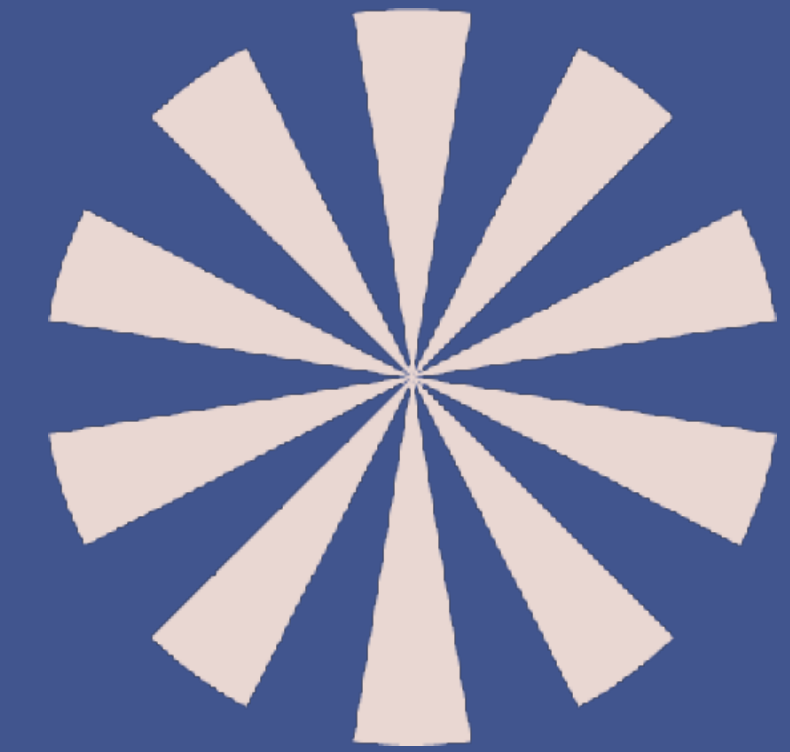

Literary Criticism 3



DR. KALYANI VALLATH

25 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE



VTES IS NOW
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Victorian Criticism

Matthew Arnold: Introduction

- First modern critic; “critics’ critic”
- Founder of the sociological school of criticism
- Introduced a methodology of objective literary criticism through *Essays in Criticism*
- Attributed a high value to poetry and talks about judgement and evaluation of poetry in “The Study of Poetry”
- In reaction to the commercialisation and materialism of the industrialised Victorian society, he places poetry in a position higher than religion, science, politics. In that society, man seemed to be leading a fractured and incomplete existence. He critiqued the utilitarianism, scientism, positivism and rationalism of the bourgeois society (Philistines) and stressed spiritual and moral values instead.
 - Aristocracy—Barbarians; Middle class—Philistines; Working class—Populace
- Through literary criticism, propagated “the best that was known and thought in the world”
- Moved on from literary criticism to a general critique of the spirit of his age.

Intro to The Study of Poetry

- The essay was originally published as the introduction to T. H. Ward's anthology, *The English Poets* (1880). It appeared later in *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*.
- The essay addresses the general middle class reader with an interest in poetry
 - It is not meant for the critics and academics
- This is a very influential text of literary humanism
- It insists on the social and cultural functions of literature, its ability to civilise and to cultivate morality, against the mechanistic excesses of modern civilization
- Sets down rules for judgement and evaluate good poetry

A Critical Summary

- “The Future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken...But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.”
 - The status of religion has been increasingly threatened by science, by the ideology of the “fact”
 - Philosophy is also powerless since it is entrenched in unresolved questions and problems.

The Study of Poetry

- We have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science is incomplete without poetry.
- In the occasion of Victorian dilemma, when religion and philosophy have failed, it is to poetry we must turn, not only for spiritual and emotional support and consolation, but to interpret life for us.

The Study of Poetry

- After giving this importance to poetry, he moves ahead to define the canon for good poetry. “But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence.”
 - If poetry is to be capable of such higher uses, we should be able to distinguish good poetry from bad poetry
 - This relates to the notions of the classic and tradition, which he will discuss later, and which was also further developed by modernists like FR Leavis and TS Eliot

The Study of Poetry

- Poetry is capable of higher uses—helps to interpret life for us, to console us & to sustain us.
- Only best poetry is capable of performing this task. Poetry is the criticism of life.
- Readers should recognize & discover the highest qualities which produce the best poetry.

The Study of Poetry

- Warns against
 - Charlatanism
 - Historical and Personal Fallacies

Classic

- Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character.
- If a poet is a dubious classic, let us sift him
- If he is a false classic, let us explode him
- But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best . . . enjoy his work
- Arnold cites abuses of criticism in comparing Caedmon to Milton, or the eminent French critic, M. Vitet's estimation of the early French epic poem *Chanson de Roland*, which is not a classic, but Homer definitely is. He quotes lines to illustrate this.

Touchstone Method

- How do we make a real estimate of a classic? Arnold's solution is to use touchstones.
- Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry.... Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently.
- Even when critics fail to define great poetry, in the presence of great lines of verse, we are "thoroughly penetrated by their power". Arnold cites lines from great poets in various languages to prove this.
- Touchstone Method—To assess the relative merit of a work by comparing it with excerpts from the work of classical writers such as Homer & Dante, as well as from Milton & Shakespeare.
 - Against his earlier concept that it is the total impression that counts
 - Comparative method

Touchstones

- Arnold quotes several touchstone passages that have one thing in common—the possession of the very highest poetical quality
- Helen mentions her brothers: “So said she; they long since in Earth’s soft arms were reposing, / There, in their own dear land, their fatherland, Lacedaemon” —Iliad
- The address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus: “Ah, unhappy pair, why gave we you to King Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal. Was it that with men born to misery ye might have sorrow?” —Iliad
- The words of Achilles to Priam: “Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy.” —Iliad
- Ugolino’s words: “I wailed not, so of stone grew I within; / they wailed.—Inferno
- Beatrice to Virgil: “Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy, made me, / That your misery toucheth me not, / Neither doth the flame of this fire strike me.” —Inferno
- “In His will is our peace.” —Paradiso

Attributes of Best Poetry

- So to judge good poetry wherein our estimate is not affected by fallacies, we should look for following attributes in the poetry:
- 1. The matter and substance of the poetry, and its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power.
- 2. Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness . Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substances and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness.

Truth & High Seriousness

- Excellence of poetry lies both in its matter or substance & in its manner & style. If matter has truth & high seriousness, manner & diction will also acquire the accent of superiority.
- Thus, the superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner.
- So, a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us.

Estimate of Chaucer

- Then Arnold charts out the tradition and development of poetry
- In the 12th and 13th centuries, French romance-poetry, like that of Christian of Troyes, was held in high regard. By historical estimate, he seems great.
- In the 14th century came Chaucer who was nourished on the French tradition. Chaucer's power of fascinating his readers is enduring; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate; it is real.
- He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us; but so also, and I think in quite as great a degree, is the language of Burns. In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns (because it is Scots dialect), it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

Estimate of Chaucer

- Chaucer's superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry.
- Chaucer has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. Arnold recalls Dryden's comments: "It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty." And again: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance, divine liquidness of diction, divine fluidity of movement.
- Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our "well of English undefiled" (quote from Spenser), because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement of Chaucer

Criticism of Chaucer

- And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it.
- He lacks the accent of classics like Dante
- What is lacking in Chaucer is the *spoudaiotes*, the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it.
- He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

Dryden's Age

- Arnold does not dwell on Elizabethan poetry or Milton
- Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics? Arnold begins with cordial praise and says they are masters in letters, two men of admirable talent
- Arnold says we find the Elizabethan translator Chapman's prose intolerable, Milton's prose as grand but obsolete, and Dryden's as true English prose
- Arnold says, the needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry.
- We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century.
- Arnold quotes from both poets to prove that though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

Estimate of Gray & Burns

- Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favourable, have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner....He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.
- In the 18th century, there is another great name—Burns. The real Burns is of course in this Scotch poems, which are very personal. Arnold quotes from Burns to show the grand, genuine verses which constitute a criticism of life, and involve a high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. Arnold concludes that Burns has truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent or the poetic virtue of the highest masters. He is very different from Chaucer

Burns and Chaucer

- The freedom of Chaucer is heightened, in Burns, by a fiery, reckless energy; the benignity of Chaucer deepens, in Burns, into an over-whelming sense of the pathos of things;—of the pathos of human nature, the pathos, also, of non-human nature. Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner, the manner of Burns has spring, boundless swiftness. Burns is by far the greater force, though he has perhaps less charm. The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in Tam o' Shanter, or still more in that puissant and splendid production, The Jolly Beggars, his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it.

The Estimation of Poets

- Chaucer's poetry—wanting in high seriousness; surveys the world from a truly human point of view
- Shakespeare & Milton—great poetical classics
- Dryden & Pope—not poetical classics (“are classics of our prose”)
- Dryden's & Pope's poetry is “conceived & composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived & composed in the soul”
- The most singular & unique poet of the age of Pope & Dryden—Gray
- The poetry of Burns has truth of matter & manner, but not the accent of the poetic virtue of the highest masters
- Good literature will never lose its currency

The Ending

- Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worthwhile to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world, in spite of monetary appearances; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper,—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

Arnold's Estimation of Wordsworth

- In *Essays in Criticism*, Arnold made an evaluation of Wordsworth
 - Wordsworth was at the height of popularity between 1830 and 40 at Cambridge
 - But after his death he was not well-received in Europe
- Arnold asserts that Wordsworth's name should stand beside Shakespeare and Milton
- "His poetry is the reality, his philosophy ... is the illusion."
- Arnold's views in a nutshell
 - Wordsworth deserves to be among the greatest poets
 - His best poems are his dozen short poems
 - He deals with life in a powerful, inspired manner
 - However, he relied too much on inspiration and nature

Arnold's Estimation of Keats

- No one except Shakespeare has such “fascinating felicity”, such “perfection of loveliness”, such “indescribable gusto in the voice” as Keats
- Keats had humbly said, “I think I shall be among the English poets after my death”. Arnold asserts, “He is, he is, with Shakespeare”
- However, Keats did not have Shakespeare’s power of moral interpretation which is as beautiful and powerful as his naturalistic interpretation
- He did not possess the “architectonics of poetry” or the power of evolution
- His Endymion is a failure; his Hyperion, fine as it is, is not a success
- But in shorter poems, where mature moral interpretation and architectonics go with complete poetic development, “he is perfect”

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

- Criticism is lower in rank to creation. For great creation, “the power of the man & the power of the moment must concur” but this will not always occur.
- Even the tremendous natural power of the romantic poets was partially crippled by the lack in the English society of the 19th century. Criticism alone can help to remedy.

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

- Criticism has the power to make the best ideas prevail.
- Criticism must essentially be the exercise of curiosity & the critic must pursue his course with the greatest sincerity.
- Criticism must also be disinterested. It must keep aloof from the practical view of things. In England criticism is being stifled by practical considerations.

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

- The function of criticism is to keep men from self-satisfaction. It must lead men to perfection. But in English it has grown too controversial & practical.
- Criticism is to be directed not only upon the work of art but also upon life in general.
- A critic must resist the temptation to indulge in false estimates.

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

- Literary criticism should be the exercise of disinterested curiosity, the desire to learn & propagate the best.
- Advocates a European confederation, bound to joint action & working for a common result & whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman & Eastern antiquity.
- Criticism which is sincere, simple & ardent gives a joyful sense of creative activity.

Preface to the Poems, 1853

- Classicism—Love of Hellenic culture, art & literature is reflected everywhere in his critical workings
- Stress on ‘Action’
 - Poetry of the highest order requires a suitable action, sufficiently serious & worthy
 - Poetry, all art, is dedicated to joy & this joy results from the magnificence of its action
- He criticised his own poem Empedocles on Etna for being too depressing and not leading to suitable action. He had included this poem in his collection Poems 1852, but he removed it from the collection Poems 1853, for this reason.

Preface to the Poems, 1853

- Subject of Poetry
 - Must impart high pleasure
 - Character of the subject chosen is important
 - Modern poets should not choose modern subjects
 - Modern poets must go to the ancients for themes
 - Classical literature has pathos, moral profundity and noble simplicity
 - Modern themes arise from spiritual weakness; suitable only for lighter forms of poetry

Preface to the Poems, 1853

- Manner & Style
 - Highest pleasure results from the whole, & not from separate parts
 - Expression cannot take the place of action
 - Subject or action should be excellent & the treatment of it should be severe & simple as it is in the classics
 - Considers ancients as safe models

Preface to the Poems, 1853

- Grand Style
 - Arnold's concept of grand style is the same as the sublime of Longinus
 - Grand style ennobles poetry & life
 - For grand style there must be
 - Nobility of soul
 - Serious action or subject
 - Treatment—severe and simple
 - Poetically gifted style
 - Homer is the best model of a simple grand style, while Milton is the best model of severe grand style. Dante, however, is an example of both

Preface to the Poems, 1853

- Poetry—criticism of life
 - Noble & profound application of ideas to life
 - Makes men noble, better & moral
- The critic must be disinterested in the sense that he should pursue only the ends of cultural perfection & should remain uninfluenced by the coarser appeals of Philistines (a racial stereotype that calls for deconstructive reading)

Culture and Anarchy

- Defines culture as High Culture, as “the study of perfection”
- He is against Anarchy, the prevalent mood of England's then new democracy, which lacks standards and a sense of direction
- Hellenism and Hebraism
 - Hellenism is the values of ancient Greece—paganism, love of life and beauty, freedom (spontaneity of consciousness)
 - Hebraism is the values of Christianity—austere monotheism (one God only), conforming to rules (strictness of consciousness)

Walter Pater (1839-94)

- Subjectivist and impressionistic critic associated with Aestheticism and the Pre-Raphaelites
- Educated at Oxford; deeply affected by renaissance paintings in Italy
- Ideologically against John Ruskin and insisted artistic autonomy
- Introduced the doctrine of “art for art’s sake”
- This is a feature of Decadence, which marked a resigned withdrawal from socio-political concerns, disillusionment with religion and a rejection of bourgeois culture
- Gave up the intention to enter the church due to his interest in classical studies. His early works reflect his classical studies, coloured by a highly individual view of Christian devotion and his extremely refined artistic sensations
- In his later critical writings Pater continued to focus on the innate qualities of works of art, in contrast to the prevailing tendency to evaluate them on the basis of their moral and educational value.

Studies in the History of the Renaissance (The Renaissance, 1873)

- Essays on Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Pico della Mirandola, Michelangelo, etc
- Changed the Victorian conception of art
- Art is concerned with its own sensuous ingredients (form, color, balance, and tone) more than anything else
 - Imposition of morals is against the integrity of art
 - Art as a vehicle for the expression of uplifting sentiments or edifying ideals
- The genuine critic analyses the impression that a painting or a poem communicates and then traces that impression to the structural elements of the work
- The notorious conclusion of The Renaissance
 - Art is a means of enhancing, expanding, and enlarging the faculties of sensuous apprehension
 - Art exists for the sake of its beauty alone, and that it requires neither moral standards nor utilitarian functions as its purpose of being
 - Controversial for it seemed to endorse amorality and "hedonism"

Other Works

- Pater's ideal of an aesthetic and religious life is elaborately discussed in his novel *Marius the Epicurean*
- *Imaginary Portraits* (1887)
 - Short pieces of philosophical fiction
 - Pater invented the genre of imaginary portrait as a kind of short story
 - Each portrait focuses on an individual who is deeply solitary, and enigmatic, who stands as a representative of cultural transition
- *Appreciations* (1889)
 - Critical essays on English subjects
 - Contains a Postscript and Essay on Style
- *Plato and Platonism* (1893)
 - A literary view of Plato and neglecting the logical and dialectical side of his philosophy
- Other posthumous works

Postscript

- Distinguishes between the words “Romantic” and “Classic”, which were being used very loosely and vaguely
 - “Classic” normally means what is conventional and traditional
 - “Romantic” means something unusual, something new
- According to Pater
 - The distinction between these two terms is not necessarily between reason and emotions, or past and present
 - Rather it is the difference between two universal principles that co-exist in art—the distinction between form and idea, between authority and liberty
- The classic, like a tale, can be told over and over again and gives the tranquil charm of familiarity.
- The Romantic spirit is an ever-present, enduring principle and is the addition of strangeness to the beauty of art.

Style

- Had a distinctive prose style
- He used to keep little squares of paper, each filled with its ideas, and then shuffled them to form a pattern and sequence.
- He always wrote on ruled paper and kept each alternate line blank. Then he prepared a fair copy of it and sometimes even got it printed to judge its effect.
- At the height of Pater's career, he discussed broadly his style and principles of composition in the essay 'Style', published in 1888.
- His style was perfectly attuned to his philosophy with its depth, richness and sensuous rhythms.

Views on Style

- Echoes Longinus
- The writer should present the subject in three ways
 - Diction (“a vocabulary faithful to the colouring of his own spirit”—use current words in their finer meaning, exercising economy)
 - Design (combination of words into a unified whole, like an architectural design)
 - Personality (soul in style—the mind brings about a unity of design, a unity of tone or atmosphere)

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

- Aesthete, major figure of Decadence, dazzling wit, flamboyant conversationalist, dandy
- His social comedies took the London stage by storm; wrote poetry, novels, criticism
- The famous Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a manifesto of his aestheticism
- Rejected the notion of art as imitation, art as expressing reality or ideality; rejected connection art with truth or morality
- States “the artist is the creator of beautiful things”
- There is “no such thing as a moral or immoral book”
- “Beautiful things mean only Beauty” and “Art is quite useless”

“The Critic as Artist”

- Most important views on art and criticism
- In the form of a dialogue between Ernest (who values art over criticism) and Gilbert (who voices Wilde’s notions of the superiority of criticism)
- Reinterprets Plato and Aristotle in the light of aestheticism
- Plato attempted to connect beauty, truth and morality, and will be remembered as a “critic of Beauty
- Aristotle’s katharsis (purification of emotions) is an aesthetic (rather than moral) notion
- Whatever “is modern in our life we owe to the Greeks. Whatever is anachronism is due to medievalism.”
- The antithesis between art and criticism is arbitrary. Without criticism, there is no art, because art is not just an outpouring of emotion, but is “self-conscious and deliberate”. “Criticism is itself an art.” The highest criticism is more creative than creation, the record of one’s own soul.

John Ruskin (1819-1900)

- Born into the commercial class; introduced the commercial classes to the possibility of enjoying and collecting art
- Victorian Sage writer, or Prophet: a writer of polemical prose who sought to bring about cultural and social change
- Painter, prose stylist, critic of art, architecture and society, characterised by religious intensity and appreciation for Romanticism; became Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford later
- Critic who had a major impact on art evaluation of the 19th century
- Romantically idealised the Middle Ages; his medievalist enthusiasm led Ruskin to support the PRB
- Promoted Venetian painting, the English artist JMW Turner (1775-1851), the Pre-Raphaelites, and Gothic architecture; condemned Baroque art as insincere
- Believed in the dignity of labour and the importance of craftsmanship
- Later influenced William Morris (1834-96) and the English Arts and Crafts movement

Modern Painters (1843)

- Took 17 years to write; subsequently in 5 volumes
- Praised the “truth” of the depiction of Nature in Turner’s landscape paintings (Neoclassical critics criticised Turner for his failure to represent the “general truth” that had been an essential criterion of painting in the age of Sir Joshua Reynolds. True to the Romantic spirit, Ruskin shifted from general to particular truths and highlighted Turner’s “truth of tone,” “truth of colour,” “truth of space,” “truth of skies,” “truth of earth,” “truth of water,” and “truth of vegetation”)
- Discussed Pathetic fallacy (the attribution of human feelings and responses to inanimate things or animals)
- Advocated Art for Life’s Sake: an ethical conception of art as distinct from the Aesthetic, undidactic, or art-for-art’s-sake definition

Other Works of Art Criticism

- The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849)
 - Written during the European revolutions of 1848
 - Describes seven moral principles (or ‘Lamps’) to guide architectural practice
 - One of these is “The Lamp of Memory” which expresses respect for the original style of old buildings. This inspired William Morris and the conservation movement of the 20th century
- Stones of Venice (1853)
 - Venice has fallen from its medieval glory through the impiety and arrogance (as Ruskin saw it) of the Renaissance, to its modern condition of political impotence and social frivolity
 - Celebrated the Italian Gothic which encouraged the use of foreign models in English Gothic Revival architecture

Cultural Criticism

- Influenced by his friendship with Thomas Carlyle
- “The Work of Iron in Nature, Art and Policy” (published in *The Two Paths*, 1859)
 - Contrasts the exquisite sculptured iron grilles of medieval Verona with the mass-produced metal security railings with which modern citizens protect their houses
- Two works on political economy
 - *Unto This Last* and *Munera Pulveris* (1862 and 1872)
 - First appeared as magazine articles
 - Attack on the classical economics of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill

Cultural Criticism

- Sesame and Lilies (1865)
- Statement on the natures and duties of men and women
- Two parts: “Of Kings' Treasuries” (critiques Victorian manhood) and “Of Queens' Gardens” (counsels women to take their places as the moral guides of men and urges the parents of girls to educate them to this end)
- The second part became notorious in the late 20th century as an example of Victorian male chauvinism (as against John Stuart Mill's more progressive “Subjection of Women”)
- Ruskin advocated the conventional image of the feminine as pacific, altruistic, and uncompetitive, to support his anticapitalist social model.

Cultural Criticism

- The Crown of Wild Olive (1866, enlarged in 1873)
 - Three essays: “Work,” “Traffic,” “War”
 - Lectures meant for workers, traders and soldiers
- “The Mystery of Life and Its Arts”
 - About the mystery of life and its reaction to the arts and labour
- The Queen of the Air (1869)
 - About the divine power of Nature at a time when the faith in Christianity is changing
- Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain, a one-man monthly magazine that presented his cultural ideas
- His autobiography Praeterita (1885–89) presents a history of the development of his thought

Henry James (1843-1916)

- Novelist, short story writer and critic; representative of a transatlantic culture
- Novels on the theme of the innocence and exuberance of the New World in clash with the corruption and wisdom of the Old
- Younger brother of the pragmatist philosopher William James
- Influenced by European and American Romantics; acquainted with realist and naturalist writers
- From these writers he acquired the idea of critical disinterestedness

“The Art of Fiction” (1884)

- Written in response to a lecture / essay titled “Fiction as One of the Fine Arts,” by Walter Besant
- Published in Longman's Magazine
- Succinct expression of his critical ideas; a manifesto of literary realism that argued against rigid prescriptions on the novelist's choice of subject and method of treatment
- Chief arguments
 - Asserts the importance of the novel as a genuine art form
 - Rules cannot be prescribed for fiction (The novelist and the novel must be free)
 - Against the puritanical criticism that attacked art as amoral; James asserts that novel is free from moral and educational constraints

“The Art of Fiction” (1884)

- The novel represents life; produces the complex “illusion of life” (it is not passive imitation and cannot be contained within a formula)
 - The novel is “a personal, a direct impression of life”
 - “as the picture is reality, so the novel is history” (The novel is analogous with philosophy and history)
 - The novelist’s task is analogous to that of the painter
 - He wrote in “The Future of the Novel”: “The novel is of all pictures the most comprehensive and the most elastic. It will stretch anywhere—it will take in absolutely anything. All it needs is a subject and a painter. But for its subject, magnificently, it has the whole human consciousness.”
- To write from experience is not a simple thing; it is deeply personal and complex (it is defined like Coleridge’s imagination)
 - Experience is never limited and never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness.... It is the very atmosphere of the mind”

“The Art of Fiction” (1884)

- Because reality and experience are so complex, the novelist cannot be taught how to represent them; the novelist should have the freedom to experiment
- Art cannot have moral or other obligations
- If art has a purpose, that purpose is artistic: it must aim at perfection
- “Remember that your first duty is to be as complete as possible-to make as perfect a work.”
- James employed in his novels
 - Unreliable narrator
 - Narrator as centre-of-consciousness

Percy Lubbock (1879-65)

- The Craft of Fiction (1921)
- Writers seem to prefer either the restricted scenic vision or the broader panoramic vision (though they use both)
 - Panoramic vision (Fielding, Balzac, George Eliot, Thackeray)
 - A broad impression of people and places; crowded with life
 - Vanity Fair, Pendennis, The Newcomes, Henry Esmond—"Thackeray saw them as broad expanses, stretches of territory, to be surveyed from edge to edge with a sweeping glance; he saw them as great general, typical impressions of life, populated by a swarm of people whose manners and adventures crowded into his memory. The landscape lay before him, his imagination wandered freely across it, backwards and forwards. The whole of it was in view at once, a single prospect..."
 - Scenic vision (Dostoevsky or Tolstoy)
 - Focus on one man's consciousness, one hour, one scene
 - Illustrates with Emma

Formalism

I.A. Richards (1893-1979)

- **Principles of Literary Criticism (1924)**
 - Two uses of language—the scientific and the emotive
- **Practical Criticism (1929)**
 - Close reading
 - Four kinds of meaning—sense, feeling, tone and intention
- **The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936)**
- **Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar (1930) with C.K. Ogden**
 - Basic English (**British American Scientific International and Commercial English**)

William Empson (1906-84)

- The Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930)
- Milton's God (1961)
- Essays on Shakespeare (1986)
- Faustus and the Censor (1987)

Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994)

- Understanding Poetry (1936) with Robert Penn Warren
- Understanding Fiction (1943) with Robert Penn Warren
- Modern Poetry and Tradition (1943)
- The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry (1947)
 - Paradox
 - Heresy of Paraphrase
 - Organic unity

F.R. Leavis (1895-1978)

- Scrutiny
 - Criticism in practice
 - Collaborative criticism
- New Bearings in English Poetry (1932)
- Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry (1936)
- The Great Tradition (1948)
 - Literature should be closely related to criticism of life
 - Leavisism—culture belongs to the minority of the educated elite
- D.H. Lawrence, Novelist (1955)

John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974)

- God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy (1930)
- The World's Body (1938)
 - Ontological criticism
- The New Criticism (1941)

Chicago School (Neo- Aristotelians)

- R.S. Crane
- Elder Olson
- Richard McKeon
- Norman McLean
- Bernard Weinberg

Structuralism

Ferdinand de Saussure

- Semiology
- Course in General Linguistics (1913)
 - Langue and Parole
 - Synchronic and Diachronic
 - Syntagmatic and Associative
 - Signifier and Signified

Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914)

- Icon, index, symbol
- Qualisign, sinsign, legisign
- Rheme, dicisign, argument

Claude Levi Strauss (1908-2009)

- Structuralist Anthropology (1958)
 - Cultural phenomena including mythology, kinship patterns and food preparation
- The Savage Mind (1962)
 - The comparison of the Bricoleur and Engineer
- Mythologiques (1973)

Roland Barthes (1915-80)

- **Writing Degree Zero (1953)**
- **Mythologies (1957)**
- **Elements of Semiology (1964)**
 - Language/ Speech
 - Signifier/Signified
 - Syntag/System
 - Denotation/Connotation
- **Death of the Author (1968)**
- **S/Z (1970)**
 - Readerly and writerly
 - Five codes:
Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semic, Symbolic
and Cultural

Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017)

- **Grammar of the Decameron (1969)**
 - Narratology
- **The Poetics of Prose (1971)**
- **The Conquest of America: Question of the Other (1982)**
- **Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle (1984)**
- **Genres of Discourse (1990)**
 - Difference between story and discourse
- **In Defence of the Enlightenment (2009)**

A.J. Greimas

- **Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method (1966)**
 - Actantial Model
- **On Meaning (1970)**
- **Of Gods and Men: Studies in Lithuanian Mythology (1985)**

Northrop Frye (1912-1991)

- **Fearful Symmetry (1947)**
- **Anatomy of Criticism (1957)**
- Literature drew upon transcendental genres such as romance (summer), tragedy (autumn), irony/satire (winter) and comedy (spring)
- **The Well Tempered Critic (1963)**
- **Myth and Metaphor (1974)**

Poststructuralism

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

- **Speech and Phenomena (1967)**
- **Of Grammatology (1967, trans 1976)**
 - Deconstruction
- **Writing and Difference (1967)**
 - **Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences (1966)**
- **Margins of Philosophy (1972)**
- **Limited Inc.**
 - Signature, Event Context (1972)
- **The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond (1980)**

Paul de Man (1919-83)

- **Criticism and Crisis (1967)**
- **Allegories of Reading (1979)**
 - Theory of figurative language
- **The Rhetoric of Romanticism (1980)**
- **The Resistance to Theory (1980)**
 - Resistance

Julia Kristeva (1941-)

- **Desire in Language (1980)**
 - Semiotic (Chora) and symbolic
 - **“Word, Dialogue and Novel”** — intertextuality
- **Powers of Horror (1980)**
 - Abjection
- **New Maladies of the Soul (1993)**

Michel Foucault (1926-84)

- **Madness and Civilization (1961)**
- **The Birth of the Clinic (1963)**
 - Medical gaze
- **The Order of Things (1966)**
- **The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969)**
 - Epistemes
 - History of ideas / History of the Present
- **Discipline and Punish (1975)**
 - Panopticon
- **History of Sexuality (1976)**

**More
Poststructuralists
will be discussed
under
Postmodernism**