to say to one another. In more than one sense, Coleridge remains the uniting link between Wordsworth and Hazlitt. The
current of thought running through Hazlitt’s criticism shows flashes of Coleridgean metaphysics, it is his adeptness that distinguishes him from Coleridge. Nevertheless, Hazlitt’s criticism does reflect the soul and body of an art in its real perspectives of light, shade and colour, he may be said to be the forerunner of Impressionistic creed of criticism. At times, he displays a rare amalgam of gusto, impression and avocation and at times he indulges in outbursts of personal affront and aspersion. Some of his reflections on individual poets and their works display his ability for mature judgements in the field of literary criticism. Hazlitt’s sound artistic taste in prose may be considered one of the most outstanding features of his personality as a man of letters.

Shelley was the true child of Platonic Philosophy. He had read Plato’s Ion I translated “Symposium” and other mythical dialogues. There is more of the Platonic creed in the “Defence” than in any earlier piece of English Criticism, though it is a Platonism seen through a vista of Neo platonic and Renaissance commentators and interpreters. Shelley was also familiar with the poetic theory of Wordsworth and other contemporaries, he had been a close student of the English sensational psychologists and continued to support the ethics propounded by Godwin. In the Defence these various traditions remain imperfectly assimilated, so that one can discriminate two
places of thought in Shelley's aesthetics—— one platonic and mimetic, the other psychological and expressive—— applied alternately. The combination effected a loosely articulated critical theory, no doubt, but resulted also in a set of art unmatched by the other platonic poets who succumbed to the charm of the platonic world-picture, with its beauty behind the fleeting shadows of this world of becoming.

On the level of Platonism we find Shelley proposing a mimetic theory of the origin of art 'In the youth of the world,' says Shelley, 'men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order. This order originates in man's faculty of approximation to the 'beautiful' and may itself be called the beautiful and the good.' The objects imitated by the great poet are the external forms discerned through the veil of familiarity from the world and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of forms. And the analogue Shelley employs to clarify the relation of imitation to ideal, is the standard one of a mirror: 'A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth——. A story of particular facts is as a mirror that obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful: poetry is a mirror

which makes beautiful that which is distorted.\textsuperscript{13}

Shelley's essay reveals the tendency of a Platonic aesthetic to conceal differences, by reducing everything to a single class, and by subjecting this class to a single standard of judgement. 'A poet' as Shelley puts it, participates in the external, the infinite and the one.\textsuperscript{14} When poetry is defined by Shelley in what he calls, 'the most universal sense of the word, it includes all imitations of the realm of Essence, whether in the medium of 'language, colour, form or religious and civil habits of action.' In this usage poetry yields into a single category with all the important human activities and products.

Like Neo-Platonists, Shelley implies that the ideas have a double existence, both behind the veil of the material world and in the minds of men; and this view, in earlier criticism, resulted in statements that poetry is an expression, as well as an imitation of Ideas. But according to Shelley, the poet sometimes turns out to express not only platonic ideas, but also human passions, and other mental materials. Shelley's account of the primitive origin of poetry is not merely mimetic, but resembles that of Wordsworth by making poetry the product of an emotional response to sensible objects.

The language of poetry, says Shelley \textsuperscript{15}is as a

\textsuperscript{15}Shelley: Defence of Poetry (London) 1817 p.p. 120-21
mirror which reflects', but the materials of the other arts, 'as a cloud which enfeebles, the light of which both are mediums of communication.' A combination of Platonism and psychological empiricism and of the mimetic and expressive point of view is seen running all through the Defence of Poetry. Shelley says e.g. that poetry removes the veil from the forms of the world, but a few sentences later says, "And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from the scene of things it equally creates for us a being within our being."

The 'imagination' of which poetry is the product and expression, is the mental organ for intuiting 'those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself.' Shelley describes the poet as envisioning his ideas in isolation from an audience, like a nightingale who 'sings to cheer its own solitude', nevertheless, the effect of his poetry is centrally moral, because it enlarges and strengthens 'the great instrument of moral good' that sympathetic imagination by which man puts himself 'in the place of another and of many others.' Shelley describes beautifully the process by which subject matter is transformed into poetry. 'Poetry arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, either in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kind red joy to those with whom their sister abide

abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things.\textsuperscript{17}

When compositions begin; Shelley, declared, 'inspiration is already on the decline, and poets must fill the gaps between the incandescent moments by a inter-texture of conventional expressions.'\textsuperscript{18} Shelley's Defence of Poetry was by far the most elaborately reasoned and most impressive of all romantic statements of the moral value of poetry, he wanted to unite the functions of a poet and a reformer. While still very young Shelley had insisted that poetical beauty ought to be subordinate to the inculcated moral and that, poetry ought to be pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instructions. The prefaces of his longer poems, however show a mounting depreciation of teaching by moral preposition until, in the preface to Prometheus Unbound, he says flatly, 'Didactic poetry is my abhorrence.' He acknowledges non-the-less, that he has not given up his 'passion for reforming the world.'

To Shelley as to Wordsworth and DeQuincey, the importance of poetry as a moral instrument lay in its exercising and strengthening the under structure of moral action, although in his view this is not so much a matter of feeling as of fellow feeling. It is all by conveying their power of universal

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.ss: p. 129.

\textsuperscript{18} Shelley: Defence of Poetry; Literary and Philosophical Criticism (London), 1817 p. 153.
sympathy and understanding that poets, though singing in the solitude, become 'the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration' and the unacknowledged legislators of the world.19

Shelley admits the charge of the Benthamites that poetry lacks utility, but he broadens the significance. The utility of technological and Scientific knowledge which 'banishes the importunity of the wants of our animal nature', and disperses 'the grosser delusions of superstition' is real but transitory. The higher utility consists in pleasure 'durable, universal and permanent;' in this sense whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful, and those who produce and preserve this pleasure are poets or poetical philosophers. And Shelley going over to the attack against the utilitarians, lays the blame for the progressive ills of society on the great disproportion between the progress of science and that of, the poetic and moral imagination in man.

Keats' criticism is substantially based on his own experience as a creative artist. Analytically speaking, the nature of his criticism is introspective. His emphasis on negative capability wherein he refers to the poet as the 'most unpoetical having no Identity', displays his striking originality. Keats maintained specifically that 'the excellence of every art is its

intensity', and although Longinus was not probably known to him at first hand, he announced the three poetic axioms to the publisher of his Endymion. 'First I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity——— it should strike the reader as a working of his own highest thoughts and appear almost a Remembrance. Second its touches of Beauty should never be half way there by making the reader breathless rather than content ——— and this leads me to another axiom, that if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.\textsuperscript{20}

In answer to Hunt's question, 'why endeavour after a long poem'? Keats justified the sustained poetic effort, but in such a way as to exhibit still his proclivity for fragments that are one with a fine suddenness. 'Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading?\textsuperscript{21} He adds to a different tradition, 'besides a long poem is a test of Invention which I take to be the Pole Star of Poetry ———.' This same invention seems indeed of late years to have been forgotten as a poetical Excellence.

\textbf{Walter Pater} the most learned and sober


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.: pp. 52-53.
follower of the cult of brevity is very well associated to the Aesthetic movement in England. By some he is even regarded as the leader of the aesthetic movement. But T.S. Eliot says that Pater is a moralist like Ruskin and Carlyle.

The followers of this movement believed in the doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' and regarded the worship of beauty as the highest good of life. Art was divorced from morality; the purpose of art was exclusively to impart aesthetic pleasure by the cultivation of beauty. It had nothing to do with morality or with any other utilitarian considerations. Life is short; they live constantly under the shadow of death, so, they must hurry to enjoy, and pleasure lies in ones sensations and experiences derived from the beautiful.

Pater categorically states that the best criteria for the judgment of a work is the impression of beauty it leaves on the mind. The critics business in his opinion lies in recording his own impressions of a work of art and thus communicating the pleasure, which he himself has experienced. He rejects all abstract and philosophical theories, all principles and rules for measuring the excellence of a work. Instead of such abstract theories, he supports the theory of personal impressions, the pleasure, which one derives from the beauty of a work of art. This is the only true measure of its merit; all other criteria are
superfluous and non-artistic.

His artistic creed, his aestheticism, his cult of beauty finds clearest and most detailed enunciation in the Preface to the Renaissance, as well as in its conclusion. 'To define beauty,' Pater writes in his Preface, 'not in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it is the aim of the true student of aesthetics ——. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book to me? —— And he who experiences these impressions strongly and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth of experience—— metaphysical ques-
tions elsewhere.'

In other words Pater's aesthetic creed, makes enjoyment of the moment, "the hard gem like flame, without any ulterior aim, as the greatest, good of life. It is not the function of poetry to teach but to withdraw the thoughts for a while from crude, harsh reality, and impact the highest quality to your moments, for those moment's sake. Enjoy the pleasure of the sensations and experiences derived from the beautiful whether in art or from nature." Pater is very close to the Longinian way of
importing sublimity of thought into art as the first requisite of its greatness. No one before Pater had stressed so much on the pleasure giving quality of literature. In his criticism, he tried to harmonize the beauty and delight within, with the beauty and delight without. He redeemed English criticism from stagnation and raising it to a status which in its own way is worthy of respect and admiration.