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Literary Theory for the Study of British Literature

For First Year Master Students

Literature and Civilisation

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General Introduction

In the study of literature, the question is not just about what we read, but it is more about *how* we read and interpret, which tells us about ourselves, about others and about the world. For reading and interpreting literature, the importance of knowing and understanding theory arises as a crucial step beforehand. In this field, students are often confronted with the challenging subject of literary theory and they feel overwhelmed by technical language and a style of writing that can be dense and difficult to understand. Difficulties in reading and understanding theory often result from a lack of knowledge of the fields from which they originate. Many literary and cultural theories emerged out of philosophy and other fields of the humanities and social sciences that include psychology, mythology, theology, politics, and linguistics. In addition, literary theory employs complex terminologies and writing styles to explain ideas, and theorists often invent new terms to accommodate new methods, techniques, and objects of study. Most of the times, the invention of new terms and concepts and modification of some others poses a major obstacle in understanding theory and how to apply it in the study of literary texts. Problems of comprehension require explanations of important concepts and provide historical and cultural contexts and the philosophical traditions from which theorists draw their ideas. Therefore, students of literature need to know these terms and concepts and their functions to be able to understand the key principles, assumptions, and techniques, and sometimes the relations that might exist between one theory and another. By being familiar with the broad contours of each theory, students will develop methods of reading and interpreting literature and gain greater clarity from the texts they read.

Objectives of the Course

Through this course, students are expected to:

- Learn and understand the various literary theories that are used by critics and readers of literature in the study of literary texts.
- Explore the various perspectives (formal, social, cultural, philosophical) in approaching literature for a better understanding of texts' meanings and authors' intentions.
- Be able to use literary theories to interpret works of literature and to generate new ideas and understandings about our world and our own selves.
- Be able to examine any particular aspect of a text, which they regard of significant importance.
- Be able to apply theory in their research works in literary studies, and more particularly in their dissertation projects.

Description of the Course

This course in British literature is designed for first year Master students specialised in literature and civilisation. It is an annual course which is presented in the form of lectures about literary theory and criticism that initiate students to the academic study and analysis of literary texts. It consists of twelve lectures to be covered during two semesters. Since the course's allotted time is one hour and a half per week, each lecture is taught in two sessions (two weeks). In this subject, the students learn about the theories of literature and acquire the methods to apply in reading and interpreting British literature in the directed studies (TD) sessions. Each lecture presents a theory with its background context, its assumptions, its terminology and concepts, and its methods of approaching any literary piece of writing whether in verse or in prose. The variety of perspectives and the diversity of historical and cultural backgrounds offered by these theories make of reading literature all the richest. Ranging from a concern in the formal aspects and the purely linguistic features explored in literature (as in formalism, structuralism, and discourse studies) to the social, psychological, political, philosophical, and cultural concerns (as in psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, new historicism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism), literary theories cover a broad array of perspectives that have developed from the beginning of the twentieth century to the contemporary period. The text/context paradigm is not the only concern of theorists; others have shifted their interest to the reader in the process of reading and interpreting literary texts. As a tool in the study and search for meanings of literary texts, the theories presented in this course are to be applied by students in the "TD" sessions to the analysis of selected literary works from British literature belonging to modernist and postmodern periods. The course offers also for each theory a selection of suggested sources for further reading that encourage students to read and search for more details and knowledge, which are necessary requirements in the study of literature in particular and in university studies in general.

Formalism / New Criticism

1. Introduction

Literary theory and literary criticism are interpretive tools that help us think more deeply about the literature that we read. Over time, different schools of literary criticism have developed, each with its own approaches to the act of reading. These different approaches allow critics to consider works of literature based on certain assumptions within that school of theory. They also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important. Although philosophers, critics, educators and authors have been writing about writing since ancient times, contemporary schools of literary theory now influence how scholars look at and write about literature. The following sections overview these trends in critical theory.

2. Russian Formalism

In the last century, and for more than seven decades, there were many attempts to approach literature from a scientific perspective by a growing number of critics. Their goal was to examine aesthetic aspects of any literary product, relying on its form (how it is said or written) rather than its content (what is said or written). It was a practice that could meet the norms of modernity and that would lead to more objectivity in literary studies following the popularity of the "art for art's sake" maxim and the major premises of Formalism that include: "content = form" and "texts exist in and for themselves."

Formalism, also called Russian Formalism, is a school that attempted a scientific analysis of the formal literary devices used in a text. Formalism maintained that a literary work contains certain intrinsic features and literary qualities that the theory defined and addressed. Its practitioners advocated methodical and systematic readings of texts and attempted to treat each work on its own terms and for its own sake, free from its environment,

era, and even author. This point of view rejected "forms of 'extrinsic' criticism that viewed the text as either the product of social and historical forces or a document making an ethical statement." Formalists assume that the keys to understanding a text exist within "the text itself." Thus, they stressed the importance of form and technique over content and looked for the specificity of literature as an autonomous verbal art.

Russian Formalism refers to the Russian school of literary criticism which began in two groups: the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and second the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded in 1914 by Roman Jacobson. Eichenbaum's 1926 essay "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'" provides an overview of the approach the Formalists advocated, which included the following basic ideas:

- The aim is to produce “a science of literature.”
- Since literature is made of language, linguistics will be a foundational element of the science of literature.
- Literature is autonomous from external conditions in the sense that literary language is distinct from ordinary uses of language.
- Literature has its own history, a history of innovation in formal structures, and is not determined by external, material history.
- What a work of literature says cannot be separated from *how* the literary work says it, and therefore the form and structure of a work, far from being merely the decorative wrapping of the content, is in fact an integral part of the content of the work.

Shklovsky was the lead critic of the group, and he contributed two of the most well-known concepts of Formalism: **Defamiliarization** (more literally, "making it strange") and the **plot/story** distinction. "Defamiliarization" is one of the crucial ways in which literary language distinguishes itself from ordinary, communicative language, and is a feature of how

art in general functions, namely, by presenting things in strange and new ways that allow the reader to see the world in a different light. Innovation in literary history is, according to Shklovsky, a matter of finding new techniques of defamiliarization. The plot/story distinction, according to Shklovsky, is the distinction between the sequence of events the text relates ("the story") and the sequence in which those events are presented in the work ("the plot"). By emphasizing how the "plot" of any fiction naturally diverges from the chronological sequence of its "story," Shklovsky was able to emphasize the importance of paying more attention to the plot—that is, the form—of a text, so as to understand its meaning. Both of these concepts are attempts to describe the significance of the form of a literary work in order to define its **"literariness" (artfulness),** or the ways to separate poetry and fictional narrative from other forms of discourse.

Formalism was important in the Soviet Union until 1929, when it was condemned for its lack of political perspective and anathema to the Marxist critics. Later, largely through the work of the structuralist linguist Roman Jacobson, it became influential in the West, notably in Anglo-American New Criticism. Jakobson left Moscow for Prague in 1920, and in 1926, founded the Prague Linguistic Circle which combined an interest in literary theory with an interest in linguistics, especially the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. Jakobson's work on linguistics, and Saussure in particular, proved seminal for the development of **structuralism,** and his move from Prague to France served to help catalyze its development there.

3. New Criticism

New Criticism was the dominant trend in English and American literary criticism of the mid twentieth-century to the late 1960s. Its adherents were emphatic in their advocacy of close reading and attention to texts themselves, and their rejection of criticism based on extra-textual sources, especially history and biography. They insisted on the intrinsic value of a work of art and they paid no attention to anything outside the small world of a closed text. Studying a passage of prose or poetry in New Critical style required careful, exacting scrutiny

of the passage itself. Formal elements such as rhyme, meter, setting, characterization, and plot were used to identify the theme of the text. In addition to the theme, the New Critics also looked for paradox, ambiguity, irony, and tension to help establish the most unified interpretation of the text.

3.1. The Single Best Interpretation in New Criticism

Given that the text was thus seen as an independent entity with a stable meaning of its own, New Critics believed that a single best, or most accurate, interpretation of each text could be that best represents the text itself: that best explains what the text means and how the text produces that meaning; in other words, that explains its organic unity. This is why, during New Criticism's heyday, essays interpreting a literary text frequently began with a survey of other critics' interpretations of the same text in order to show that everyone else's reading fell short—that important scenes or images were unaccounted for, that tensions structuring the text were not resolved—often because a proper understanding of the text's theme was lacking. In other words, in order to establish that yours was the best reading of a literary work, you would have to begin by establishing that all former readings were in some way inadequate.

In light of the scrupulous attention paid to textual details by the New Critics, it is understandable that their method worked best on short poems and stories because the shorter the text, the more of its formal elements could be analyzed. When longer works were examined, such as long poems, novels, and plays, New Critical readings usually confined themselves to the analysis of some aspect (or aspects) of the work, for example, its imagery (or perhaps just one kind of imagery, such as nature imagery), the role of the narrator or of the minor characters, the function of time in the work, the pattern of light and dark created by settings, or some other formal element. Of course, whatever formal element was analyzed, it had to be shown to play an important role in the text's advancement of its theme and thus contribute to the unity of the work as a whole.

Through your own familiarity or unfamiliarity with the New Critical principles, you can probably form some idea of New Criticism's lasting contribution to literary studies. New Criticism's success in focusing our attention on the formal elements of the text and on their relationship to the meaning of the text is evident in the way we study literature today, regardless of our theoretical perspective. For whatever theoretical framework we use to interpret a text, we always support our interpretation with concrete evidence from the text that usually includes attention to formal elements, and we usually try to produce an interpretation that conveys some sense of the text as a unified whole.

3.2. The Question New Critics Asked About Literary Texts

Given New Criticism's focus on the single meaning of the text and its single method of establishing that meaning, it should not be surprising that the list of questions New Critics asked about literary texts should consist of only one complex question: What single interpretation of the text best establishes its organic unity? In other words, how do the text's formal elements, and the multiple meanings those elements produce, all work together to support the theme, or overall meaning, of the work? If the text is too long to account for all of its formal elements, we apply this question to some aspect or aspects of its form, such as imagery, point of view, setting, or the like.

This is the question we ask in order to produce a New Critical interpretation. It is interesting to note that, despite their belief in the text's single, objective meaning, New Critics rarely agreed about what that meaning was. Instead, different interpretations of the same texts abounded. As in every field, even expert New Critical practitioners disagreed about the meaning of specific works. Thus, the main goal remains to use New Criticism to help enrich our reading of literary texts, to help us see and appreciate in new ways the complex operations of their formal elements and how those elements function to create meaning.

3.3. The Beginnings and Downfall of New Criticism

Ivor Armstrong Richards (1893-1979) was an influential English literary critic who is often cited as the founder of an Anglophone school of Formalist criticism that would eventually become known as New Criticism. Richards' books, especially *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1929), and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), were seminal documents not only for the development of New Criticism, but also for the fields of the philosophy of language and linguistics. Although Richards is often labelled as the father of New Criticism, he would likely dispute the connection, as New Criticism was largely the product of his students, who extended and re-interpreted Richards' more general theories of language.

Another contribution was made by the American literary theorist William K. Wimsatt and philosopher of art Monroe Beardsley who published together an essay entitled "The Intentional Fallacy" in 1954 that would become a watershed text in the development of New Criticism. The essay argued strongly against any discussion of an author's intention, or "intended meaning." For Wimsatt and Beardsley, the words on the page were all that mattered; the reader has no privileged access into the author's mind to determine what the author "intended" to say. The importation of meanings from outside the text was quite irrelevant, and potentially distracting, and this became a central tenet of New Criticism.
Leading new critics include American literary critics Cleanth Brooks and John Crowe Ransom (the movement derived its name from his 1941 book *The New Criticism*), Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, T.S. Eliot, the Russian linguist Roman Jacobsen, and the English poet and critic William Empson (his notable work *Seven Types of Ambiguity* -1930).

However, New Criticism's method to critical theory—its focus on the text itself—was responsible for its downfall. New Criticism was eclipsed by politically and ideologically turbulent decades of the 1960s and 70s when its methods were questioned. Starting from the late 1960s, the theory was challenged by the growing interest, among almost all other schools

of critical theory, in the ideological content of literary texts and the ways in which that content both reflects and influences society, an interest that could not be served by the New Critical insistence on analyzing the text as an isolated aesthetic object with a single meaning. Therefore, and because of their refusal to investigate other contextual avenues of critical inquiry, the New Critics were eventually submerged by the development of Post-structuralism, Deconstruction, Postcolonialism, and Cultural Studies, more politically-oriented schools of literary theory.

Although current theorists tend to criticize Formalism and New Criticism for their rigid attitude and narrow-mindedness; still, they cannot deny that New Criticism has left a lasting impression on literary scholarship. Its terminology continues as the basis for most literary analysis in the world, and other critical approaches to reading literature depend upon readers' familiarity with these terms. In reality, in recent years, literary theory—suffering from a critical lack of structure and an increasingly complex and chaotic academic environment—has begun to turn back and re-examine some of the works of the New Critics. Current scholars are beginning to re-evaluate the methods of the New Critics in order to apply them to the broader fields of culturally and politically relevant criticism that have emerged, and it is clear that many of the ideas of the New Critics—and those of Formalists at large—are far from obsolete.

4. Glossary of Major Formalist/New Critical Literary Terms

Character: creation and representation of fictional persons and entities

Antagonist: the main villain

Antihero: a central sympathetic character with significant personal flaws

Dynamic: changing, growing, active

Flat: not well-developed

Protagonist: the main character with whom the audience is expected to sympathize

Round: well-developed

Static: not growing or changing, an inactive personality

Symbolic: caricature that is representative of certain kinds of people

Allegory: parallel story with underlying moral or message

Analogy: extended comparison of things or events with other things and events

Irony: paradoxical events, ideas, or attitudes that are played off against each other

Sarcasm: making serious fun of things, ideas, people, or events

Satire: synthesis of heavily developed ironies and sarcasms

Metaphor: extended comparison of something with something else

Metonymy: using the story of a small, localized event to illustrate a larger social concern; comparing a part with the whole (as in "he gave up the sword" to indicate leaving a life of warfare)

Personification: comparing inanimate things to people

Simile: something or someone is "like" something else

Symbolism: using inanimate or imagined things to stand for real situations

Intangible: imaginary or "mental" symbols

Tangible: physical or "actual" symbols

Imagery: specific details used to describe characters, situations, things, ideas, or events

Plot: a series of events or happenings that organize a text

Climax: the point of highest dramatic tension in a text

Complicated: characterized by many twists and turns

Conflict: plot features that demonstrate human rivalries and difficulties, whether internal or external

External: conflicts that are active, perhaps physical or overtly expressed

Internal: conflicts that are passive, perhaps mental or covertly expressed

Dénouement: final part of a play or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved.

Foreshadowing: plot features that predict other events, such as the climax or dénouement

Implausible: fantastic plots that are not acceptable in the everyday sense of reality

Inciting event: event that marks the beginning of a course of action

Plausible: believable, everyday plots

Reversal: events that mark a turnabout of fortune for a character

Point of view: perspective of the controlling narrative voice

First person: narrative voice that speaks with "I/we/us" pronouns

Limited omniscience: narrator who doesn't know everything

Objective: narrator who tries to tell the story from an impersonal point of view

Omniscient: narrator who presumes to know the ultimate truth of the story

Reliable: narrator who can be trusted to tell the truth and be objective

Subjective: narrator whose personal viewpoint skewed the telling of the story

Third person: narrative voice that uses "he/she/they" pronouns

Unreliable: narrator who cannot be trusted to tell the truth or be objective

Setting: historical period, time, and physical setting

Place: physical or psychical locations of events, things, characters, and historical times

Time: physical or psychical progression of events

Ahistorical: not grounded in any "real" historical period; imaginary or fantastic

Chronological: linear telling of events

Backward: starting at the end and working toward the beginning

Forward: starting at the beginning and working toward the end

Circular: a reflection that begins anywhere, goes to the end, works its way to the beginning, and eventually gets back to where it started

Flashbacks: looking back into time

Historical: grounded in a "real" historical time period

Projections: looking forward into time

Fragmented: going back and forth in time with combinations of chronologies

Atmosphere: physical and external descriptions that help us better understand the setting

Mood: emotional and internal descriptions that help us better understand the setting

Theme: a major idea or message in the text

Controlling idea: the organizing theme of a work

Related ideas: subthemes that contribute to the development of the main idea

Suggested Reading

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Psychoanalytic Theory

1. Introduction

Psychoanalytic theory of criticism refers to any form of criticism that draws on psychoanalysis, the practice of analyzing the role of unconscious psychological drives and impulses in shaping human behavior or artistic production. Psychoanalytic criticism builds on Freudian theories of psychology that Freud began developing in the 1880s while attempting to treat behavioral disorders in his Viennese patients. He dubbed the disorders 'hysteria' and began treating them by listening to his patients talk through their problems. Based on this work, Freud asserted that people's behavior is affected by their unconscious; he considered that "human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware." Freud organized these events into developmental stages involving relationships with parents and drives of desire, pleasure, fear of loss (loss of affection from parents, loss of life), and repression.

2. What is Psychoanalysis?

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) postulated that there exists a subterranean level to human mind which we are not even aware of, which is the unconscious. Not only its contents are vague to us, there even exists unconscious irrational forces that inform our thought and behaviour. Many people are afflicted with psychological troubles such as anxiety, stress, depression, phobias and other ailments. Psychoanalysis aims to treat such ailments by undermining their causes and arriving at the necessary treatments. The therapist establishes a rapport with the patient and makes him/her talk and share his/her feelings and emotions spontaneously. Hence, the emotions that are buried in the hollow depths of the patient’s unconscious find an outlet and thereby, the therapist is able to grasp the cause and history of the ailment.

Freud's theory of the unconscious is best represented by the image of an iceberg, where the part of the iceberg visible above surface level of the ocean is just a measly chunk of the entire mass, which remains buried underneath. Similarly, a large part of ourselves remains buried beneath our conscious level. This unconscious level, according to Freud, has a strong bearing on our actions. Why is that these emotions find residence in the depths of our unconscious? According to Freud, it is because of the idea of repression, which is the forgetting and pushing away of unresolved conflicts, undisclosed desires or traumatic past events because they are stressful for the conscious mind to bear. Linked with the process of repression is sublimation, whereby the repressed feeling or emotion is transformed into something disguised as noble or creative.

2.1. Id, Ego, and Superego

Freud introduced a three-part model of the psyche or areas of the mind, the id, ego and super-ego, which correspond to the unconscious, the conscience and the conscious, and that wrestle for dominance as we grow from infancy, to childhood, to adulthood.

- id - the location of the drives and libido
- ego - one of the major defenses against the power of the drives
- superego - the area that houses Judgment (of self and others) and which begins to form during childhood.

The Id is the source of all psychic energy, making it the primary component of personality. The id is driven by the pleasure principle, which strives for immediate gratification of all desires, wants and needs. If these are not fulfilled, it results into tension. Therefore, it needs a regulator, which is provided by the Superego. The latter contains our internalized moral standards and ideals that we acquire from our context and thus gives us guidelines for making judgements between the right and wrong. The Ego is the agent of equilibrium. It operates on

the reality principle, which strives to satisfy the id's desires in realistic and socially acceptable ways.

2.2. Oedipus Complex

The Oedipus complex, also known as the Oedipal complex, is a term used by Freud in his theory of psychosexual stages of development to describe a child's feelings of desire for his or her opposite-sex parent and jealousy and anger toward his or her same-sex parent. Essentially, a boy feels that he is competing with his father for possession of his mother, while a girl feels that she is competing with her mother for her father's affections. According to Freud, children view their same-sex parent as a rival for the opposite-sex parent's attentions and affections. The Oedipus complex begins in a late phase of infantile sexuality (between the ages of three and five). Freud believed that the Oedipus complex is one of the most powerfully determinative elements in the growth of the child and serves as an important point in forming sexual identity. The analogous stage for girls is known as the Electra complex in which girls feel desire for their fathers and jealousy of their mothers. The term Electra complex was introduced by Carl Jung to describe how this complex manifests in girls.

In order to develop into a successful adult with a healthy identity, the child must identify with the same-sex parent in order to resolve the conflict of the phallic stage. So, Freud suggested that while the primal *id* wants to eliminate the father, the more realistic *ego* knows that the father is much stronger. The ego is the part of personality that emerges to mediate between the urges of the id and the demands of reality. It is at this point that the *superego* is formed. The superego becomes a sort of inner moral authority, an internalization of the father figure that strives to suppress the urges of the id and make the ego act upon these idealistic standards. Outside influences including social norms, religious teachings, and other cultural influences help contribute to the suppression of the Oedipal complex. It is out of this that the child's conscience emerges, or his overall sense of right and wrong. So, what happens when the Oedipus complex is not successfully resolved? Freud

suggested that boys who do not deal with this conflict effectively become "mother-fixated" while girls become "father-fixated." As adults, these individuals will seek out romantic partners who resemble their opposite-sex parent.

3. Psychoanalysis and Literature

Psychoanalytic criticism has its roots with the idea that a therapist interpreting a patient's mind is analogous to a critic interpreting a text. Hence, this school of criticism is an approach whereby a critic is a psychoanalytic therapist and the text or the author or the character or even the reader is a patient, having a conscious and an unconscious level. Just like the conscious and the unconscious, the text has two kinds of contents –the overt content is called the manifest content, whereas the repressed content is called the latent "lying hidden" content. Such critics approach a text as if it is a dream. A dream is fraught with mysterious signs, symbols, images and occurrences which require careful interpretation to arrive at its latent truth. Similarly, a text is made of a number of signs, symbols, images and occurrences, which need to be interpreted.

A text's latent content can also be used to trace the repressed self of the author of the text and thus his mental framework can be charted. According to Freud, art is viewed as the imagined fulfillment of wishes that reality denies. Artists sublimate their desires and translate their imagined wishes into art. Thus, critics tend to identify the real meaning from the apparent meaning and arrive at a consensus towards the understanding of the text or character.

Psychoanalytic criticism has given a plausible solution to one of the resounding questions of English literature and that is the cry of Hamlet: "to be, or not to be" in Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*. In the play, Hamlet is urged by his dead father's ghost to avenge his murderer, his uncle Claudius, who has usurped the throne of Denmark and married his mother. In several instances, Hamlet is actually shown to be courageous in decision-making –he kills Polonius without any thought, sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their death traps and duels with Laertes. However, when it comes to killing King Claudius, why

does he procrastinate and go through bouts of madness and inquiry in order to arrive to a decision?

The answer is neatly given by Freud, which was later developed by Ernest Jones (A Welsh neurologist and psychoanalyst and a lifelong friend and colleague of Freud. He became his official biographer and was the first practitioner of psychoanalysis and its leading exponent in the English-speaking world). It is suggested that Hamlet has an Oedipus complex, where he is sexually attracted to his own mother –Queen Gertrude, as evidenced by Hamlet's accosting his mother explicitly in the closet room. He cannot avenge the murderer of his father as the murderer has done something, which he unconsciously wished to do –that is to eliminate the father. He sees his own repressed self in the image of Claudius and to kill him would be akin to killing himself. This turns out to be true in the end, as Hamlet dies only when King Claudius is killed with the poisoned sword. Secondly, Claudius is also like a father figure to him and the desire to eliminate the father in the oedipal picture (id) must be repressed due to the ego's censoring of incestuous feelings, resulting in Hamlet's hesitation in killing Claudius.

4. Carl Jung and Analytical Psychology

One of the leading figures in developing psychoanalytic theory was the Swiss Carl Jung (1875-1961), who was a student and early supporter of Freud because of their shared interest in the unconscious. However, in 1912 Jung publicly criticized Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex and his emphasis on infantile sexuality. The following year, this led to an irrevocable split between them and Jung went on to develop his own version of psychoanalytic theory. Like Freud, Jung regarded the psyche as made up of a number of separate but interacting systems, which are the *ego*, the *personal unconscious*, and the *collective unconscious*.

According to Jung, the ego represents the conscious mind as it comprises the thoughts, memories, and emotions a person is aware of. However, he proposed that the unconscious

consists of two layers. The first layer called the **personal unconscious** is essentially the same as Freud's version of the unconscious. The personal unconscious contains temporally forgotten information as well as repressed memories. Jung also believed that the personal unconscious was much nearer the surface than Freud suggested. However, by far the most important difference between Jung and Freud is Jung's notion of the **collective (or transpersonal) unconscious**. This is his most original and controversial contribution to *personality theory*. This is a level of unconscious shared with other members of the human species comprising latent memories from our ancestral and evolutionary past. 'The form of the world into which [a person] is born is already inborn in him, as a virtual image' (Jung, 1953). According to Jung, the human mind has innate characteristics "imprinted" on it as a result of evolution. These universal predispositions stem from our ancestral past. Fear of the dark or of snakes and spiders might be examples. These aspects of the collective unconscious have developed into separate sub-systems of the personality that Jung called **archetypes**.

Archetypes are images and thoughts which have universal meanings across cultures which may show up in dreams, literature, and art or religion. Jung believed symbols from different cultures are often very similar because they have emerged from archetypes shared by the whole human race. For Jung, our primitive past becomes the basis of the human psyche, directing and influencing present behavior. Jung claimed to identify a large number of archetypes but paid special attention to four.

- The "***persona***" (or ***mask***) is the outward face we present to the world. It conceals our real self and Jung describes it as the "conformity" archetype. This is the public face or role a person presents to others as someone different from who he really is (like an actor).
- Another archetype is the ***anima/animus***, which is the mirror image of our biological sex, that is, the unconscious feminine side in males and the masculine tendencies in

women. Each sex manifests attitudes and behavior of the other by virtue of centuries of living together. The psyche of a woman contains masculine aspects (the animus archetype), and the psyche of a man contains feminine aspects (the anima archetype).

- The ***shadow*** is the animal side of our personality (like the id in Freud). It is the source of both our creative and destructive energies.
- Finally, there is the ***self*** which provides a sense of unity in experience. For Jung, the ultimate aim of every individual is to achieve a state of selfhood (similar to self-actualisation).

In his book *The Undiscovered Self* (1928), Jung argued that many of the problems of modern life are caused by "man's progressive alienation from his instinctual foundation." One aspect of this is his views on the significance of the anima and the animus. Jung argues that these archetypes are products of the collective experience of men and women living together. In modern civilization men are discouraged from living their feminine side and women from expressing masculine tendencies. For Jung, the result was that the full psychological development of both sexes was undermined. Together with the prevailing patriarchal culture of Western civilization, this has led to the devaluation of feminine qualities altogether, and the predominance of the persona (the mask) has become an unquestioned way of life.

5. Jacques Lacan and Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) was a major figure in Parisian intellectual life for much of the twentieth century. Sometimes referred to as "the French Freud," he is an important figure in the history of psychoanalysis. His teachings and writings explore the significance of Freud's discovery of the unconscious in connection with a wide range of other disciplines, especially post-structuralism. The Freudian aspect that gets a novel interpretation in Lacan (and has been fruitfully appropriated in literary criticism) is the mechanism by which the young child emerges into consciousness. Lacan reworks the three stages of psychosexual

development in terms of the three ‘orders’ or ‘registers’ of the *Imaginary*, the *Symbolic* and the *Real*, which form the skeletal framework for the various concepts of most of Lacan’s intellectual itinerary.

The Imaginary is marked by a sense of unity with the world around us; infants in this stage believe the world revolves around them, not recognizing that the entire world is not an extension of themselves. The Imaginary (an order of deceptive images) then refers to a state of indistinction self/other.

The second order is the **Symbolic**. This order is marked by language; we learn to understand the differences that make language and gender differentiation possible, allowing us to make sense of our reality. The Symbolic is the socio-cultural realm structured by language, where the separation between self and other evolves to a linguistic separation premised on the ability to name things as separate from self. Lacan reformulates in linguistic terms Freud’s theory of the child’s socialization through the resolution of his/her Oedipal complex in his/her fifth or sixth year. The child’s successful socialization then entails complete submission to the Law. After the Imaginary stage, the subject is aware that the concept of the coherent self is an illusion and enters into the Symbolic, needing language to mediate experience and shape reality.

The third order is the **Real**, which is essentially unachievable and traumatic. Entering into The Real would require us to recognize our lack and our loss, making us even more fragmented. The Real is the space beyond signification, beyond language, and culture. Lacan viewed the self as fragmented and broken because the unconscious is structured like a language. In the Post-Structuralist tradition, he saw the unconscious as a chain of signifiers, all leading to more signifiers without any signified that would give the whole system stability. As we develop, we develop our personality in a way to create an illusion of a unified self,

which we can never achieve. The Real hence would be whatever is beyond, behind, or beneath phenomenal appearances accessible to the direct experiences of a person's awareness.

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Marxist Theory

1. The Framework of Marxist Theory

It is interesting to note that the principles of Marxism were not designed to serve as a theory about how to interpret literary texts but as a theory that has provided a revolutionary way of understanding history. They were originally meant to be a set of social, economic, and political ideas that would, according to their followers, change the world. They are the basis of a system of thought that sees inequitable economic relationships as the source of class conflict. That conflict is the mechanism by which Western society developed from feudalism to capitalism, which, according to Marxism, will eventually give way to socialism, the system that will characterize world economic relationships, and finally to "utopian communism." For a political system to be considered communist, the underclasses must own the means of production--not the government. Therefore, communism has not yet really existed.

Marxism has a long and complicated history. Although it is often thought of as a twentieth-century phenomenon, partly because it was the basis of the social-governmental system of the Soviet Union, it actually reaches back to the thinking of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), a nineteenth-century German philosopher and economist. The first announcement of his way of seeing things appeared in *The German Ideology* in 1845, in which he introduced the concept of **dialectical materialism** and argued that the modes of production control a society's institutions and beliefs, and contended that history is progressing toward the eventual triumph of communism. When Marx met the political economist Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in Paris in 1844, they decided to collaborate to explain the principles of communism (later called Marxism) and to organize an international movement. These ideas were expounded in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), in which they identified class struggle as the driving force behind history and anticipated that it would lead to a **Revolution** in which the workers would overturn the capitalists, take control of economic

production, and abolish private property by turning it over to the government to distribute fairly, and thus class distinctions would disappear. In the three-volume work *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx argued that history is determined by economic conditions and urged an end to private ownership of public utilities, transportation, and the means of production. Despite the variations and additions that have occurred in the century that followed, Marx's writings still provide the theory of economics, sociology, history, politics, and religious belief called Marxism.

Marxist perspective opposes the idealist philosophy that focuses on conceptualizing a spiritual worldview. Idealism as a set of metaphysical philosophies asserts that reality is fundamentally mental, or mentally constructed, and stresses the role of the spiritual in the interpretation of experience. According to this immaterial view, consciousness is the pre-condition and determines the material existence and not vice versa. Notable idealist philosophers that followed the ancient Platonic thought include the British George Berkeley who revived idealism in 18th century Europe and the German modern philosophers Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Arthur Schopenhauer who dominated 19th-century philosophy. Therefore, the core definition of Marxist philosophy encapsulates **historical materialist** approach that focuses on exploring scientific and concrete explanations of this world with the observable historical facts. Unlike other philosophies, Marxism with its revolutionary nature does not only tend to understand and explain the ideologies of the world but also to change the world through revolution.

The revolution that both Marx and Engels anticipated did not come in the 19th century and did not even occur in their lifetime. The reminiscent of Marxist perspective began to evoke in 1917 in a country unimagined by both theorists –Russia- which had seen an extended period of imperialism of despotic Tsars. At the same time, Russian revolutionaries like Lenin and Leon Trotsky took Marx’s literary work and his beliefs as inspiration. The

remarkable work of Trotsky *Literature and Revolution* (1924) is one of the earliest writings produced in Marxist criticism.

2. Basic Principles of Marxist Theory

2.1. Base/Superstructure Paradigm

The concept of base and superstructure is one of the fundamental concepts of Marxism that establishes a relationship between the cultural world of ideas and the material existence of production means. Marx called the economic conditions of life the *base* or *infrastructure*, which refers to the modes of production from technology and raw materials to the class formations and socio-economic relationships. This economic base has a powerful effect on the *superstructure*, Marx's term for the social and cultural institutions and traditions that promulgate and sustain the specific **ideology** of the ruling class. Marx sometimes referred to the superstructure as *consciousness*, the way we think and look at reality. Marx famously said, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness." Accordingly, our ability to think for ourselves is limited, and thus our ideas are shaped by the material conditions of life. The superstructure includes religion, law, art, philosophy, and politics that represent a particular ideology.

The term **Ideology** refers to a system of ideas and beliefs that guides and organizes the social and cultural elements of the superstructure. Ideology is typically associated with the ideas and beliefs of the ruling class, which controls the means and modes of production. Since ideology is dictated by the dominant class, it functions to secure its power. When such cultural conditioning leads the people to accept a system that is unfavourable for them without protest or questioning, that is, to accept it as the logical way for things to be, they have developed a **false consciousness**. Marxism works to rid society of such deceptions by exposing the ideological failings that have been concealed. It takes responsibility for making people aware of how they have unconsciously accepted the subservient, powerless roles in

their society that have been prescribed for them by others. Since Marx, the term ideology has undergone a number of refinements and complications. For example, the Hungarian Marxist critic **Georg Lukács** (1885-1971) argues in *History of Class Consciousness* (1923) that ideology is a form of false consciousness that arises whenever the subjective consciousness of a specific class (typically, the ruling class) is taken to be the objective consciousness of society at large. It is called false consciousness because it obscures the reality of historical processes.

The Italian Marxist **Antonio Gramsci** used the concept of **hegemony** to describe the way in which ideology is not simply oppressive and coercive, but also involves an element of consent. He refined Lukács' view of ideology and argued for a model of the superstructure: "civil society" would correspond to "the function of hegemony which the dominant group exercises throughout society," while "political society" (the State) would correspond to 'direct' domination exercised through the State and 'juridical' government. Hegemony works through institutional modes of consensus and consent (e.g., universities, political parties, state bureaucracies, corporations). The goal for the dominant social group is to achieve hegemony by extending its ideology – its values, beliefs, and ideals – to every level of society.

The Welsh Marxist critic **Raymond Williams** suggested in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) that every historical time period has competing hegemonies. The dominant hegemony promotes the interests of the ruling classes, the residual hegemony defends the culture and belief system of the previous era, and the emergent hegemony shares revolutionary ideas of new social groups that may later become the dominant hegemony. This model acknowledges the presence of counter-hegemonic potentialities within the social totality.

Of special note is the French philosopher **Louis Althusser**, who drew on Poststructuralism and psychoanalysis in his highly influential rereading of Marx. Althusser is most famous for his elaborations on Gramsci's theory of ideology and the specific

mechanisms of ideological hegemony. Following Jacques Lacan, he argues that false consciousness is an imaginary construction: "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their material conditions of existence" (146). Althusser here refers to the Lacanian Imaginary, which corresponds to the phase of development when the individual has not yet experienced differentiation from the mother, a space of fantasy formations, and of resistance to reason and the entire order of the Symbolic. The Real represents a potential for critique of the Symbolic order.

2.2. Dialectical Materialism and Class Conflict

According to Marx, the moving force behind human history is its economic systems, for people's lives are determined by their economic circumstances. A society is shaped by its forces of production and the methods it uses to produce the material elements of life. One of the basic assumptions of Marxism is that the forces of production and the way goods and services are produced, will, in a capitalist society, inevitably generate conflict between social classes, which are created by the way economic resources are used and who profits from them. More specifically, the struggle will take place between the bourgeoisie (the capitalist), who control the means of production by owning the natural and human resources, and the proletariat, who supply the labour that allows the owners to make a profit. The conflict is sometimes realized as a clash of management and labour, sometimes simply as friction between socioeconomic classes. They are generally two parts that struggle against each other, not just physically but also ideologically. Marx referred to this confrontation as **dialectical materialism**. Actually, the term includes more than class conflict, for it refers to the view that all change is the product of the struggle between opposites generated by contradictions inherent in all events, ideas, and movements. A thesis collides with its antitheses, finally reaching synthesis, which generates its own antithesis, and so on, thereby producing change and progress.

The concept of '**dialectics**' was originally developed in the eighteenth century by the German philosopher **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** who believed that the immaterial spiritual thoughts govern this world and dialectics refers to the emergence of new ideas as a result of two conflicting or opposing ideas. Marx put this idea into materialist terms as he theorized a dialectical struggle between classes that would yield a classless communist society. Classical Marxism was thus a form of **historical determinism**, which means that the analysis of history could conceivably proceed along scientific lines. In fact, Louis Althusser called Marxism "a new science: the science of history." The Marxist is aware that the working class does not always recognize the system in which it has been caught. The dominant class, using its power to make the prevailing system seem to be the logical and natural one, entraps the proletariat into holding the sense of identity and worth that the bourgeoisie wants them to hold, one that will allow the powerful to remain in control.

3. Marxism and Literary Criticism

Although Marxism was not designed as a method of literary analysis, its principles were applied to literature early on as Marxism provided a new way of reading and understanding literature. In Russia, literature was sometimes accepted as a means of productive propaganda and at other times viewed as a threat if it did not promote party ideology. Although it was linked to the philosophical principles set down by Marx and Engels, its place was uncertain and shifting, culminating finally in the Soviet Writer's Union, founded (and headed) by Joseph Stalin to make certain that literature promoted socialism, Soviet actions, and its heroes. Besides, the Soviet Union suppressed Russian Formalism because it did not comply with the party's perspective.

One of the Russian critics who continued his political and critical practice to support Marxism was Mikhail Bakhtin who introduced a concept called '**Dialogism**' to affirm variety and plurality. In contrast to 'Dialectics' that refers to merging thesis and antithesis via conflict or tension to have a synthesis, Bakhtin believed that in a dialogic process, various approaches

coexist and are relativistic in their interaction. Here, each ideology can be more prominent in particular circumstances. Changes can be made within these ideologies if a strategy does not have the desired effect. With this concept, he wanted to raise an argument against the absolute hegemony of authorial control and the increasing homogenization of political and cultural life, and to emphasize the need to consider the ‘other’.

With an innovative approach, many Marxist critics started various revolutionary movements in many Western countries after Russia, among which the **Frankfurt School** (1923–1970) which is a group of German Marxist thinkers associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. These thinkers applied the principles of Marxism to a wide range of social phenomena, including literature, cultural studies, and political economy. Major members of the Frankfurt School include Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse.

The first major Marxist critic outside Russia was **Georg Lukács** (1885-1971) who was responsible for what has become known as **reflectionism**. Named for the assumption that a text reflects the society that has produced it, the theory is practiced for the purpose of discovering how characters and their relationships typify and reveal class conflict, the socioeconomic system, or the politics of the time and place. Such examination will in the end lead to an understanding of that system and the worldview of the author. Reflection theory seeks not just to find surface appearances provided by factual details but to determine the nature of a given society, to find a truer, more concrete insight into reality. In the end, the reflectionists attribute the fragmentation and alienation that they discover to the ills of capitalism.

Another important figure in the evolution of Marxist criticism is the Algerian-born French philosopher **Louis Althusser** (1918-1990), whose views were not entirely consonant with those of Lukacs. Whereas Lukacs saw literature as a reflection of a society's consciousness, Althusser asserted that literature and art can affect society, even lead it to

revolution. Building on Antonio Gramsci's idea that the dominant class controls the views of the people by many means, one of which is the arts, Althusser agreed that the working class is manipulated to accept the ideology of the dominant one, a process he called **interpellation**. One way that capitalism maintains its control over the working classes is by reinforcing its ideology through its arts. Althusser went on to point out, however, that the arts of the privileged are not all the arts that exist. There remains the possibility that the working class will develop its own culture, which can lead to revolution and the establishment of a new hegemony, or power base.

4. Marxism in the Western World

Marxism established itself as part of the American literary scene with the economic depression of the 1930s. As new journals dedicated to pursuing this new kind of social and literary analysis sprang up, writers and critics alike began to use Marxist interpretations and evaluations of society in their work. Eventually, it became increasingly important to ask how a given text contributed to the solution of social problems based on Marxist principles. The movement grew strong enough and resulted in the appearance of such critics as **Edmund Wilson** and his famous essay "Marxism and Literature" (1938).

Currently two of the best-known Marxist critics are the American **Fredric Jameson** and the British **Terry Eagleton**. Jameson is known for the use of Freudian ideas in his practice of Marxist criticism. Whereas Freud discussed the notion of the repressed unconscious of the individual, Jameson talks about the political unconscious, the exploitation and oppression buried in a work. The critic, according to Jameson, seeks to uncover those buried forces and bring them to light. Of special interest to Eagleton is his examination of the interrelations between ideology and literary form. The constant in his criticism is that he sets himself against the dominance of the privileged class. Both Jameson and Eagleton have responded to the influence of poststructuralism and the mixture of schools in literary criticism today. In fact, it is not uncommon to find psychoanalytic ideas in the writing of a feminist

critic, or postcolonial notions influencing a Marxist. As groups that share an active concern for finding new ways of understanding what we read and the lives we live, their interaction is not surprising. The borrowing back and forth may make it difficult to define freestanding schools of literary analysis, but in practice it makes the possibilities for literary analysis all the richer.

5. Marxist Criticism and the Role of Literature

Although Marxist views about literature coexist comfortably with the principles of some other schools of criticism, they stand in direct opposition to the concerns of the Formalists, for Marxist critics see a literary work not as an aesthetic object to be experienced for its own intrinsic worth but as a product of the socioeconomic aspects of a particular culture. Marxists generally accept, then, that critics must do more than explain how a work conforms to certain literary conventions or examine its aesthetic qualities. The good Marxist critic is careful to avoid the kind of approach that concerns itself with form and craft at the expense of examining social realities. The function of literature is to make the populace aware of social ills and sympathetic to action that will wipe those ills away. However, the ideology that a text inevitably carries can be found in either its content or its form. That is, a text has both subject matter and a manner of presentation that can either promote or criticize the historical circumstances in which it is set. To many Marxists, it is content that is the more significant of the two. The "what" is more revealing than the "how." The "what" is important because it overtly expresses an ideology, a particular view of the social relations of its time and place. It may support the prevailing ideology of the culture, or it can actively seek to show the ideology's shortcomings and failings. By depicting the negative aspects of a socioeconomic system -injustice, oppression, and alienation- literature can awaken those who are unfavourably treated by it, and thus can be a means of changing the superstructure and the base because it can arouse people to resist their treatment and overthrow unfair systems.

The manner of presentation (the "how") can also be instrumental in revealing the ideology of a text. In fact, realistic presentations that clearly depict the time and place in which they are set are preferable to many Marxist readers because they make it easier to identify with an ideology or to object to it. However, others find in modern and postmodern forms evidence of the fragmentation of contemporary society and the alienation of the individual in it. The narrative that is presented in an unrealistic manner -that is, through stream of consciousness or surrealism- may make a less overt identification with the socioeconomic ills of capitalism or with socialist principles, but it can nevertheless criticize contradictions and inequities found in the world that capitalism has created.

Believing that all products of a culture, including literature, are the results of socioeconomic and ideological conditions, the Marxist critic must have not only an understanding of the subject matter and the form of a work but also some grasp of the historical context in which it was written. He must also be aware of the worldview of its author, who wrote not as an individual but as one who reflects the views of a group of people. Such grounding helps the reader identify the ideology that inevitably exists in a text, so that s/he can analyze how that ideology supports or subverts the power structure it addresses.

Some questions require to go outside the text for answers, and these deal with the historical circumstances of the text and the writer. You may then ask about the following topics:

* What are the values and the socioeconomic conditions of the author's time and place? Where are they reflected in the text?
* What biographical elements of the author's life can account for his ideology? For example, to what social class did he belong? Where is that evident in the text?
* What were the circumstances of the work’s publication? How was it received? Banned? Favourably or unfavourably reviewed?

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Feminist Theory

1. Introduction

The term feminism is used to describe a political and cultural movement aimed at establishing equal socio-political rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference and a struggle to advocate gender equality and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (property rights, voting rights); for women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception); for protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; against misogyny; and against other forms of gender-specific discrimination against women.

During much of its history, most feminist movements and theories had leaders who were predominantly middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. However, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms, which accelerated in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism. Since that time, women in former European colonies and the Third World have proposed "Post-colonial" and "Third World" feminisms. Some Postcolonial Feminists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, are critical of Western feminism for being ethnocentric. Black feminists, such as Angela Davis and Alice Walker, share this view.

2. Feminism in Literary Theory

The term refers to a number of different critical approaches that seek to draw attention to the ways in which patriarchal social structures have marginalized women and male authors

have exploited women in their portrayal of them. This school of theory looks at how aspects of culture are inherently patriarchal (male dominated) and this critique strives to expose the explicit and implicit misogyny in male writing about women. Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious forms of marginalization such as the exclusion of women writers and their contributions from the traditional literary canon.

Although the feminist movement dates as far back as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and had some significant advocates in the early 20th century, such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, it did not gain widespread recognition as a theoretical and political movement until the 1960s and 1970s. Though a number of different approaches exist in feminist criticism, there exist some areas of commonality:

1. Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically.
2. In every domain where patriarchy reigns, women are defined only by their difference from male norms and values.
3. While biology determines human sex (male or female), culture determines gender (masculine or feminine).
4. All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality.

Feminist criticism has followed what some theorists call the three waves of feminism:

2.1. First Wave of Feminism

It refers to an extended period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally it focused on the promotion of equal property rights for women and the opposition to ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's

suffrage. In Britain, the Suffragettes campaigned for the women's vote, which brought about the Representation of the People Act in 1918, granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses, and in 1928 this was extended to all women over twenty-one. In the United States, leaders of this movement included Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Victoria Woodhull, and Susan B. Anthony, who campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote. American first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granting women the right to vote in all states.

An important text of the first wave is Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which asserted the importance of women's independence and how the patriarchal society prevented women from realising their creative potential. Woolf also inaugurated the debate of language being gendered –an issue which was later dealt with by the Australian feminist scholar **Dale Spender** who wrote *Man Made Language* (1981) and the French poststructuralist feminist **Hélène Cixous** who introduced *écriture féminine* in her article “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975).

2.2. Second Wave of Feminism

It refers to the period of activity in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. It has been suggested that the second wave was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism with the second wave largely concerned with the issue of equality and ending discrimination. Therefore, this wave was characterised by a critique of patriarchy in constructing the cultural identity of woman. Simone de Beauvoir famously stated in her work *The Second Sex* (1949), “one is not born a woman, but becomes one” –a statement that highlights the fact that women have always been defined as the ‘other’, the lacking, and the negative. A prominent motto of this phase was the slogan coined by the American feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch "The Personal is Political", which became synonymous with the second wave. Second-wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as

inextricably linked and thus encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures. Transcending their domestic and personal spaces, women began to venture into the hitherto male dominated terrains of career and public life. Marking its entry into the academic realm, the presence of feminism was reflected in journals, publishing houses and academic disciplines.

The major works of the second wave include Mary Ellmann's *Thinking about Women* (1968), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969). Millett's work specifically depicts how Western social institutions work as covert ways of manipulating power, and how this permeates into literature, philosophy, and art in general. She undertakes a thorough critical study of the portrayal of women in the works of male authors like D. H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, and Jean Genet.

2.3. Simone de Beauvoir and French Feminism

The French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir is now best known for her treatise *The Second* Sex (1949), a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of French and contemporary feminism. It sets out a feminist existentialism which prescribes a moral revolution. As an existentialist, she accepted Jean-Paul Sartre's precept 'existence precedes essence'; hence her statement "one is not born a woman, but becomes one." Her analysis focuses on the social construction of Woman as the Other. She argues that for feminism to move forward, the attitude that considers men to be the ideal toward which women should aspire must be set aside.

From the 1970s to the 1990s French feminism became a branch of feminist thought, compared to Anglophone feminism, which is distinguished by an approach which is more philosophical and literary. Its writings tend to be metaphorical, being less concerned with political doctrine and generally focused on theories of "the body." The movement includes writers who are not French, but who have worked substantially in France such as the

Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, the Israeli-born philosopher and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger and the French philosopher and literary critic Hélène Cixous.

2.4. Third Wave of Feminism

This phase began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave. Resisting the white, middle class focus of second wave feminism, third wave feminism borrows from contemporary race theories to expand on marginalized populations' experiences. Writers like Alice Walker work to reconcile feminism with the concerns of the black community and the survival and wholeness of her people, men and women, and for the promotion of dialog and the valorization of women and of all the varieties of work women perform.

In the third wave, feminism has been actively involved in academics with its interdisciplinary associations with Marxism, Psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, and post-structuralism, dealing with issues such as language, writing, and sexuality. One of the leading feminist voices of this phase and one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in the United States academia is **Elaine Showalter** who introduces the concept and practice of 'gynocriticism' in "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979). Showalter argues, "One of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male-oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be" (129). Then she explains her theory of criticism:

> The programme of *gynocritics* is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories.

Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the nearly visible world of female culture. Before we can even begin to ask how the literature of women would be different and special, we need to reconstruct its past, to rediscover the scores of women novelists, poets and dramatists whose work has been obscured by time, and to establish the continuity of the female tradition. As we recreate the chain of writers in this tradition, the patterns of influence and response from one generation to the next, we can also begin to challenge the periodicity of orthodox literary history, and its enshrined canons of achievement. It is because we have studied women writers in isolation that we have never grasped the connections between them. When we go beyond Austen, the Brontes and Eliot, say, to look at a hundred and fifty or more of their sister novelists, we can see patterns and phases in the evolution of a female tradition which correspond to the developmental phases of any subcultural art. (133)

Feminism and Gender Studies

1. Recent Developments of Feminist Theories

Although feminism has a longer history, women's studies emerged only in the 1960s. As a reform movement aiming at the social and political equality of women, feminism received a new impetus in the 1960s with the creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the cause of feminism came to be known as "Women's Lib", i.e., women's liberation. American feminist writers have drawn on the earlier work of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86), especially on her *The Second Sex* (1949). But the strongest contribution in these new fields of inquiry, which seek to integrate approaches from both socio-political and literary studies, came from feminist writers. In the wake of Virginia Woolf's work *A Room of One's Own* (1924), and under the influence of recent French feminist writers (Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray), American feminist authors such as Kate Millett and Elaine Showalter (*The New Feminist Criticism*, 1985) have practiced what Showalter terms gynocriticism in their new search for a true feminine culture. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, released in 1985, was a milestone in that it formalized a canon of female writing and made it accessible to a large readership. Works that were widely read and became best-sellers include Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), and Germaine Greer's (an Australian-born critic who moved to England) *The Female Eunuch* (1971). Among the more important theorists of feminism, Lillian Robinson (1941-2006) has been a foremother with her work that linked feminist with Marxist critique while exploring intersections of gender, class, and modern culture, especially in her work *Sex, Class, and Culture*, 1978.

So, literary critics of the 1970s and beyond began to demand a new look at the canon of American literature, those works that are considered important by academics, literary historians, and literary critics. Until that point, literature by women had been considered

inferior and outside the mainstream of American literature. But as academics began to examine the canon with a different set of lenses, nineteenth-century women writers, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin, and twentieth-century writers, such as Zora Neale Hurston, were admitted to the canon—that is, they were included in anthologies, read in high school and college classrooms, and discussed by literary historians and critics.

What has been described as a "third wave" of feminist activity and theorizing emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Moving away from second-wave feminist identity politics, third-wave feminist ideas about identity embrace notions of contradiction, multiplicity, and ambiguity, and emphasize the need for new feminist modalities in the twenty-first century. Third wave feminism is influenced and informed by postmodern theory, as well as other anti-foundationalist discourses, such as postcolonialism and poststructuralism. Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson argue that, in spite of inevitable tensions, an alliance between postmodernism and feminism could be politically advantageous, especially in redressing the universalizing tendency in feminist thought which privileges heterosexist and ethnocentric claims about female identity (1988). Donna Haraway's landmark essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985) offers a critique of feminist orthodoxies and essentialist categories. Combining postmodernism and politics, Haraway conceptualizes the figure of the "cyborg" as one that embraces otherness and difference, echoing some of the concerns articulated by Chandra Mohanty and Chela Sandoval's work on Third World feminisms that have played an influential role in the development of third-wave feminist thinking and activity. Sandoval argues that the third wave of the women's movement needs "grounds for alliance with other decolonizing movements for emancipation" (1991). Therefore, through its fusion with various disciplines and trends of thought and its rejection of ethnocentric claims, feminism is not a monolithic category; rather, feminisms are multiple, complex, and diverse.

The contemporary star on the third wave feminist critical horizon is Judith Butler (born 1956), who teaches at the University of California at Berkeley. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism*

and the Subversion of Identity (1990), she developed her major argument about the performative nature of gender roles while arguing that there is no logical correspondence between gender and anatomy and exploring the implications of multiple gendered subjectivities. She went one step further in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), explaining how sex/gender relate in their performative construction as an effect of discourse. Butler has also tackled the issues of lesbian and gay identities in such works as *Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of Epidemic* (1993) and *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997), covering the political and legal discourse about gender and homosexuality. These works helped define the fields of gay and lesbian criticism and they have become the major sources to the most widely cited theory in current Queer Studies.

While Butler writes in the wake of French and American feminist and gay criticism, with a readership largely restricted to universities, Camille Paglia (born 1947) is a cultural critic who received great media attention because of her attacks on academics in her books and lectures. Paglia made international headlines with a best-seller, *Sexual Persona: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1990), a book that purports to write a new history of Western culture as a product of nature and sexuality, including amorality, voyeurism, and pornography. Attacking established thinking on literature, religion, gender, and feminism, Paglia challenged the assumptions of conservatives and liberals alike, but in particular the conventional scholarly establishment (e.g., deconstruction as a foolish movement and a baneful influence on American scholarship). Paglia's second book which also proved a huge success: *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (1992) collects her polemical assessments of various cultural phenomena (art, cinema, literature, rock and movie stars) combined with further attacks on poststructuralist criticism.

2. Gender Theories

The term "gender" refers to the human state of being male or female, but in the late twentieth century, thanks largely to the influence of feminism, "gender" tends to be distinguished from "sex," with the former seen as referring to the culturally attributed characteristics associated with being a woman or a man, and the latter viewed as a matter of nature or biology. Nevertheless, the sex/gender distinction continues to be a source of debate and contention both within and beyond feminism. Despite considerable evidence of argument and speculation on the differing characteristics of the sexes through history, the active theorizing of gender as a concept and category really began in 1949 when Simone de Beauvoir famously opens *The Second Sex* by expressing her initial reluctance "to write a book on women," before proceeding to ask "what is a woman?" – a question that would become central to feminist theory in the twentieth century, and that clearly distinguishes matters of (biological) sex from matters of (cultural) gender. According to de Beauvoir, it is necessary to ask this question precisely because the answer is not at all clear, and because "woman" in fact lacks a positive definition. This, according to de Beauvoir, is because

> Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being ... She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other. (5)

With the advent of second wave feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminist authors such the American Kate Millett and others, developed de Beauvoir's philosophical investigation into how one "becomes" a woman into political, polemical writings which addressed the subordination of women, and sought also to challenge the conceptions of

femininity (as passivity, as weakness, as governed by biological imperatives) which kept women in that subordinate position.

De Beauvoir's suggestion that one is not "born," but rather "becomes" a woman, opens up the possibility that one might become something quite different, or that the process of "becoming" might be substantially altered by social and cultural change. "Femininity," then, takes on quite different connotations – many of them negative – in the feminist theory of the 1960s and 1970s: in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), it is linked to the "nameless aching dissatisfaction" of middle-class women, encouraged into the public sphere through education and the temporary opportunities of the war years, only to be coerced back into more limited, domestic roles; and in *Sexual Politics* (1970), Kate Millett opines, "'Is **it** a **boy** or a **girl**?' … expectations the culture cherishes about his gender identity encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses, and the female to thwart her own or turn them inward" (89), placing the emphasis firmly upon cultural conditioning as productive of gender. More generally, feminists since the second wave have deployed a skepticism about the traditional associations of "femininity," and have emphasized instead the mutability and instability of gender; feminism of the third wave could be seen as taking a more tolerant view of femininity as something which is a source of pleasure for many women, not simply a means of their oppression.

The tendency in feminist theory of the late twentieth century has been toward a view of gender as culturally constructed and this argument reaches its apogee in the work of Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler develops a theory of gender as performative, in which:

> Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance ... Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express

> are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (173)

While earlier feminist theorists had viewed gender as cultural, rather than natural (and Butler is building on the work of theorists such as de Beauvoir), Butler here redescribes what had previously been seen as the expressions of some innate gender identity as part of the cultural means by which, and through which, that identity is produced as natural, so gender becomes an action (or series of actions), a kind of "doing," rather than a kind of "being."

Butler's constructivist argument figures gender as "a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (10). Having severed gender from sex in this way, Butler proceeds to ask "what is 'sex' anyway?" and to suggest that "perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender" (10), a thought that she expands and elaborates in her subsequent book, *Bodies That Matter* (1993).

If it seems, however, as though the sex/ gender distinction has been resolved, the situation is not as straightforward as this. More recent feminist theorizing on sex and gender (by the likes of Elizabeth Grosz, Karen Barad, and Vicky Kirby) has sought to counter a perceived "linguistic turn" within feminism (under the influence of poststructuralism), by returning to questions of corporeality and materiality, and by making use of the biological sciences to advance a more sophisticated understanding of both "nature" and the female body than had hitherto been available. One result of this is that the suggested opposition between the material and the discursive (central to much debate about the sex/gender distinction within feminism) is substantially problematized.

It must be conceded that much of this overview of gender theory, so far, has been concerned with the theorization of femininity in particular, rather than of gender in general. There are clear reasons for this, not least the historical conception of femininity as a mystery or danger requiring attention, and of masculinity as the norm, somehow uncomplicated and uncontroversial – unless tainted (and thereby rendered "effeminate") by any suggestion of homosexuality. In the 1980s, the successes of women's studies as a discipline were, however, beginning to invite complaints that questions of maleness and masculinity were being either overlooked or vilified. A men's movement had emerged in response to (and largely as a reaction against) the women's movement, so there was space for a more interrogative study of masculinity to emerge both within feminism and beyond it. This new form of masculinity studies is evident in the work of feminists such as Lynne Segal, whose *Slow Motion*, initially published in 1990, is a landmark text, and R. W. Connell, whose *Masculinities* appeared in 1995. This branch of masculinity studies builds on, and acknowledges its debt to feminism with theorists such as Carrigan et al. (2004) noting, in an essay first published in 1985, that "One of the central facts about masculinity ... is that men in general are advantaged through the subordination of women" (570). It has also been centrally concerned with, and has sought to critique, the homophobia built into traditional models of masculinity and the forms of racism which inflect power relations between men and women, thus complicating that picture of dominant men and subordinate women and seeking to "[recognize] a range of masculinities."

In *Slow Motion*, Segal traces the emergence and consolidation of a "masculine ideal" (which Carrigan et al. refer to as "the culturally exalted form of masculinity, the hegemonic model"), which stresses aggression, athleticism, and courage, and disparages both introspection and the outward expression of emotion, from the nineteenth century to the present. Segal examines the influence of institutions (such as boys' public schools), global events (like the two world wars) and iconic masculine figures (such as Ernest Hemingway and

John Wayne) in the formation of this understanding of masculinity, and in doing so reveals the very unstable foundations upon which it is built. In her essay “Changing Men: Masculinities in Context,” she writes:

> The closer we come to uncovering some form of exemplary masculinity, a masculinity which is solid and sure of itself, the clearer it becomes that masculinity is structured through contradiction: the more it asserts itself, the more it calls itself into question ... As it is represented in our culture, “masculinity” is a quality of being which is always incomplete, and which is based as much on a social as on a psychic reality. It exists in the various forms of power men ideally possess: the power to assert control over women, over other men, over their own bodies, over machines and technology. (631)

Segal, then, encourages more diverse masculinities (in the plural) which explore men’s positive roles as fathers and partners, and refuse the elements of violence and homophobia which are part and parcel of the “ideal.”

3. Queer Theory and Transgender Studies

Although primarily concerned with issues around sexuality, queer theory has also been responsible for theorizing gender “queerness,” questions of gender crossing, transvestism, and transgenderism– anything that might fall under the heading of a non-normative practice or presentation of gender. Annamarie Jagose (LGBT academic and writer from New Zealand) has defined “queer” as describing “those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire,” and as focusing in particular on “mismatches between sex, gender and desire” (3). This definition reveals the relationship between gender and sexuality, such that “woman” is conventionally taken as meaning “attracted to men” (i.e., heterosexual) and that supposedly

unorthodox desires or sexual practices can be seen as disrupting or problematizing perceptions of that person's gender. This disruption is something that queer theory generally seeks to celebrate, opening up the possibility for more diverse and challenging experiences and expressions of gender.

As in its treatment of sexuality, queer theory sets itself against any suggestion of a stable or determinate identity, as far as gender is concerned, and instead looks for those instances of fluidity, indeterminacy, or apparent contradiction in one's gender presentation. Any notion of "natural" gender is, then, complicated by the existence of bodies, desires, and identities which counter the suggestions that maleness should produce masculinity, and femaleness femininity. American professor and researcher in the field of gender and sexuality at Columbia University Judith (Jack) Halberstam sets out to reclaim and celebrate masculinity as part of the overall experience of womanhood. She presents this as a radical project – "a seriously committed attempt to make masculinity safe for women and girls" – noting that, "despite at least two decades of sustained feminist and queer attacks on the notion of natural gender, we still believe that masculinity in girls and women is abhorrent and pathological" (268). If this project involves the reimagining of femaleness, as something which can include forms of behavior, desire, and self-presentation traditionally coded as "masculine," it also involves a reimagining of masculinity, which separates it from "maleness." As Halberstam asks at the outset:

> If masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness, then what is it? I do not claim to have any definitive answer to this question, but I do have a few proposals about why masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects. (1)

Halberstam's argument is concerned with the "immense social power that accumulates around masculinity," which she sees as explaining why masculinity "has been reserved for

people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies." Halberstam therefore works to redefine masculinity and to reduce the stigma attached to those women deemed to be "manly." As part of her discussion of "female masculinity," Halberstam explores questions around transgenderism and transsexuality, and in the years since the publication of her book *Female Masculinity* (1998), transgender studies has achieved a disciplinary status in its own right, through the work of writers and activists such as Susan Stryker, Stephen Whittle, and Jay Prosser.

In this way, transgender studies can be seen as building on the interrogations of gender normativity previously posited by feminism and queer theory. The range of experiences that a "trans identity" can describe includes, according to Stephen Whittle, "discomfort with role expectations, being queer, occasional or more frequent cross-dressing, permanent cross-dressing and cross-gender living, through to accessing major health interventions such as hormonal therapy and surgical reassignment procedures" (xi). Thus, the proliferation of sexual identities in the twenty-first century has also been the case for gender. As relatively new identities and descriptions such as "transman" become available – often identities which disrupt attempts at categorization and containment, and celebrate indeterminacy and inbetweenness – discussions of gender have moved far beyond the taxonomical models of the sexologists and beyond any simple analysis of the characteristics of masculinity and femininity. Thus, it is clear that the impetus to reflect upon and theorize gender has not decreased, and our understanding of it continues to develop.

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Structuralism

"*There are only two or three human stories and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before*."—Willa Cather *O Pioneers!*

1. Introduction

Structuralism is an intellectual movement that made significant contributions not only to literary criticism but also to philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and history. More accurately it could be described as an approach in academic disciplines that explores the relationships between fundamental elements in language, literature, and other fields of human culture that reflect some higher mental, linguistic, social, or cultural "structures" and "structural networks". In other words, it works to uncover the structures that underlie all the things that humans do, think, and perceive. Whatever its object of study, a structuralist analysis looks to find the most basic or fundamental parts or units of the system or structure that combine with each other according to specific rules. In the field of literature, structuralist critics read texts as an interrelated system of signs that refer to one another rather than to an external "meaning" that is fixed either by author or by reader. So, structuralism has focused primarily on classifying literary works according to the genre or narrative structure, and is most useful for categorizing texts into particular groups with similar characteristics. Structuralism as a field of academic interest began in the late 1950s and peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. The approach has its roots in structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) outlined a theory of the sign that transformed not only linguistics, but nearly every branch of the humanities and the social sciences.

2. Linguistic Background

Ferdinand de Saussure believed that language is much more complex than the study of grammar and philology, which emphasized logic and historical development. For him, "language has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the

other." Saussure differentiated language as such (langage), the human ability to communicate with signs, from language as a system (langue) and both of these from individual instances of speech (parole). His work is mainly concerned with the difference between langue and parole, a difference that enables us to distinguish what is social from what is individual. Langue constitutes a system separate from the individual. By contrast, parole is "the sum total of what people say to one another," comprising "individual combinations of words."

For Saussure, the social element of language, indeed of all sign-making practices, constitutes the field of semiology, which he defined as a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. Though the terms "semiology" and "semiotics" are often used interchangeably, there are some significant differences. Semiotics refers to the general science of signs pioneered in the 1880s by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce; in Peircean semiotics the focus is on the sign as a reference to or representation of an object. Semiology is Saussure's theory of linguistic sign systems that is less interested in reference. In Saussurean semiology, the sign does not designate a link between words and the things or objects in the world. Rather, it is a complex unity of a concept in the mind and a sound pattern that corresponds with it. For Saussure, the linguistic sign is composed of two parts, a **signifier** (le signifiant) (the *sound pattern* of a word, either in mental projection—as when we silently recite speech to ourselves—or in actual, physical realization as part of a speech act) and a **signified** (le signifié) (the concept or *meaning* of the word). Saussure has famously noted that the linguistic sign is arbitrary in relation to its signification, with which it has no natural connexion in reality. This is not to say that it is unfixed or free-floating or that the link between signal and signification is the "free choice" of the individual speaker, for "the individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in a linguistic community" (46). What can be said of the individual can also be said of the community, for the "complex mechanism" of a language prevents the community from changing it.

Literary structuralism claimed to take on modern linguistics to develop a true science of literary text. But it can easily be observed that most of structuralist research did work mainly with categories such as “paradigm”, “syntagm”, and “pattern”, which have no linguistic reference and these notions were not fully developed in Saussure's thought. The Saussure’s most important original contribution is the concept of language as a “sign system” or structure whose individual components can be understood only in relation to each other and to the system as a whole rather than to an external ‘reality’. Signification, then, occurs not as a link between words and nonlinguistic reality, but strictly within the autonomous system of signs as the association of signifier and signified within the linguistic sign. Furthermore, as the signifier is constituted through its relations with other signifiers within the linguistic system, such relations are of primary interest. They are organized along two axes: (a) the paradigmatic, which identifies the vertical axis of possible substitute terms from which only one is selected for use at any given place in a sentence, and (b) the syntagmatic, which identifies the way in which individual elements are combined in chains to form meaningful sentences. A structural paradigm is a class of linguistic units based on relations within the system as a whole (lexemes, morphemes, the system of inflections, or synonyms) which are possible in a certain position in a given linguistic environment (like a given sentence), which is the syntagm (combinations derived from relations of sequential interdependence). Saussure argued that “almost all linguistic units depend either on what precedes or follows in the spoken sequence” (67).

The first to apply Saussure’s ideas about language were the Russian Formalists, especially Roman Jakobson, whose influence extended to many European countries and contributed to the rise of structuralism. The term "structuralism" itself appeared in the works of French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, and gave rise, in France, to the "structuralist movement," which spurred the work of thinkers in diverse fields such as the historian Michel Foucault, the political scientist Louis Althusser, and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Their

objective was establishing a "scientific" basis for explaining social and literary behavior, just as the linguist can locate a "scientific" basis for explaining the syntax of a natural language.

3. Structuralism in Social Sciences

Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrated how structural linguistics could play a "renovating role" in the humanities and social sciences by providing a principled scientific method of analyzing literary and cultural texts. Lévi-Strauss's study of kinship systems and mythology illuminates the specific ways that Structuralism can be applied to social systems. The most important initial work on this score was his 1949 volume *Elementary Structures of Kinship* in which he examined kinship systems from a structural point of view and demonstrated how apparently different social organizations were in fact different permutations of a few basic kinship structures. His studies were based on activities as diverse as food preparation and serving rituals, religious rites, games, literary and non-literary texts, and other forms of entertainment to discover the deep structures by which meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture. In addition to these studies, he produced more linguistically-focused writings where he applied Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* in his search for the fundamental mental structures of the human mind, which he conceptualized as universal, arguing that the deep structures of society originate in the mind and operate in us unconsciously. In the late 1950s he published *Structural Anthropology*, a collection of essays outlining his program for structuralism.

A way of reducing the complexity of the universe of discourse to a more handle-able set of meaning units appears in an obvious case of greeting someone expressed from "Hello" and "Hi" to no more than a nod of the head or a smile. Each is distinct, yet at a certain level each is also the same "greeting" that goes on all over the English-speaking world. Moreover, ALL human languages have similar greeting systems. In different cultures, a lot of words and phrases that do not look or sound alike are structurally very similar. Therefore, the fact that different languages and cultures have terms for greeting or any other human relationship

(kinship) may also be a step towards capturing something deep about human behaviour and about the role of language in structuring and regulating that behaviour.

Although structural anthropology fell out of favour in the early 1980s, some anthropological theorists, while criticising Lévi-Strauss's version of structuralism, did not turn away from a fundamental structural basis for human culture. For instance, the Biogenetic Structuralism group argues that some kind of structural foundation for culture must exist because all humans inherit the same system of brain structures. Its pioneers Charles Laughlin, an anthropologist, and Eugene d'Aquili, a psychiatrist, proposed a kind of Neuroanthropology which would lay the foundations for a more complete scientific account of cultural similarity and variation by requiring an integration of cultural anthropology and neuroscience.

Lévi-Strauss's work had a profound effect on intellectual trends in the 1960s, especially in France. It stands behind such diverse developments as Louis Althusser's structuralist Marxism, Jacque Lacan's structuralist psychoanalysis, Michel Foucault's work (*The Order of Things*) that examined the history of science to study the structures of epistemology, and one of the most influential structuralists for literary theory Roland Barthes (though he later turned to Poststructuralism). Barthes' first major work, *Mythologies* (1957), approached cultural myths from a semiological perspective that postulates a relation between a signifier and a signified. Other authors in France and abroad have since extended structural analysis to practically every discipline, including psychology, the history of science, and philosophy.

4. Structuralism in Literary Criticism

Structuralist theorists like Roland Barthes started experimenting with new claims about the deep structure similarities to be found in literary discourse and situated among other texts. Critics analyzed material by examining underlying structures, such as genre, characterization or plot, and attempted to show how these patterns were universal and could

thus be used to develop general conclusions about both individual works and the systems from which they emerged.

Branches of literary structuralism, like Freudianism and Marxism, posit both a deep and a surface structure. In a Freudian literary interpretation, the literary text is based on the deep structure grounded in the life and death instincts and the Marxist reading will interpret the conflict between classes in the text as rooted in the deep structure of the economic "base." Northrop Frye's attempts to categorize Western literature by archetype in his work *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) had some basis in structuralist thought by concentrating on the anthropological study of myths.

In his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1966), which was influential in the development of narratology, Barthes investigated the "functional syntax" of narrative structures. Echoing Lévi Strauss's theory of myths, he argues that narrative is structured like a sentence and that the relations between the various parts of a narrative have a syntactical form and value. Though Barthes' structuralist theories are highly complex and employ a technical vocabulary, he does not commit the formalist mistake of ignoring context. Indeed, the structuralist emphasis on systems is, inevitably, an emphasis on systems in the world. Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology is grounded on this fact, and Barthes' Structuralism is always aware of its historical moment and it is always the study of human beings in the world. When Barthes claims that "it may be that men ceaselessly re-inject into narrative what they have known, what they have experienced" (242), he reaffirms one of Saussure's principal points about language: that it is historically embedded. Saussure argued, "Language has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the other" (77).

Structuralist literary criticism argues that the novelty value of a literary text can lie only in a new structure or an inversion of the first story's structure, producing many versions

of the ur-story or ur-myth but with the same basic elements combined in various ways. And certainly, the Willa Cather quotation suggests a way of understanding *all* of literature as the repetition of a very few basic elements in a system that could be combined in different orders, just as is the case with the elements of English sentences.

Even if structuralism has not finally been all that productive in terms of reading practices, it still has had a major effect on the tradition of literary interpretation in the following ways:

1. Structuralist critics have shifted attention away from the relation between texts and the world towards the study of literary systematicity, so as to highlight how texts operate logically or systematically, the structures texts have and share in common with other texts, and the interrelations between parts of a text.

2. Structuralist critics focus on the way the elements of a text are combined according to logical rules that can often be also noticed in other similar texts. For instance, the moral qualities of the characters as organized in binary oppositions of the type 'possessing trait x'/'not possessing trait x'.

3. Unlike traditional humanist criticism with its approach to characters as if they embodied real moral qualities, structuralist criticism regards texts as systems of signs wherein a character is a signifier linked to signified concept, and what it signifies has meaning only in relation to other signifiers/characters. Being engaged in structuralist activity, therefore, does not involve describing the structure of a literary text in order to interpret what the work means or to evaluate its literary accomplishments and value, but describing the text's structure to discover how its composition demonstrates the underlying principles of a given structural system. Alternatively, the structure of a large number of texts of the same (sub)genre can be examined so as to discover the underlying principles that govern their composition.

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Post-structuralism and Deconstruction

1. Premises of Post-Structuralism

Post-structuralism is an "umbrella" term that refers to the ways of thinking about human thought and culture that developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to and criticism of structuralist thought. What they share is often a radical plurality, a preference for playful interpretation that ignores the author and champions the reader in the establishment of meaning, and the study of texts as products of cultures.

Whereas the structuralists sought to interpret phenomena as a discrete arrangement of signs that could best be understood within the larger system surrounding the entity under scrutiny, poststructuralists bring to this practice a strain of metaphysical doubt about the possibility of achieving a final or even stable meaning. Poststructuralists emphasize the instability of language and, hence, the instability of formal, structuralist interpretation.

A Poststructural analysis tries to address both the object itself as well as the cultural and social forces that shape both the object and the analysis. By the mid-seventies, various practices began to merge with the new Poststructuralist trends in literary theory to produce the broader field of critical theory that includes radical forms of feminism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Marxism, reader-response theory, new historicism, cultural criticism, lesbian/gay/queer theory, African American criticism, and postcolonial criticism. Key figures associated with this brand of inquiry include anthropologist and philosopher Michel Foucault, feminist critic Julia Kristeva, and psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan

Though post-structuralist ideas occur in a wide variety of contexts and disciplines, most have a shared set of ideas and values that include the following:

- The "self" is a constructed entity, not an essential core of being. A self is fluid; its markers of identity, including race, gender, sex, and sexuality, are all socially constructed and therefore unstable and changeable.
- The "self" and its experiences are all products of language; we do not speak language, language speaks us. All human consciousness of the external world is created by language and cannot exist without it. Reality is thus the product of language.
- There is no distinction between the "self" and the external world, as both are constructed by language itself, and hence there can be no objective mode of knowledge; without objectivity, there is no such thing as a universal truth. Rather, truth itself is constructed.
- What is called truth or science or fact is the product of ideology, which can be defined as belief systems that are articulated within a culture and which determine all human thought and practice.

2. Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a term coined by the philosopher Jacques Derrida to name his critique of Western philosophy. The term refers to a specific practice of reading in which the critic discloses buried, competing—even contradictory—meanings latent within a text. In his essays from the late 1960s and early 1970s, Derrida sought to dismiss the notion that philosophical and literary works contain some single, inherent meaning.

Deconstruction began when Jacques Derrida observes, in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966), that there is a "scandal" in Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the structure of myth and culture in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964). Lévi1Strauss argues that all mythology and indeed all human culture and human thought are structured by binary oppositions. Binary oppositions are by definition mutually exclusive; hot is what is not cold, night is what is not day, black is what is not white. Nothing on one side of the / (slash)

can have anything in common with the thing on the other side of the /. Derrida studies the consequences when other fundamental binary oppositions are destabilized. He focuses specifically on the binary opposition presence/absence, which is important in Plato's metaphysics. Presence is better than absence in Platonic philosophy, just as speech, because it represents presence, is better than writing. Speech is a guarantee of the presence of the person doing the speaking; writing marks the absence of the writer. For communication to happen between the speaker and the audience both have to be physically present at the moment of speaking; however, words written on the board continue to have meaning even when the person who wrote these words is no longer present. So, in his book *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida investigates the implications of destabilizing the binary pairs presence/absence and speech/writing.

The idea that words are a primary creative force is what Derrida calls logocentrism; logos meaning word and centrism meaning at the center. Western philosophy from Plato to Derrida has been logocentric, favoring speech over writing, presence over absence, light over dark, and all the binaries that become associated with these, including good/evil, male/female, white/black, reason/ madness, order/chaos, and so on. Deconstruction for Derrida is a way of destabilizing these binary oppositions and seeing what happens to the certainty of our ideas and our philosophical systems when the binary structure on which they depend gets shaken up.

In "Structure, Sign, and Play," Derrida argues that what holds binary oppositions in place has always been some power or force that creates a system of binary oppositions and keeps each piece of a binary on its proper side. An example of such a center might be God; creation begins when God speaks; the act of speaking guarantees that God exists and has the power to speak. God's speech — "let there be light"— creates light; God's speech has the power to make something out of nothing. Once God has made light by speaking, the binary opposite of light/dark exists, and it is God's will that holds the two binaries in opposition.

Derrida says that the history of Western philosophy reveals the continual substitution of one center for another. The history of Western philosophy begins with Plato positing the ideal for the forms of the center, followed by Christianity positing God as the center, followed by the Enlightenment positing human reason or the I as the center (think of Descartes and "I think therefore I am"), followed by Freud positing the unconscious as the center of thought and action.

When a center creates a system and holds all of the elements of the system in place, the system is stable; its elements cannot move around. When you remove the center of the system, nothing is holding the elements in place; the system is destabilized, and the elements have more "play." Play for Derrida is flexibility, and allowing the elements of the system more freedom of movement is seen by Derrida as a positive thing. Play makes possible new combinations and arrangements of the elements of the system because the center is removed and the elements do not have to follow its rules. This is what Derrida calls "bricolage," which is essentially making whatever you want with the elements at hand without regard for the original purpose of the elements or the original rules for putting those elements together. Thus, the bricoleur, the creative artist, has the capacity to tolerate disorder and uncertainty.

Deconstructionists examine literary texts through a poststructuralist lens, regarding the meaning of a text as inherently unstable and subject to the shifting social, historical, ethnic, and intertextual influences that help produce the work itself. To "deconstruct" a text is to disclose the shifting and elusive influences that contribute to the work's network of meaning. Derrida argued that language should be viewed as a system of signs that achieve signification via an endless network of subjective renderings that sometimes are in opposition to one another. Deconstructionist readings unravel these implied oppositions, as well as trace elements of past texts, double meanings, cultural codes, and other linguistic difficulties and contradictions.

The 1970s saw a popularization of deconstruction within university literature departments, which regarded it as a theoretical approach applicable to literary texts. The "Yale School" is a term used to describe a group of thinkers at Yale in the 1970s and '80s whose work was indebted to Derrida and deconstruction. The most famous examples were the literary critics Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, and Harold Bloom. The publications generated by these thinkers include Paul de Man's celebrated text *Allegories of Reading* (1982) and the anthology *Deconstruction and Criticism* (Bloom et al. 1979), which included a contribution by Derrida. Yale was generally regarded as the US home of deconstruction until Derrida became professor of the humanities at the University of California in 1986.

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New Historicism and Cultural Studies

The essential matter of history is not what happened but what people thought or said about it. Frederic W. Maitland (1850-1906) -English Historian

1. Introduction

Emerging in the 1960s, the field of cultural studies has settled a set of principles and practices that can be recognized in many other theories, including ideas drawn from Marxism, feminism, popular culture, and racial and ethnic studies. At present, three types of cultural studies that are getting particular notice are new historicism, postcolonialism, and American multiculturalism. Although each has its own distinct focus, all are concerned with social and cultural forces that create a community. Although the field of cultural studies is still finding its way, its approaches to reading texts can change the way readers conceive of a culture. In simple terms, cultural studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research that investigates the ways in which "culture" creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. The field emerged from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the UK, which, beginning in 1968, was headed by Stuart Hall, a Marxist sociologist and cultural theorist, who is generally accepted as the discipline's most important figure.

2. An Overview of Cultural Studies

Part of the difficulty in defining cultural studies, or even culture, is that the terms are so inclusive. If culture refers to the sum of the beliefs, institutions, arts, and behaviours of a particular people or time, then cultural studies can be said to address an almost unthinkably broad body of knowledge: language, customs, legal systems, literature, and more. Usually, a cultural study addresses a particular topic, such as "Hispanic Women Writers of Texas," using the cultural context to arrive at generalizations about that topic. The intent is to connect historical, social, and economic knowledge surrounding the topic that may not seem to be

very literary at all. For the most part, groups engaged in cultural studies share the assumption that within any society there is a dominant group that determines what is acceptable and what is unacceptable for the larger body. It defines the culture's tastes and values—in short, its ideology. Cultural critics are interested in those groups of people who do not belong to the dominant parties and who challenge the hegemony of the powerful. In the world of literature, they are the people Antonio Gramsci called subaltern writers. However, wherever there is dominance, there is also, to some degree, defiance that makes it impossible for the powerful to prevent change indefinitely. Such a focus makes the field a highly politicized one, dedicated to examining cultural forces in both literature and life with the intent of changing the way power is conceived. The challenge presented to the power structure by groups such as African Americans, gay people, and women has led to challenges in other arenas as well. In literature, all the artifacts of a time or a people are of interest to the cultural critic, each to be treated with equal importance. There are no hierarchies of importance, no divisions between "fine art" and "popular art," between "high culture" and "low culture." Such an assumption makes cultural studies inevitably interdisciplinary. Literary criticism, in these terms, is a limited creature that needs the help of anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, history, and linguistics.

When literature is no longer given special reverence but is instead regarded as one of many areas of interest, its connections with the everyday world are inevitably involved. At this point, the influence of Marxism becomes particularly evident. In sum, cultural studies takes a broad view of human communities, and its practitioners challenge the status quo by trying to displace the powerful (whether "the powerful" be a literary canon or discriminatory institutions) and promote the voices of those seldom heard. For them, literature is a means by which a culture can call attention to itself and assert its significance and worth, especially with the increased self-awareness that has burgeoned since the 1960s among groups of people

bound by common ties of race, ethnicity, history, and gender. One major type of cultural studies that has received significant attention is new historicism.

3. New Historicism: Assumptions and Principles

Given that it is a radically new way of examining the human past, new historicism is difficult to pin down, partly because it is still changing and developing and partly because it draws on widely diverse fields that seem to have little in common except their interest in the study of cultures. The scope of investigation by new historicists is never limited to any single field of study. The reason is that they see all parts of a given culture as shaping and being shaped by one another in such complex ways that any one approach is incapable of providing a complete picture of what has happened or, more important, what it means. Because new historicism is significantly different from traditional historical study, perhaps the best way to present its basic assumptions and principles is to compare it with its predecessor.

3.1. Traditional Historicism

Historians have traditionally been concerned with finding out what really happened at a given time and place. They worked to establish the factual accuracy of the stories that make up the record of the human past so that they could establish, with as much certainty as possible, that the account they rendered was a valid delineation of what had happened. Consequently, the task was meant to maintain an objective stance or a position of distance from the scene of action that would allow them to see and state the truth about people and events. If they were successful in doing so, they could find the essence of a period, the worldview that would unlock the meaning of that period’s literature, art, politics, and social behaviour.

3.2. New Historicism

The new historicists, most of them literary scholars, have challenged and resisted the assumptions and goals of traditional historicism. They deny that anyone can ever know exactly what happened at a given time and place. Thus, all history is subjectively known and set down, coloured by the cultural context of the recorder—usually a person of power—thus leaving untold the stories of those who were powerless. Traditionally, history has been recorded by the winners. The losers, or those who lack political or social power, have their stories to tell as well. Although they may not have published those stories in official documents, they have circulated them as separate discourses. The new historicist would want to hear all the stories and recognize all the voices. The new historicists do not claim to have the "truth" about a text or historical event; rather, they assert that the truth, if such a thing could even exist, would be narratologically and culturally contingent. History and literature are more complicated than earlier readers had assumed.

Complicating the matter further is that not only are history's stories subjectively recorded, but they are also subjectively read and interpreted. A historian works from texts that have already been written (or told), recasting them in light of his or her own particular concerns. Inevitably caught up in his own social and cultural contexts, the historian cannot escape the viewpoints provided by the ideas and institutions of his own day. Like the literary analyst, the historian who reads a "text" is involved in interpretation, reinforcing the subjectivity of any account of history. Because it is impossible to maintain pure objectivity in the examination of history, historians are obligated to acknowledge the biases that are likely to colour their interpretations. As a result of the subjective recordings and readings of the past, history becomes a text rather than a series of empirically verifiable events. Consequently, its study calls for a more interesting question than "What really happened?" In its place, the new historicist is drawn to ask: "What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" As the American historian Hayden White pointed out, what yesterday's historian would have seen as

an event that actually occurred in the past, today's historian sees as a "text" to be interpreted, just as a poem or novel is interpreted by a critic.

The new historicists also challenge the existence of what is referred to as the "spirit of an age." Recognizing that any culture is made up of many disparate and conflicting strands, they deny that there is ever a single, unified worldview operating at a given period. To claim to have found the one perspective that would explain the beliefs, behaviours, and products of a time and place is an oversimplification. Instead, the new historicists recognize that at any given period, many discourses, or ways of seeing and thinking about the world, operate simultaneously. The political discourse of the court of Henry VIII in sixteenth-century England was not the discourse of the peasants who populated the country's rural villages. To claim understanding of that period by considering only what the court was talking about and how it saw current events, or by examining only how the church viewed them, would provide a severely limited sense of what was happening and what it meant. According to new historicists, there never was, and there never is, a single history or a single worldview. Instead, many discourses come together in a complex cultural interaction. Some new historicists charge that the very notion of a standardized culture is a false one that has been imposed by powerful institutions and classes as a way of maintaining their own interests. To hear only the narratives of the dominant group would mean ignoring others that have helped shape the period. And this would provide only a partial understanding of what and how ideologies operated and interacted to form personal and group identities. We consider, for example, the sketchy picture Americans had of antebellum life before the slave narratives began to appear in the 1960s. Obviously, without those stories, a large part of what was known about the pre–Civil War United States was missing.

The presence and use of power (and the lack thereof) is implicit in the search for previously silenced voices. The groups of power establish norms and define what is deemed acceptable. Discourses that differ from the norm and digress from what is acceptable are

likely to be suppressed, or at least go unrecognized, for they threaten the dominance of the powerful and the values generally espoused by a culture. Stephen Greenblatt points out that we define ourselves in relation to what we are not, making it necessary to demonize and objectify what we are not as "others." Designated as disruptive, foreign, and perhaps mad, the "others" are evidence of the rightness of our own power. Nevertheless, the "others" are there, despite being ignored, scorned, or disapproved—that is, silenced; without an awareness of them, one cannot understand the power structure itself. It is by hearing the repressed discourses as well as the dominant ones that the historian is able to discover complex relationships among ideologies that eventually provide an interpretation of what the stories of the past mean. Powerful, affluent peoples do not stay at their peak forever. Even the Roman Empire eventually fell to the invaders known as barbarians.

4. New Literary Historicism

Such radical departures from the traditional ways of looking at history change the way we read literature. It should be noted that most of the new historicists are literary scholars. Under their aegis, the concept that a text reflects its historical context has either disappeared or seen serious changes. Gone are those approaches that used history, even history of the text, as background to literature and that saw the work as a replication of a period's people and behaviour. History is not expected to validate a text by providing facts that will prove the text's truth.

The new historicist critic works in two directions. She seeks to understand a text by examining its cultural context —the anxieties, issues, struggles, politics— of the era in which it was created. She also seeks to understand the culture by looking at its literature. Like the Marxists who preceded them, these critics assume that literature addresses cultural concerns and can affect society's attitudes and values. With such assumptions, the questions for readers are not: Were the characters based on real people? or Do the events recounted in the text recreate experiences from the real life? or Does the text capture the spirit of the times

accurately? Rather, the question is: How does the text reveal and comment on the disparate discourses of the culture it depicts? With that new question, an era's various discourses, including literature, become coparticipants in a complex interaction that is the subject of study. A work of literature is no longer read as an autonomous entity. In fact, according to the new historicists, all texts are social documents and, as such, they both reflect and affect the world that produces them. Using such an approach means accepting literature as one discourse among many—such as scientific tracts, legal papers, and popular songs, seemingly distant from the sublimity traditionally attributed to literary works. Literary interpretation involves acknowledging all the social concerns that surround a text—the customs, institutions, and social practices it depicts, as well as those that are part of the author's life.

The job is complicated, however, by the fact that culture affects critics as it affects texts. Just as a literary work exists in the midst of other discourses, so a critic cannot escape those of his own time. He is influenced by cultural norms and values, both public and private, so that instead of finding (and perhaps explaining) the "true" meaning of a work, he inevitably arrives at a unique interpretation—his own. In sum, reading literature from a new historicist perspective involves accepting a new understanding of what a text is. Working from this position, the critic accepts the interrelatedness of all human activities, making it necessary to examine how all discourses—those contemporary with a text and those of readers who came later—affect the interpretation of literature.

The new historicists have not escaped criticism, even from postmodernists. Some have objected to their willingness to discard aesthetic values in their use of what are usually deemed non-literary documents to add to the picture they are trying to formulate. New historicists answer such charges by saying that the value of their type of reading is that it provides a more complete understanding of a text than could be discovered under the older system.

A brief word needs to be said about the related British movement known as **cultural materialism**. Like new historicism, this movement calls for a renewed awareness of the interrelatedness of human society and a deeper understanding of our own habits and beliefs. However, it is more overtly political in its beliefs and goals than is new historicism. Originally organized in the mid-1960s as an outgrowth of Marxist criticism, cultural materialism argues that the dominant class dictates what forms of art are to be considered superior at the expense of the working-class culture, which, misunderstood and undervalued, is deemed to be inferior. The cultural materialists work to erase any distinction between "high" and "low" forms of art, arguing that any text can be analyzed to reveal how it shapes a people's experience. All texts are carriers of ideologies that have power. The dominant class defines what is acceptable with the goal of strengthening its own position of superiority and power, and the art of the excluded also has the power to reinforce those for whom it speaks and even to affect the entire culture. It is important to note that whereas new historicism tends to look at the operations of power from the top down and to concentrate on the pervasive nature of dominant power structures, thereby emphasizing how the powerful produce (and appropriate) subversion in their own interest, cultural materialism looks at how power works from the bottom up and is more interested in producing alternatives to dominant institutions of power and modes of knowledge. Because literature is a means of effecting change, the job of the critic reading as a cultural materialist is to reveal the social purposes that may lie unrealized in a text, so that repressive ideologies of the powerful can be revealed and resisted.

5. Historical and Cultural Influences

The new literary historicism has challenged several movements that preceded it, and it has particularly disputed the principles of traditional historicism and New Criticism (formalism), both of which had dominated critical practice for several decades. By positioning texts against a background of social and political information of the times in which they were produced or in the context of biography, literary historians provided readers with a way of

understanding another way of life, another culture. As the formalists pointed out, such a perspective was more historical than literary. They went so far as to ignore the historical context of literary works, arguing that those works belong to no particular era but instead are universal and timeless. The formalists believed that it was not necessary to know the author's biography or the cultural environment in which a work was produced, because the work held its own aesthetic rules of being within itself. To consider a poem only in terms of itself—without reference to why it came to be, who was influenced by it, what its purpose was, or how it changed the world—meant not asking questions that many readers believed to be fundamental to understanding it. Those who objected began to challenge such a stance, raising issues about how a reader can understand literature without knowing where it came from and how it was received. At about the time that the New Critics were under attack from various postmodern theorists, the new historicists joined the battle by raising questions that further challenged the premises of both New Criticism and traditional historical literary study.

The general social unrest of the 1960s laid the groundwork for change, even in academia, where the literature classroom grew increasingly politicized. A new generation of professors who were no longer mostly white males began to raise questions about the relationship of literature and culture, power, and authority. Representative of a wide cross section of society—females, minorities, working classes—these professors had a stake in finding and liberating voices that had not traditionally been heard in literature. An early shot on the literary front of the culture wars was fired by literary scholar Stephen Greenblatt, who is regarded by many as the founder of new historicism and a key figure in the shift from literary to cultural poetics and from textual to contextual interpretation in U.S. English departments in the 1980s and 1990s. At the least, he provided the name by which the movement is known in the United States when he used the term in 1982. Well schooled in the principles of New Criticism, Greenblatt resisted the narrowness of its view and began to publish articles and essays in which he probed the nature of literature and its relationship to

the larger culture. His thinking attracted the interest of others, such as Louis Montrose, Jonathan Dollimore, and Catherine Gallagher, who were to become early new historicists. Together they questioned the objectivity of historians, the meaning of texts, the nature of literature, and the role of the critic. Several influences led to the emergence of the theory.

The nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had opened the discussion much earlier by asserting that people shape facts to suit their desires. He wrote, "Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them." Nietzsche rejected the possibility of absolute truths or objective knowledge; in their place, he found that what is accepted as truth is that which corresponds to what has already been described as truth by those in power, including political authorities, rulers, intellectuals, or simply the prevailing ideologies of the day. Then the new literary historicists have been more directly influenced by the French thinker Michel Foucault (1926–1984), who challenged many of the accepted concepts about history, culture, and society; by the ideas of Marxist scholars, who recognized the interconnected nature of society; and by the methodology of cultural anthropologists.

According to Foucault, history is not a continuum in which truths about human nature and society remain constant. Instead, in Foucault's concept of history, what is accepted to be true changes. Each period establishes its own set of values or actions that people are expected to discuss, protect, and defend. Each develops its own standards of permissible behaviour, its criteria for judging what is good or bad, and its system of rules for controlling what is to be said and for disseminating what is accepted as knowledge. Control may take the form of exclusion or prohibition, because what is considered normal or rational silences what is not, whether that be objects, rituals, or specific subjects. Foucault was particularly interested in discourse, and he examined discursive practices in an effort to find the episteme, or the rules and constraints outside which individuals cannot think or speak without running the risk of being excluded or silenced. The episteme designates which statements can be uttered, who or what institutions have the authority to name things and make judgments about them, how they

are allowed to speak, the forms their expression can take, and what can be talked about. Persons and institutions representing "the norm" have the power to determine that which is judged to be knowledge and truth, and to dictate which subjects are valued and which are not.

Because human society is always more complicated than a single view can indicate, Foucault searched for those who had not been allowed to speak and topics that had not been valued. To do so, he borrowed techniques and terminology from archaeology. He dug down past history to find what had been suppressed, ignored, or silenced, which may be just as important to understanding a culture as what has been accepted as knowledge. He examined subjects such as madness, prisons, and sexuality, which he felt had been discourse taboos and subject to "rules of exclusion" for centuries. For example, madness, which Foucault saw as a changing, historically conditioned notion, became a threat to society once reason was considered to be supreme, and therefore it had to be banned from society.

In these terms, literature becomes one of many interactive discourses, and studying it requires putting together those discourses—the accepted with the excluded—even when they are contradictory. Thus, literature is part of the record of human experience that was formed by the cultural conditions at a particular time and place. By reading literature in this way, one not only arrives at a more accurate picture of the past but also discovers knowledge that was lost in traditional historical and literary accounts, because it belonged to those who were shut out from participating in the discussion.

Another key influence on new historicism has been Marxism, particularly its view of power, which recognizes that the dominant class tries to control the thinking of the people through many means, one of which is literature. Following the Marxists, the new historicists acknowledge that a culture's accepted practices keep the powerless in their place and serve the interests of the ruling classes by maintaining social divisions. However, texts can also be a means of overturning the status quo; according to new literary historicists—and more

especially their British cousins, the cultural materialists—critics have a role to play in revealing the political subtexts that lie beneath the conventional ones. From that position, the literary new historicists reason that because a work is connected to the world that produced it, any understanding that does not include an awareness of the concerns of both the culture in general and the author in particular is incomplete.

An additional influence on the practices of the new historicists comes from cultural anthropology. In particular, the methodology Clifford Geertz called **thick description** has proved to be helpful. (Greenblatt, in particular, acknowledges the influence of Geertz's thinking on his own work.) Actually, Geertz gives credit for the term thick description to Gilbert Ryle, who explained that a wink means nothing to the person who sees it unless it has a context, and with different contexts, that wink has different meanings. Extending the argument to all human behaviour, Geertz distinguished between thin description, which would focus only on an isolated act (such as a wink), and thick description, which includes the context of the act. Thick description involves observing, collecting, and interpreting cultural details to find the codes by which people govern their choices and actions. Even small actions that seem to have no particular significance in themselves can, along with other actions, suggest how a given people see their world. In Geertz's methodology, everything is important, because it is through the interconnections of details that meaning is revealed. The observer, however, can never be fully objective, for we are all biased by our own cultural forces. As Foucault pointed out, because historians are also subject to their epistemes, they must confront their own biases.

Influenced by Foucault, Marxism, and cultural anthropology, the new literary historicists no longer see history as factual background but as one of many concurrent narrative discourses that can be (and will be) read and reread in light of the worldview of succeeding cultures. Analysis of a literary text involves listening to all the discourses while recognizing the critic's inherently biased perspective. The process might be thought of as an

ongoing conversation among authors and readers of various eras in which no participant has a complete or objective understanding of the whole.

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Multiculturalism and Cultural Studies

1. Definition

Multiculturalism, which might be defined as a careful attention to and respect for a diversity of cultural perspectives, has been a crucial part of cultural studies throughout the history of the discipline. Cultural studies and multiculturalism share the common mission of destabilizing the entrenched knowledge, ideological perspectives, and most particularly the interpretive practices through which the dominant culture shapes and regulates the production and consumption of knowledge. Both academic discourses fundamentally challenge traditional literary and cultural canons, what counts as "literature" and "culture," as well as what are considered appropriate tools of interpretation for assessing and analyzing literature and culture. In their most progressive forms, they are theoretical movements that powerfully infiltrated and influenced academic institutions in the 1980s and '90s, attempting to reshape the contents of traditional disciplines and their modes and methods of inquiry.

2. Development of Multicultural Theory

The emergence and development of cultural studies can certainly be traced to the mid-twentieth-century writings of Raymond Williams when the waning of the British Empire motivated a reconfiguration of the centers of knowledge production in the British university system. In its earliest formulations, cultural studies asserted the value and significance of popular and particularly working-class literary and cultural productions against the established system of production, consumption, and distribution of literary works known as "English literature," which it questioned; that is, cultural studies unsettled the notion of a singular or homogeneous English national culture. Thus, cultural studies expanded its focus to include a range of diverse populations who challenged and complicated British identity from many sectors of the faltering empire.

Likewise, multiculturalism in the United States entered the academy as a controversial challenge to the monocultural basis of knowledge production that tended to establish disciplinary foundations exclusively on the historical experiences and cultural productions of white males of Western Europe or the United States. Evolving out of the Third World student movements of the 1960s and early '70s (a coalition of ethnic student groups), which were stridently anti-imperialist and allied themselves with the many decolonization movements in Southeast Asia and around the globe, multicultural theory led to the development of ethnic studies programs on many American college and university campuses. It often sought to demonstrate the role of literary and cultural studies, particularly the construction of literary traditions and canons, in underwriting the colonizing and racist practices of the United States and Europe in maintaining domination over the rest of the world. **Edward Said**'s 1978 work *Orientalism* was a key forerunner of multicultural criticism in its progressive manifestation as it uncovered the relays between the racist production of knowledge about the non-European other and Western imperialist expansion and colonial brutality. Perhaps the most critically compelling aspect of Said's work is his identification of racialist ideology and thinking as produced not simply in political discourses but more pervasively by those presumed to strive for objectivity and truth, namely scholars and intellectuals whose social function is to produce knowledge about the world in such academic disciplines as anthropology and the social sciences. Thus, Said's work effectively interrogates the objectivity, even the integrity, of academic knowledge production, demonstrating that the production of knowledge always takes place in the context of and is filtered through a set of cultural values or cultural worldview.

Henry Louis Gates's collection of essays *Figures in Black* (1989) stands as an early exemplar of this particular project of multicultural theory, offering a bold challenge to conventional formalist or New Critical literary theory. Though multiculturalism in the academy is an evolutionary consequence of the Third World nationalist movements in the

United States during the late 1960s and early ’70s, the antecedents of Gates’s analysis can be traced to the history of black nationalist scholarship in the United States, rooted in the thinking of nineteenth-century figures such as Martin Delaney and represented in W. E. B Du Bois’s now canonical work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). As black nationalist politics developed in the twentieth century, the literary and cultural counterparts were established in major artistic movements such as the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and perhaps most notably in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s, which was quite explicit in injecting the “discourse of colonialism” into the literary analysis of the cultures of people of color in the United States. Certainly, literary scholars from other groups of people of color, such as **Paula Gunn Allen** and **Arnold Krupaut** in Native American literary study, Chicana/o scholars **Ramon Saldivar** and **Maria Herrera-Sobek**, and Asian American literary critics **E. San Juan, Jr.** and **Sau-Ling Wong**, share this general orientation in their work, challenging the illusory universalism of the entrenched methods of literary and cultural analysis which underwrite and ratify colonizing practices.

This school of multicultural theory, in challenging the universalism complicit with colonial domination, tends to hold the view that culture is based in shared historical and life experiences and in common practices and beliefs such as religion or folklore and therefore, to be adequately understood, must be analyzed in the context of the specific lived experiences of a specific people. Thus, diverse cultures cannot effectively be studied or understood in terms of the models derived from a national literary canon that is representative of the dominant culture alone and that excludes texts from “subcultures” because they do not share the same features as the dominant cultural exemplars. Thus, multiculturalism interrogates the notion of cultural unity, that there is a homogeneous national culture, and underscores that attempts to assert a methodological unity in terms of aesthetic value only reinforce relations of domination and subordination and lead to distorted apprehensions of many subcultures, which might be divided by race, class, or gender stratifications. Thus, the means to study and

understand cultures of people of color and other subcultures must be derived from the extensive study of the cultural products of these cultures.

However, liberal multiculturalism, infused with racial and ethnic studies, came to reproduce the very racial, gender, and class hierarchies its critical discourses challenged, as it became dominated by representational practices that divorced "race" from its material conditions and largely ignored the economic inequalities and exploitation that racism sustains. American Chicana/o critic **Rosaura Sanchez** has argued that multiculturalism has largely been institutionalized as a liberal pluralism that simply celebrates cultural difference, and in doing so, ignores the material realities of racial difference and the real socioeconomic inequality.

Because of the complexity of the field and the varying and competing influences on racial and ethnic studies, multiculturalism is a contested discursive field that has been represented as a discourse that accommodates racial exploitation. Indeed, it is such contradictory and contested articulations of multiculturalism that enable sociologist **Avery Gordon** and professor of American studies **Christopher Newfield** to make statements such as "Multiculturalism rejected racial subordination but seemed sometimes to support it" (7) or "Multiculturalism sponsored contacts among people of color that avoided white mediation and oversight by white opinion. And yet, it became a popular term in managerial circles for controlling a multiracial and gendered workplace" (ibid).

Recent controversial statements about the literary canon have been made by many writers, notably Chinua Achebe, who have struggled with the dilemma of whether to express themselves in their own dialect, to achieve an authentic rendering of their cultural situation, or in English, to reach a wider audience. Today, there are innumerable varieties of English spoken in many countries, and their expression in literature has only recently been institutionally acknowledged. One of the profound effects of multiculturalism is that the

'English Departments' – all over the world – teach much more than merely English literature. Their scope has extended to encompass literatures written in English in many parts of the globe; literary criticism and theory with a wide international provenance; literatures in translation; postcolonial literatures; and literatures from various religious traditions.

3. Multicultural American Literature after 1945

Since multiculturalism as a canon and approach to study literature was born in the United States, American ethnic prose fiction has attracted much attention in recent years. Then the searchlight will be on a few outstanding Native, Hispanic, and Asian-American writers. Major ethnic fiction has been produced by Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans. Since the late 1960s, Native American novelists have been concerned both with the correction of prevalent stereotypes and the construction of minority identities. While correcting the notions that Indians belong to the past or must be seen apart from American culture, the Native authors rely on the various tribal traditions of storytelling, especially myths. The poet and novelist **N. Scott Momaday** (born 1934) has recorded the legends of his Kiowa tribe in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and won a Pulitzer Prize with his novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968). With *The Ancient Child* (1989), Momaday covered the ritual pilgrimage of the painter Locke Setman. Tracing Setman's way toward a new Native identity, Momaday uses elements of magic realism and Indian tales. **James Welch** (1940-2003) has written on the modern Indians' loss of identity in such novels as *Winter in the Blood* (1974) and *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), and he has reconstructed the traditional world of a nineteenth-century Blackfoot (Blackfeet are American Indian people of Montana and Alberta) in *Fools Crow* (1986). The contemporary situation of educated Natives caught between ethnic discrimination, politics, and crime is the subject of Welch's *The Indian Lawyer* (1990). **Leslie M. Silko**'s (born 1948) *Ceremony* (1977) combines modern realism with traditional Indian forms, such as songs and myths. Her *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), which integrates parts of the Maya narrative *Popul Vuh*, is an apocalyptic prophecy of the perishing of the Europeans'

violent and amoral world in the American Southwest. **Louise Erdrich** (born 1954) wrote most of her fiction in collaboration with her husband, and she has covered the twentieth-century experience of a people living on, and moving away from, a Chippewa reservation in a series of novels marked by irony and compassion: *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), *The Bingo Palace* (1994), and *Tales of Burning Love* (1996).

A different perspective marks the fiction of the Chickasaw **Linda Hogan** (born 1947); in *Mean Spirit* (1990) she describes the exploitation of the Osage tribe by white prospectors and oil barons in the 1920s. Like some other Native American novelists, **Louis Owens** (1948-2002) is what he himself calls a "mixedblood" (he has Choctaw, Cherokee, and Irish ancestors). He has dealt with the problematics of a mixed cultural heritage and hybrid identities in fiction that is partly postmodernist and highly intertextual, using the form of the crime novel to probe questions of race, belonging, and a waning culture (*Wolfsong*, 1991; *The Sharpest Sight*, 1992; *Bone Game*, 1994; *Nightland*, 1996; and *Dark River*, 1999). The recent fiction of Native Americans offers a varied and large spectrum of genres and approaches, including historical novels (Joseph Bruchac's *Dawn Land*, 1993), experimental works (Gordon Henry Jr's *The Light People*, 1994), and politically engaged novels exploring the unpleasant history of the exploitation and suppression of Native Americans down into the twentieth century (Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer*, 1988).

The prose fiction of Hispanic-Americans has been dominated by the novels of Chicano authors. Thus, **Oscar Zeta Acosta**'s (1935-1974) fictionalized autobiographical books cover his rise from poverty and drug addiction (*The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, 1972, and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, 1973); **Tomás Rivera** (1935-84) wrote about the migrant Chicano workers in Texas and California in a short novel with elements of magic realism that has become a classic *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, (1971); and **Rudolfo A. Anaya** (1937-2020) has covered similar subjects in fiction set in New Mexico (*Tortuga*, 1979). Magic realism and the general influence of Latin American literature shaped the fiction

of **Arturo Islas** (1938-91) as in *Migrant Souls* (1990), and experimental fiction has been written by **Richard Rodriguez** (born 1944), especially in his autobiographical writing (*Hunger of Memory*, 1981; and *Days of Obligation*, 1992).

Latin-American competitors of these Chicano authors are the Cuban-born **Roberto G. Fernandez** (born 1951), mainly known for his satirical fiction about exiled Cubans (*Holy Radishes!*, 1995); **Oscar Hijuelos** (born 1951), the son of Cuban immigrants whose best novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1990) describes the cultural shock and the suffering involved in emigration; and **Abraham Rodriguez Jr** (born 1961), who is of Puerto Rican origin and whose lively prose covers the urban setting and the language of impoverished and partly criminal Latinos (*Spidertown*, 1993).

On the other hand, each of the large American cities has its Chinatown and Koreatown, the most remarkable being in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. Despite the discrimination against Japanese Americans in World War II, when they were segregated in camps (an experience reflected in recent Asian-American fiction: *No-No Boy*, 1957, by **John Okada**), Asian American cultures have flourished in the post-war period. In the contemporary literary scene, Asian-American writers are present in all genres. As far as the novel is concerned, the Chinese emigrant's view of America has been described in a realistic manner by **Luis Chu** (1915-70) in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961), and by **Chuang Hua** (1937-2000) in *Crossings* (1968), while **Maxine Hong Kingston** (born 1940) has focused on the Asian's situation between two cultures in such works as *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood Among Ghosts* (1976), and *China Men* (1980), about Chinese emigration to America. Other Chinese-American novelists of note are **Amy Tan** (born 1952), who has written about conflicts between generations in *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), and **Gish Yen** (born 1956), known for her tragi-comic treatment of the Chinese version of the American dream in *Typical American* (1991). Japanese-American fiction includes works by **Hisaye Yamamoto** (1921-2011) and **David Mura** (born 1952), while the Koreans have found a literary spokesman in **Chang-Rae**

Lee (born 1965), whose *Native Speaker* (1995) presents the first-person narrative of Henry Park, a second-generation Korean born in the USA.

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Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Literary Theory

1. Background

Because postcolonialism is a relatively new field of study, there is not total agreement about its principles and purposes, and even its spelling (post-colonialism versus postcolonialism) is disputed. To understand postcolonialism and its connection to literature requires looking first at its predecessor, colonialism, and then its successor, neocolonialism. Colonialism is the subjection of one population to another. It is most clearly seen in physical conquest, but it also involves political, economic, and cultural domination. The British rule in India, for example, involved not only the use of force to subdue the latter but also the imposition of British institutions and tastes. When people are colonized, their traditions and practices are replaced by imitations of those of the colonizer. Parts of the indigenous culture as food, clothing, and recreation tend to disappear, because they are either hidden or replaced, thereby removing that culture from history. So, colonialism exists as ideologies and practices that assume the dominance or rightness of the colonizing culture; these ideologies and practices do not end when the colonists leave. Rather, “postcolonial” may refer best to the time period when a previously colonized culture wrestles with the meaning of its identity as an independent entity. What language will a postcolonial society speak—that of the colonizers, which had been the official language, or any indigenous languages? How will the history of the postcolonial nation be taught in their schools or in the schools of the colonizing country? Much postcolonial literary theory examines how authors deal with the issues and contradictions of life in formerly colonized cultures.

Although the term postcolonial was not in use until the late 1980s, theories surrounding its concerns have been published since the 1960s. Over the years, the study of postcolonialism has attracted the interest of literary scholars and critics. However, because it is concerned with what happens to a culture from the beginning of colonization to the present,

it has made its way into fields as diverse as political science, sociology, and psychology. In fact, the formal end of colonial rule does not end its legacy, and the culture that is left is a mixture of the colonized one and that of the colonizer, often marked by contrasts and antagonisms, resentment and blended practice. Consequently, new issues abound regarding the development of national identity, identification of cultural histories, the precolonial nature of the colonized, and the colonized's resistance to the power that has subjugated them.

2. Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial studies radically questions the aggressively expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world. It studies the process and the effects of cultural displacement that inevitably followed colonial conquest and rule and its consequences for personal and communal identities, and it studies the ways in which the displaced have offered resistance to colonization. In one of its most important versions, postcolonial theory sees such displacements, and the ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead, as points that allow us to expose the internal doubts and the forms of resistance that the West has suppressed in its globalizing course and to deconstruct the façade that the combination of imperialism and capitalism has traditionally striven to present. Thus, Postcolonial studies takes an approach to the study of culture and society that pays particular attention to the practices, products, and consequences of European imperialism.

Thus, postcolonial studies begins with the period of decolonization of European empires that followed World War II. In the British context, then, the era of decolonization began roughly with the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, followed by the independence of Ghana in 1957, and it continued into the late 1960s and early '70s when most of the former British and French colonies in Africa became formally independent nations and European empires were finally dissolved. In the French context, decolonization begins during the

gradual withdrawal from French Indo-China in 1949–54 and is confirmed by Algeria winning its independence in 1962.

Before and during these years, intellectuals and writers in various European centers critiqued the idea of imperialism from political, economic, and ethical perspectives, including the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. The burgeoning class of intellectuals living and writing between the colonies and the metropole, including **Frantz Fanon**, **Aimé Césaire**, **Mahatma Gandhi**, and Trinidadian historian **C. L. R. James**, were also developing their own critiques of colonization and racism. Before formal independence was declared in India, Jamaica, or Algeria, these critics were already drawing attention to the cultural, psychic, and structural problems caused by colonialism and racism. Early critics addressed the immediate concerns of the educated colonized class: How can we achieve decolonization? What will it mean to be a decolonized citizen in the modern world? Is the choice between modernity and tradition, or something else? Works by critics such as Fanon and James still offer some of the most insightful perspectives on what it means to live between cultures, to try to negotiate cultural meanings, and to create new cultural meanings.

Many of these early critics of colonialism are not accorded the status of "critic" in the present constellation of postcolonial studies, but their work nevertheless forms an important part of its intellectual and political context. Some of them are considerably more influential than others. It is notable, for example, that even though India was one of the central territories of the British Empire, and contemporary postcolonial studies is heavily based on discussions of the Indian context, Fanon, the black Martinican psychiatrist who wrote about French colonialism in Algeria, is the one whose writings have received the most attention and are much more influential on contemporary postcolonial scholarship.

Postcolonial studies begins, for the first time as an academic phenomenon, in 1978 with the publication of the groundbreaking book *Orientalism* by the literary critic Edward

Said. Said details the ways in which the British and French gathered and produced information about the Middle East and links the will to collect and organize knowledge with political influence and control. He argues that the British spent much time cataloguing, classifying, and notating everything they encountered, whereas the French, who had less political influence and certainly less political control, were more interested in the figurative Orient. Accordingly, the Orient figures in French culture and literature are more of a magical dream or fantasy than a scientific or anthropological subject. Said asserts that Orientalism has gradually ceased to be the domain of the British and French, and in the contemporary moment has become the domain of the Americans. Moreover, he suggests that under American influence, Orientalism has become more of a "scientific" discourse which now belongs to the social sciences (part of international relations or Middle East studies) rather than the humanities.

In his analysis, Said called attention to the pejorative stereotypes that the British, other Europeans, and Americans create of the peoples unlike themselves, thereby making it easier to justify military or economic conquest. Their view of the "**other**" world is inevitably colored by their own cultural, political, and religious backgrounds, leading them to depict those unlike themselves as inferior, lazy, deceitful, and irrational. The Eastern nations are given all the negative characteristics that the West does not want to see in itself. Like Foucault, Said describes this as a discursive process—Western European explorers went to "the Orient" and wrote descriptions of what they found there and Western European readers read these descriptions and understood "the Orient" as something other than their own country and civilization. Said talks about how "the West" constructed "the East" through discourse, where the colonizer produces the writing and the colonized is silent; the colonized people do not produce knowledge, but are only the subject of knowledge produced by the colonizer. When "the West" writes "the East," the writings create the "oriental" as fundamentally

"other." The negative binary opposite of "civilization"—sexual exoticism, immorality, lack of organization, ignorance, poverty—is associated with the "oriental" in this construction.

Eventually, Said called upon the literary establishment to raise questions about colonization, imperialism, and constructions of the "other." Over the ensuing decades, postcolonial theorists have probed those issues by examining such subjects as language, oppression, cultural identity, race, and education. The intent is to study what happens when one culture is dominated by another.

Much of the most recent wave of postcolonial studies is still involved in working out the implications of Said's critique and it is heavily indebted to his work. Once the originality of his arguments had been absorbed, however, certain problems began to emerge. First, Orientalism seemed to leave too little space for discursive resistance. If it was true that the texts written by Western scholars, writers, and statesmen produced a strong and politically effective discursive regime of truth – what we know as the Orient – it could not be a completely invincible regime. There had to be some possibility of contesting the discourse, of rewriting it, or of outright rebellion against it.

In the early 1980s, various scholars, using poststructuralist theories, began to examine how discursive regimes of colonial authority were already fragmented, and to examine how that fragmentation was represented in history and literature. In the case of British India, the meeting between the Indians and the British complicated attempts at representation, cultural authority, and colonial control. Homi Bhabha points, for example, to the fracturing of Christianity as a discourse of brotherly love in India, partly as a result of its clear links with formal political control in the form of colonial policy.

A group of historians of India, including, among others, Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee, known collectively as the **Subaltern Studies Group** (refers to the study of social groups excluded from dominant power structures), approached the question of anticolonial

resistance from yet another direction. Examination of the history of resistance in India and of attempts to write the history of India with concepts and assumptions derived from the Western discipline of history led this group to question the very nature of nationalism and colonialism. The kind of postcolonial critique offered by critics such as those who make up the **Subaltern Studies** Group, **Gayatri Spivak**, and **Homi Bhabha** has issued a series of demanding questions about the relationship between power, knowledge, representation, and subjectivity set in motion by the European colonization of the non-European world.

3. Postcolonial Literary Criticism and Basic Assumptions

In spite of the uncertainty regarding what literatures the term postcolonial includes, it seems to open it to countries colonized by all Western powers, including Great Britain, Spain, France, Russia, Portugal, and more. Currently the literature of any country that concerns itself with the legacy of colonial rule qualifies, including that of African countries, India, and most recently the Middle East. Some scholars assume that postcolonial literature refers to texts produced after the colonized countries became independent, but others take it to mean the texts produced from the time of colonization to the present. Written by culturally displaced people, it investigates the clash of cultures in which one deems itself to be superior and imposes its own practices on the less powerful one. Its writers examine their histories, question how they should respond to the changes they see around them, and wonder what their society will become. They recognize in themselves the old (indigenous) culture and the new, the native one and the imposed one.

Postcolonial criticism, which began to attract widespread notice in the early 1990s, looks at the works of postcolonial writers but is not limited to them. Its practitioners are interested in how the colonized came to accept the values of the more powerful culture and to resist them too. Attitudes toward the "other" are evident in works that may not, on the surface, seem to deal with colonialism at all. The lack of total agreement about what postcolonialism

is or whom it involves makes it difficult to set down its basic principles and purposes. More complicating is that different cultures have responded to colonization in different ways, making it impossible to subscribe to any single way of approaching postcolonial literature. With those reservations, the following assumptions and generalizations made by different theorists and critics are accepted as important to postcolonial theory:

1. Colonizers not only physically conquer territories but also practice **cultural colonization** by replacing the practices and beliefs of the native culture with their own values, governance, laws, and belief. The consequence is loss or change of much of the precolonial indigenous culture.
2. When their own culture is forbidden or devalued, natives come to see themselves as inferior to the conquerors. They abandon (or hide) their own cultural practices to adopt (imitate) those of the assumedly "superior" one.
3. Colonial subjects practice **mimicry** —imitation of dress, language, behavior, even gestures— instead of resistance. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, published in 1952, **Frantz Fanon**, a psychiatrist, reasoned that the inferiority complex created in black people who have accepted the culture of another country as their own will cause them to imitate the codes of their colonizers. As the colonized become better educated and able to live as their white counterparts, they become increasingly imitative. **Homi Bhabha** points out that the mimicry is never exact, however. It "is at once resemblance and menace." The colonizer both wants and fears that the colonized will be like him because the imitation honors and, at the same time, undermines the "authoritative discourse" of colonialism.
4. European colonizers believed that their ideals and experiences were universal. As a concept, **universalism** is evident in the characters and themes in European (and, later, American) literature when dealing with other societies considered as inferior.

5. The European colonizers assumed the superiority of their own culture and the inferiority of the conquered ones. They thought of themselves as civilized, even advanced, and of the colonized as backward, even savage. Using their own culture as the standard for what any other culture should be, a practice known as **Eurocentrism**, the powerful justified the imposition of their own culture on those they deemed to be of lesser status, the **subalterns**. The subalterns represent an important category in the writings of the Indian postcolonial theorist and critic **Gayatri Spivak** who used it to refer to the lowest layers of a colonial or postcolonial society: the homeless, the day laborers, the unemployed, arguing that these subaltern populations are voiceless and invisible in both colonial and post- or neocolonial cultures. In her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) Spivak focuses on women as subalterns in debates between British and Indian cultures around the issue of sati or widow-burning (a Hindu practice, in which a widow sacrifices herself by sitting atop her deceased husband's funeral pyre); women themselves do not participate, from either perspective, in the debate.
6. The practice of **othering**, viewing those who are different from oneself as inferior beings, divides people and justifies hierarchies. Sometimes the dominant culture sees the "other" as evil, in which case it is known as the **demonic other**. The term "other" is used in a variety of critical theories, including postcolonial theory, to designate the opposite of the term "self" or "subject" as it is understood in Western philosophy. A "self" has a number of distinct characteristics in Western philosophy, including the capacity for reason, self-reflection, the ability to speak and to say "I," individuality, autonomy, and self-determination. The "other," as the binary opposite of "self," lacks these characteristics; in the logic of binary oppositions, the "other" is everything the self is not. When the self is defined as white, male, free, literate, and normal, the

"other" thus stands for non-white, female, enslaved, illiterate, and abnormal. The creation of "other" is necessary to the maintenance of the category "self" as stable.

7. Colonizers also become the colonized. In this two-way process, the Europeans too were affected by their contact with other cultures.
8. The effects of past colonialism are still evident today, and a new form of colonialism is currently affected by international corporations operating in developing nations.
9. The interaction of cultures creates blended ones, mixtures of the native and colonial, a process called **hybridity**. Characterized by tensions and change, this process is dynamic, interactive, and creative. As Homi Bhabha explained in an interview with Gary Olson and Lynn Worsham, "It's a social process. It's not about persons of diverse cultural tastes and fashions." Bhabha sees hybridity as a "problematic of colonial representation … so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority." So, the hybridization marks the possibility of counter-colonial resistance.

4. Postcolonial Reading

A postcolonial analysis begins with the assumption that examining the relationship between a text and its context will illuminate the work and also the culture that produced it. The following elements recur when approaching literature from a postcolonial perspective:

- Presentation of Colonialism: The central question of postcolonial criticism addresses the stance of the text toward the mixed colonial culture that it depicts or that produced it. What attitudes does the text reflect regarding the colonizers and the colonized? Is the work critical of colonialism or approving of it? A wide range of viewpoints is possible, for the historical development of a culture, the relationships between its cultural groups, and the interaction of mixing people of different backgrounds make for a complex situation.

- Treatment of Characters: It is in the portrayals of colonizers and the colonized that the larger picture becomes evident. The reader can begin by asking whether the depictions are positive or negative. Whose deeds are celebrated and whose are reproved? The assumptions about characters, both spoken and unspoken, will indicate whether the work supports or resists the ideology and practices of colonialism.
- Expression of Nativism (National identity): Out of a desire to resurrect the precolonial culture, some postcolonial writers consciously use elements of their native culture. It is one way to rediscover native identity and declare its worth. Several problems lie in this approach, however, especially the language of writing. When writers publish works written in their own language, they usually meet a limited reading audience. Some scholars argue that the attempt is inherently flawed, because all cultures change even without the intervention of an outside oppressor. Finally, postcolonial cultures are hybrid ones, and any attempt to go back to a "pure" culture is unrealistic.
- Recurring Themes: Some postcolonial texts look to the past, retelling the stories of the initial colonization and trace changes in the native culture. Others record the sense of double consciousness and unhomeliness experienced by those who belong to both past and present and to neither. Other texts look to the future, reaching for a definition of the new hybrid identity (both personal and communal) and an ideology that will serve its needs. In all cases, postcolonial texts reveal the complexity of cultural identity in a postcolonial world.
- Political Statement: The question is whether and how a work promotes resistance to colonialism. Does the text make ideological statements or support a particular course of political, economic, or social action? Does it take up the case for or against a particular group of people? Or does it attempt to present the complexity of the situation without taking a stand on it?

5. Diaspora Studies

A related area of concern in postcolonial studies is diaspora studies, which grew out of the realization in the 1980s that immigration had given rise to new populations of ethnic and oftentimes postcolonial "others" within dominant native groups such as the English and the French. These postcolonial and diasporic juxtapositions offered occasions for intercultural conflict (such as the debates over whether or not traditional religious women's dress is "appropriate" in "modern" societies such as France that make a national ideal of excluding religious ideas and symbols from public life) as well as providing a rich new terrain for multicultural expression. Contemporary diasporas are largely postcolonial phenomena as they were created by empire and capitalism. The first African "slave" diaspora was created by the Portuguese, British, French, Dutch, and Spanish empires, and the preconditions for the emergence of most of the other largest diasporas – Indian and South Asian, Chinese, and North African – were fashioned by the emergence and eventual decline of the European empires. In the aftermath of World War II, when labor was needed for the reconstruction of Europe, Afro-Caribbeans began to emigrate to the UK in the late 1940s, followed by South Asian citizens of the British Commonwealth, while North Africans went to France and Turks to Germany. As people, money, and ideas crossed the borders of nation-states ever more easily, globalization emerged and transnational phenomena became more important. However, the seemingly homogenizing effect of globalization cannot hide the responses it has prompted in various regions of the world.

Diaspora studies is the product of these changes. It was only when the diasporic social and cultural formation became a field of study for anthropologists, sociologists, and postcolonial literary critics that the field developed. The emergence of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991 marks the beginning of this multidisciplinary field. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) and Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas* (1997) are the two most commonly taught books in most contemporary syllabi of diaspora studies. As a

multidisciplinary field, various disciplines of the social sciences and humanities have become involved in the construction of diaspora studies. Cultural practices such as the gendered and racialized remaking of collective identity through music, films, and the novel, social phenomena such as accelerated mobility, economic phenomena such as the role of the remittances migrants send to their homelands, and political topics such as the role of organized diasporas in lobbying for homeland development all draw a great deal of attention.

While in most of the texts the definition of diaspora remains contested, certain features recur in all definitions: diasporas are sociocultural formations produced when migrants and ethnics dispersed to many countries resist full assimilation in host societies, and retain or produce identity-shaping differences in culture and behavior. If diasporas do not or cannot return "home," they still articulate a yearning for home and a sense of belonging to a scattered community. Places of origin and historical narratives are often invoked as the sites, repositories, and symbols of authentic identity.

Many scholars have expressed the ways in which diasporic intellectuals act as interlocutors, mediators, and native informants about their homeland cultures and societies. In a global economy of ideas dominated by Western and metropolitan sites of knowledge production, the diasporic academic exerts greater influence than the individual or organization based in more peripheral localities and nations. Many of the culture-based disciplines (anthropology, history and psychology, and interdisciplinary fields, such as cultural studies, feminist and gender theories) have concentrated on diasporic experiences and the ways in which these experiences are manifested in quotidian practices, modes of cultural production, performance, and literary texts.

6. Literature of Diaspora

This very broad term encompasses literature that deals with experiences of (voluntary or non-voluntary) migration and exile, and cultural or geographical displacement, most often

in the context of postcolonialism, but also arising from dispersals caused by traumatic historical events such as war and political reasons. Questions of diaspora arise with particular tensions in the ways culture and literature interact. The immigrant writers are caught in a dilemma of nothingness or not belonging and their identity becomes a hyphenated identity. The tension between what was and what is, between memory and reality, energizes the writer's work where memory helps to re-constitute or recreate a remembered past. It is the nostalgia for the past that makes the immigrant survive. Another factor that makes immigrant writing so colorful and vibrant is the writer's ability to write in another language. For Sam Selvon, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie, English language has become a powerful tool and they have appropriated it for their own situations and enriched it with fresh expressions and emotions. Although the narratives of the individual writers vary greatly in their thematic preoccupations and literary styles, their diasporic condition, their sense of exile and alienation and their efforts to seek replenishment by making symbolic returns to their origins bind their writing into a unity.

It is in diaspora literature that hybridity is a recurrent motif. Under the influence of important theorists like Bhabha, the postcolonial in general was often associated with metropolitan, diasporic, migrant and minority spaces for which the nation as a horizon of expectation had retreated. But the most recent generation of postcolonial writers has moved beyond hybridity. They work to build local worlds away from the dominant North and from their own life worlds to the point that they turn increasingly towards local audiences and narrative traditions, and away from the implied European reader. In what seems indeed a post-postcolonial development, the former colonizer, the metropolis, no longer dominates the cultural horizon.

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Reader-Response Theories

'Tis the good reader that makes the good book. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1. Background and Assumptions

If we reject formalism and adopt the perspective of the reader, the focus moves away from thinking of a work as a self-contained aesthetic object to considering the experience that transpires when the reader and the work come together. We can say that the literary work has no real existence until it is read; its meaning can only be discussed by its readers. The addressee is not a passive recipient of an entirely formulated meaning; he is actively involved in the creation of meaning and an active participant in interpretation. We differ about interpretations only because our ways of reading differ. Wolfgang Iser argues that literary texts always contain 'blanks' which only the reader can fill. A problem for theory centres on the question of whether or not the text itself triggers the reader's act of interpretation, or whether the reader's own interpretative strategies impose solutions upon the problems thrown up by the text. Even before the growth of reader-response theory, semioticians had developed the field with some sophistication. Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* (1979, comprising essays dating from 1959) argues that some texts are 'open' and invite the reader's collaboration in the production of meaning, while others are 'closed' (comics, detective fiction) and predetermine the reader's response.

The issue of how meaning is created emerged as a significant concern among literary theorists by the mid-twentieth century. The question had become, "Does the interpretation of a text depend primarily on the reader, the text itself (which can manipulate the reader), or a combination of the two?" Further questions then ensued: Is the reader the actual one, the virtual reader conceptualized by the writer, or an ideal reader (the perfectly insightful reader who possesses linguistic and literary competence and understands the writer's every move)? Reader-response theorists do not answer such questions with a single voice. In fact, their

approaches cover such a wide variety of concerns that sometimes the term reader-response seems to refer to a chaotic jumble of theories that may not have anything to do with each other. They do, however, agree on a few basic principles, the most important of which is the effect that a work has on a reader and that interpretation of meaning is assumed to be an act of reading, thereby making the ultimate authority not the writer but the reader. A literary work thus becomes an evolving creation, as it is possible to have many interpretations of the same text by different readers. When readers recognize that there is no right or wrong answer but instead a variety of readings that grow out of individual experiences and feelings and when their own lives intersect with the text, literature becomes alive for them and the text takes on vitality. According to Louise Rosenblatt, "The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition." Since a reader-response analysis powerfully engages readers to find meaning in the text, some critics object to the intense subjectivity of such an approach. Others complain that digressions into self-analysis make the reader's life, rather than the literary work, the primary focus of attention.

2. Approaches in Reader-Oriented Theories

Modern reader-response theory could be said to begin with Husserlian phenomenology, take a "linguistic turn," and finally become dispersed in poststructuralist, Marxist, and new historicist theories.

2.1. Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer

Contemporary Reader-Response theory developed out of the philosophical hermeneutics and the work of the Austrian-born German philosopher **Edmund Husserl**, called phenomenology, which stresses the perceiver's central role in determining meaning. In his *Cartesian Meditations* (1929), Husserl characterized phenomenology as a "criticism of consciousness." This "criticism" wasn't a study of literary texts; it was a study of "transcendental self-experience," by which Husserl meant that it studied the nature, the acts,

and the structures constituting consciousness. According to Edmund Husserl, the proper object of philosophical investigation is the contents of our consciousness and not objects in the world. Phenomenology was an attempt to revive the idea that the individual human mind is the centre and origin of all meaning. In literary theory, this approach did not encourage a purely subjective concern for the critic's mental structure but a type of criticism which tries to enter into the world of a writer's works and to arrive at an understanding of the underlying nature or essence of the writings as they appear to the reader's consciousness ('phenomena' in Greek, meaning 'things appearing').

The shift towards a reader-oriented theory is prefigured in the rejection of Husserl's 'objective' view by his pupil **Martin Heidegger**. The latter argued that what is distinctive about human existence is its 'givenness': our consciousness both *projects* the things of the world and at the same time is *subjected to* the world by the very nature of existence in the world. We find ourselves 'flung down' into the world, into a time and place we did not choose, but simultaneously it is our world in so far as our consciousness projects it. We can never adopt an attitude of detached contemplation, looking down upon the world as if from a mountain top. Our thinking is always in a situation and is therefore always *historical*. It was **Hans-Georg Gadamer** who, in *Truth and Method* (1975), applied Heidegger's **situational approach** to literary theory. Gadamer argued that a literary work does not come into the world as a finished and neatly parcelled package of meaning; rather meaning depends on the historical situation of the interpreter.

2.2. Reception Theory: Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser

In the 1960s, another different form of reader-response criticism emerged, asking the critic to examine the public's response to authors and works during a particular era. Known as **reception theory**, it recognizes that readers in different historical periods are not likely to interpret or judge a given work in precisely the same way, and that as literary fashions and

interests change, the characteristics that find favour in one century may be disparaged in the next. The receptionists analyse newspaper articles, study magazine reviews, and read personal letters to find evidence of how the public once viewed written material. They try to determine the expectations that readers were likely to have had at a given time, based on the receptionists' understanding of genres, works, and language. They look for what Hans Robert Jauss called the **horizon of expectations** of the reading public; that is, what readers valued and looked for in a work.

Hans Robert Jauss, an important German exponent of 'reception' theory, gave a historical dimension to reader-oriented criticism. Jauss uses the term 'horizon of expectations' to describe the criteria readers use to judge literary texts in any given period. For example, if we consider the English Augustan period, Alexander Pope's poetry was judged according to criteria which were based upon values of clarity, naturalness and stylistic decorum. However, this does not establish for all the value of Pope's poetry. During the second half of the eighteenth century, commentators began to question whether Pope was a poet at all and to suggest that he was a clever versifier who put prose into rhyming couplets and lacked the imaginative power required of true poetry. However, in the twentieth century, modern readings of Pope work within a changed horizon of expectations: we now often value his poems for their wit, complexity, moral insight and their renewal of literary tradition. Jauss himself examined the case of the French poet Baudelaire whose *Les Fleurs du mal* had in the late nineteenth century attracted legal prosecution by offending the norms of bourgeois morality and the canons of romantic poetry. However, the poems immediately produced a new aesthetic horizon of expectations; the literary *avant-garde* saw the book as expression of the aesthetic cult of nihilism.

The original horizon of expectations only tells us how the work was valued and interpreted when it appeared, but does not establish its meaning finally. In Jauss's view, it would be equally wrong to say that a work is universal and that its meaning is fixed forever:

"A literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue." This means that we will never be able to survey the successive horizons which flow from the time of a work down to the present day and then to sum up the work's final value or meaning. To do so would be to ignore our own historical situation. Whose authority are we to accept? That of the first readers? The combined opinion of readers over time? Or the aesthetic judgement of the present? The first readers may have been incapable of seeing the revolutionary significance of a writer, and the same objection must also apply to succeeding readers' judgements, including our own.

Jauss's answers to these questions derive from the philosophical 'hermeneutics' of Hans-Georg Gadamer who argues that our attempts to understand a work will depend on the questions which our own cultural environment allows us to raise. However, our present perspective always involves a relationship to the past, but at the same time the past can only be grasped through the perspective of the present. A hermeneutical notion views understanding as a 'fusion' of past and present: we cannot make our journey into the past without taking the present with us. Therefore, the receptionists cannot make a final evaluation of the worth of a work, because they demonstrate how its appeal may change from one time to another. Instead, they engage the past in a dialogue with the present, helping readers view the work from contrasting historical and cultural perspectives.

A leading exponent of German reception theory is **Wolfgang Iser**, who, unlike Jauss, decontextualizes and dehistoricizes text and reader. A key work is his *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978), in which he presents the text as a potential structure which is 'concretized' by the reader in relation to his or her extra-literary norms, values and experience. A sort of relationship is set up between the power of the text to control the way it is read and a reader's 'concretization' of it in terms of his or her own experience.

In Iser's view, the critic's task is to explain not the text as an object but rather its effects on the reader. It is in the nature of texts to allow a set of possible interpretations. The reader receives certain mental images in the process of reading; however, the images will inevitably be coloured by the reader's 'existing stock of experience'. If we are atheists, we will be affected differently by a work than if we are religious. As readers, we provide the interpretation in order to fill a 'gap' or 'blank' (key terms in Iser's theory) in the text.

Iser's emphasis is ultimately phenomenological: the reader's experience of reading is at the centre of the literary process. By resolving the contradictions between the various viewpoints which emerge from the text or by filling the 'gaps' between viewpoints, the readers take the text into their consciousnesses and make it their own *experience.* While texts do set the terms on which the reader actualizes meanings, the reader's own 'store of experience' will take some part in the process. In other words, the reader's activities are confined within limits set by the literary work and to use Iser's words, reading "gives us the chance to formulate the unformulated."

2.3. Affective Stylistics and Interpretative Communities: Stanley Fish

Stanley Fish, the American theorist and critic of seventeenth-century English literature, developed a perspective called an **'affective stylistics'** by denying literary language any special status and using the same reading strategies to interpret literary and non-literary texts. In his view, a reader is someone who possesses a 'linguistic competence' and has internalized the syntactic and semantic knowledge required for reading. The 'informed reader' of literary texts has also acquired a specifically 'literary competence' (knowledge of literary conventions).

In an essay entitled "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (1970), Fish refers to affective stylistics as the impact that the structure of a given text has on the minds of individual readers as they read and, more generally, to a personal and private process of reading that Fish once believed everyone employs. In setting forth his theory of affective

stylistics, Fish suggested that a literary text is an "event" in time that comes into being in the mind of an individual reader during the act of reading; that reading is a temporal process in which each succeeding word, sentence, paragraph, or stanza provides additional information that readers must incorporate into their understanding; and therefore that meaning changes as the reader progresses through the work. At each step, readers reevaluate their interpretations, forming new expectations and perhaps rejecting old ones, recognizing past mistakes and making new ones.

Subsequently, beginning with an essay entitled "Interpreting the Variorum" (1976) and then *Is There a Text in This Class*? (1980), Fish acknowledges that his earlier work treated his own experience of reading as the norm and he shifted his focus away from the individual reader to **'interpretative communities,'** arguing that members of a given interpretive community tend to share the same reading strategies and that the meaning of a given text may differ significantly from group to group. In making this shift, Fish substantially modified his reader-response theory, coming to view affective stylistics as one of several possible reading strategies. In addition, by reducing the whole process of meaning-production to the already existing conventions of the interpretative community, Fish seems to abandon all possibility of resistance to the norms which govern acts of interpretation.

2.4. Subjective Criticism: David Bleich and Norman Holland

An American critic who has derived approaches to reader theory from psychology is David Bleich whose work *Subjective Criticism* (1978) is a sophisticated argument in favour of a shift from an objective to a subjective paradigm in critical theory. He argues that modern philosophers have denied the existence of an objective world of facts. Even in science, the perceiver's mental structures will decide what counts as an objective fact: "Knowledge is made by people and not found because the object of observation appears changed by the act of observation."

Subjective criticism is based on the assumption that "each person's most urgent motivations are to understand himself." In his classroom experiments, Bleich was led to distinguish between (1) the reader's spontaneous 'response' to a text and (2) the 'meaning' the reader attributed to it. The latter is usually presented as necessarily developed from the *subjective response* of the reader. Whatever system of thought is being employed (formalist, Marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic, etc.), interpretations of particular texts will normally reflect the subjective individuality of a personal 'response.'

Inclined toward psychoanalysis, American psychoanalytic critic **Norman Holland** believes that readers' motives strongly influence how they read. In his early work, he claims that an objective text exists (he calls his method transactive analysis because he believes that reading involves a transaction between the reader and a real text) and he focuses on what readers' interpretations reveal about themselves, not about the text. Given his analyses of the subjective experiences of readers, he is referred to as a subjective reader-response critic. However, because Holland employs psychoanalytic concepts and focuses on the psychological responses of readers, many theorists think of him as a psychological reader-response critic.

Holland believes that we react to literary texts with the same psychological responses we bring to events in our daily lives. The situations that cause a person's defenses to emerge in interpersonal life will cause his defenses to emerge when he reads. The immediate goal of interpretation, like the immediate psychological goal of our daily lives, is to fulfill our psychological needs and desires. When we perceive a textual threat to our psychological equilibrium, we must interpret the text in some way that will restore that equilibrium. For example, two readers who, at some point in their lives, have felt victimized for reasons beyond their control. These readers' defenses probably would be raised by the character of Pecola in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) because they would perceive her as a victim as they themselves had been. In other words, reading about Pecola would remind them of their

own painful childhood experience. The first reader might cope with this textual threat by interpreting the novel in a way that condemns Pecola instead of the characters who torment her: for example, Pecola instigates her own victimization by behaving in such a passive manner and refusing to stand up for herself. In this way, the reader identifies with the aggressor, rather than with the victim, and temporarily relieves his own psychological pain. The second reader for whom victimized characters threaten to stimulate painful childhood memories might cope with Pecola by minimizing the character's suffering, focusing instead on some positive quality Pecola retains intact. This reader denies Pecola's psychological pain in order to deny his own.

Holland calls the pattern of our psychological conflicts and coping strategies our **identity theme**. He believes that in our daily lives we project that identity theme onto every situation we encounter and thus perceive the world through the lens of our psychological experience. Analogously, when we read literature, we project our identity theme, or variations of it, onto the text. That is, in various ways we unconsciously recreate in the text the world that exists in our own mind. Our interpretations, then, are products of the fears, defenses, needs, and desires we project onto the text.

The value of Holland's method might be used as a biographical tool for the study of an author. Holland provides an example of such an application in a brief analysis of Robert Frost as a reader and not as a writer. That is, the focus of analysis is Frost as a person reading the world in which he lives, reacting to and interpreting it. Holland studied the poet's informal remarks; his letters; his tastes in literature; his personality traits; and his expressed attitudes toward science, politics, his own poetry, and himself in order to discover Frost's identity theme. Once this identity theme was established, it could be traced as well in Frost's poetry, which might itself be taken as the poet's interpretation of his world.

2.5. Linguistic Turn: Jonathan Culler and Roland Barthes

American literary critic Jonathan Culler made the first attempt to assimilate French structuralism to an Anglo-American critical perspective in *Structuralist Poetics* (1975). He accepts the premise that linguistics affords the best model of knowledge for the humanities and social sciences. However, he prefers Noam Chomsky's distinction between 'competence' and 'performance' to Saussure's '*langue*' and '*parole*'. Chomsky showed that the starting-point for an understanding of language is the native speaker's ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences on the basis of an unconsciously assimilated knowledge of the language system. Culler brings out the significance of this perspective for literary theory: "the real object of poetics is not the work itself but its intelligibility. One must attempt to explain how it is that works can be understood; the implicit knowledge, the conventions that enable readers to make sense of them, must be formulated" (96). Culler believes that we can determine the rules that govern the interpretation of texts, but not the rules that govern the writing of texts. If we begin by establishing a range of interpretations which seem acceptable to **skilled readers**, we can then establish what norms and procedures led to the interpretations. To put it simply, skilled readers, when faced with a text, seem to know how to make sense of it – to decide what is a possible interpretation and what is not. Culler sees the structure not in the system underlying the text but in the system underlying the reader's act of interpretation.

We know that different readers produce different interpretations, but while this has led some theorists to despair of developing a theory of reading, Culler later argues, in *The Pursuit of Signs* (1981), that it is this variety of interpretation which theory has to explain. While readers may differ about meaning, they may well follow the same set of interpretative conventions. However, there is no underlying form of 'competence' which produces these conventions: all we can talk about is the competence of readers to make sense of what they read. In order to read texts as literature we must possess a 'literary competence', just as we

need a more general 'linguistic competence' to make sense of the ordinary linguistic utterances we encounter.

Roland Barthes, whose career took several turns, was undoubtedly the most daring of the French theorists of the 1960s and 1970s. After his beginnings in structuralism, he stresses that the worst sin a writer can commit is to pretend that language is a natural, transparent medium through which the reader grasps a solid and unified 'truth' or 'reality'. What might be called Barthes' poststructuralist period is best represented by his short essay "The Death of the Author" (1968). He rejects the traditional view that the author is the source of the text's meaning, and the only authority for interpretation. At first, this sounds like a restatement of the familiar New Critical dogma about the literary work's independence (autonomy) from its historical and biographical background. Barthes' formula is utterly radical in its dismissal of such humanistic notions. His author is reduced to a location (a crossroad), where language, that infinite storehouse of citations, repetitions, echoes and references, crosses and recrosses. The reader is thus free to enter the text from any direction; there is no correct route. For Barthes, the literary text exhibits a plurality of possible interpretations and intertextual relations that coexist within the act of reading because the author offers the interpreter a work to be completed. Accordingly, "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination . . . [T]he birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148). What is new in Barthes's theory, explained in his work *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), is the idea that readers are free to take their pleasure of the text, to connect it with systems of meaning, and ignore the author's 'intention'.

Reader-response theories have no single or predominant philosophical starting-point; the scholars we have considered belong to quite different traditions of thought; and there are few common terms or positions among them. The German theorists, Jauss and Iser, draw upon phenomenology and hermeneutics in their attempts to describe the process of reading in terms of the reader's consciousness. Fish establishes what is called affective stylistics and

informed readers who have acquired literary competence. Bleich regards reading as a process which depends upon the subjective psychology of the reader. Roland Barthes celebrates the end of structuralism's reign by granting the reader the power to create meanings by 'opening' the text to the interminable play of 'codes.' Whatever one may take from these reader-oriented theories, there is no doubt that they have fundamentally challenged the predominance of the text-oriented theories associated with New Criticism and Formalism and opened the way for 'the reader' to contribute in the interpretation of texts.

To conclude, espousing various theoretical assumptions, the different trends have different methodologies for text analysis and interpretation. To varying degrees, the reader helps create the meaning of any text, and in approaching a work, the reader brings to the interpretative process his or her **forestructure**, one's accrued life experiences, memories, beliefs, values, and other characteristics that make an individual unique. Because reader-oriented critics agree that an individual reader creates the text's meaning, reader-oriented criticism declares that there can be no one correct meaning for any text, but many valid interpretations.

For these assumptions, reader-oriented criticism has been harshly critiqued by scholars who believe that the text, not the reader, creates meaning. If multiple interpretations of the same text can exist side by side, how can we ever say what a text means? Can a text actually mean anything a reader says it means? Are there no clearly delineated guidelines for interpretations? Are there no fixed values in any text? Whatever theoretical assumptions the reader adopts, if the reader is the producer of meaning, then the reader's physical or mental condition while reading a text will directly influence the interpretation, producing an array of bizarre and more frequently misguided and pointless interpretations. Because reader-oriented criticism allows for so much divergence in theory and methods, many present-day schools of criticism, such as deconstructionism, feminism and gender studies, Marxism, Cultural Studies, postcolonialism, race and ethnicity, and queer theory, declare their adherence to this

broad classification. Each of these approaches provides its own ideological basis to reader-oriented theory and develops its own methods of criticism. Thus, many reader-oriented critics today emphasize how certain groups read, asking such questions as: Do African-Americans read differently from white Americans? How do women read? How does history influence reading? Such an eclectic mix heralds the growth and ongoing development of reader-oriented criticism that will probably continue for decades.

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Discourse Studies and Literature as Discourse

1. Definitions

Etymologically, the word discourse comes from the Latin word *discursus*, which means “running to and fro.” The definition of discourse thus comes from this physical act of transferring information “to and fro”. In linguistics, *discourse* refers to a unit of language longer than a single sentence used in a social context. Thus, the term “discourse” refers to a systematic and relational sequence of meaningful statements (speech and text) and semiotic elements (signs and symbols) that influence practices and give expression to the values, behaviors, and worldviews of social groups. In everyday language, the term is often used casually to imply a structured argument about a particular theme. According to some scholars:

Discourse studies, says the Dutch linguist Jan Renkema, refers to "the discipline devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication" (*Introduction to Discourse Studies*, 2004).

"Discourse in context may consist of only one or two words as in *stop* or *no smoking*. Alternatively, a piece of discourse can be hundreds of thousands of words in length, as some novels are. A typical piece of discourse is somewhere between these two extremes.” (Eli Hinkel and Sandra Fotos, *New Perspectives on Grammar Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*, 2002)

"Discourse is the way in which language is used socially to convey broad historical meanings. It is language identified by the social conditions of its use, by who is using it and under what conditions. Language can never be 'neutral' because it bridges our personal and social worlds."
(Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Discourses of Domination*, 2002)

"Discourse can also be used to refer to particular contexts of language use, and in this sense . . . we can conceptualize political discourse (the sort of language used in political contexts) or media discourse (language used in the media). In addition, some writers have conceived of discourse as related to particular topics, such as an environmental discourse or colonial discourse. Such labels sometimes suggest a particular attitude towards a topic; e.g. people engaging in environmental discourse would generally be expected to be concerned with protecting the environment rather than wasting resources."
(Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece, *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*, 2011)

"'Discourse' is sometimes used in contrast with 'text,' where 'text' refers to actual written or spoken data, and 'discourse' refers to the whole act of communication involving production and comprehension, not necessarily entirely verbal . . . The study of discourse, then, can involve matters like context, background information or knowledge shared between a speaker and a hearer."
(Meriel Bloor and Thomas Bloor, *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*, 2013).

So, scholars and theorists have come to see the value of a more functional, less abstract view of language as situated social action, language in use, or discourse, in reading, understanding and writing creatively. Discourse then is 'how it is said' and 'how it is read', and the contexts in which language is used and processed, both linguistic and in wider social and cultural terms, to explain how meanings arise between language users (speaker/listener – writer/reader).

2. Theories in Discourse Studies

The modern genealogy of the concept goes back to the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and includes pre-eminent poststructuralist theorists like Michel Foucault. For mainstream linguistics, highly indebted to Saussure, the focus is on the analysis

of the internal mechanisms of language in use. In contrast, according to the Foucauldian perspective, which tends to be more influential in cultural studies and literary theory, the emphasis is on examining the impact of discourse on the social sphere.

Although the term “discourse” was not used extensively in Saussure’s work, his theory of language has had a significant influence on theories of discourse. Saussure favored a structural analysis of linguistic systems, and by emphasizing structural aspects of language and examining the structure of language as a fixed system, he does not deny the importance of social norms and rules in these systems. The notion of discourse acquired new meaning as poststructuralist theorists attempted to solve some of the problems that Saussure’s ideas raised. Roland Barthes built on Saussurean linguistics to show the importance of sociocultural and intertextual dimensions of discourse. Barthes’s contributions to a post-Saussurean understanding of signification includes his innovative theory of mythic discourse that focuses on the semiotic dimension of cultural practices and reworks the Saussurean framework (sign/signifier/signified) to show that there are two levels of signification: denotation and connotation. On level of denotation, signification is largely descriptive and objective; a signifier refers to a signified. Denotative meaning tends to be stable and referential and requires little interpretive analysis. On the level of connotation, signification is largely suggestive and subjective; meaning is variable, tending toward abstraction or metaphoric displacements; and interpreting connotative signs requires greater sensitivity to linguistic features and to the social and cultural contexts of their articulation. According to Barthes, connotation occurs in the second order of signification, where the denotative, or first order, of signification acquires specific cultural meanings through use. The second order has obvious ideological implications, for a dominant group can present a connotative sign in the guise of a simple denotative one. Cultural practice becomes hegemonic when this process succeeds in the formation of a myth, which is presented as truthful to those influenced or governed by that practice. Barthes’s *Mythologies* (1957) explores the kinds of cultural practices open to

"mythic" transformation and offers a theoretical explanation for the process by which myth becomes a specific discourse with its own signifying system.

In a similar vein, Russian critic and scholar **Mikhail Bakhtin** proposes a theory of language that stresses "the primacy of context over text." He uses "discourse" to refer to the way in which the voices of speakers are structured in social contexts. Bakhtin shows that texts are dialogical; several voices compete within a single text. What privileges one voice over another depends on the role that institutions and dominant social groups play within a culture. Therefore, the goal of the critic is to stress the dialogical conversation which occurs among various voices within and without text.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Michel Foucault's work on discourse emerged as one of the most influential theoretical projects of the era. Though he learned a great deal from thinkers like Saussure and Barthes, he was less interested in semiotics as such than in the conditions of existence and historical specificities of signifying structures understood as discourse, or "discursive formations." Though he did not ignore the importance of signification, his main interests lay in what discourses do, and this complex engagement of signification and context challenged both abstract theories of the sign and materialist theories of society. One of the innovations of Foucault's conception of discourse is the idea that webs of signification are in fact relations of material force (power) within discourse systems. Foucault's early studies of institutions –*The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *Madness and Civilization* (1961), and *The Order of Things* (1966) – employ an archaeological method to analyze what he terms historical "epistemes" – discursive systems of thought and knowledge – and the rules of enunciation they generate. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault shows that each historic epoch has an episteme or a system of knowledge that orders it. An episteme makes certain discourses acceptable and others unthinkable. Two consecutive eras are separated by an epistemic break which transforms systems of knowledge and alters radically

the conditions of existence of a discourse. Therefore, a discourse that may be legitimate within one episteme (an era characterized by a unique way of knowing) might become inconceivable in another. One of his most influential archaeological studies of epistemes was *Madness and Civilization* (1961), in which Foucault describes the emergence of asylums and mental health practices that establish coherence in a discursive system that both creates norms for "sanity" and excludes from society those individuals determined as "insane."

Foucault's theory makes clear that discourse acts on and in the world; it does not merely represent it, it is, in effect, a constitutive part of reality. Foucault defines discourse as "Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (qtd in Lessa 285). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault provides a systematic description of the archaeological method which led to challenge one of the key theoretical trends in the 1960s: Marxian dialectical materialism. His insistence on the "relative autonomy" of discourse from the economic base came as a response to orthodox Marxism dominant in French intellectual circles in the 1960s. For orthodox Marxism, ideology and culture are mostly determined by economic processes, and they represent a reflection of dominant socioeconomic relationships. Foucault was not concerned with such concepts, conventionally understood, as "truth," or "representation," which were operative concepts for many Marxists at the time. Nevertheless, he was sympathetic to the Marxian analysis of material conditions and looked with skepticism at theories of textuality and language that ignored or denied the material and formal dimensions of discourse and "discursive practices." At one end of the spectrum in discursive formation is the "statement," which functions as a basic unit of analysis, and can be meaningfully uttered only if it conforms to the rules of enunciation generated by the discursive formation itself. Statements are performative acts that acquire meaning only within a specific discourse, which is in turn grounded in a particular sociohistorical moment. It is crucial to view the statement as an act of enunciation as well as a piece of text. What matters

in the enunciation of a statement is not the psychology of the subject who enunciates it but the institutional and discursive position from which a statement is uttered. At the other end of the spectrum is the "archive," which is the conceptual space in which all discourses circulate and where they are accessible. The archive is governed by an internal principle of dispersion. Foucault defines discourse as a "dispersion of statements" that follows certain regularities and abides by a set of rules of enunciation. There are a number of conditions (material, ideological, disciplinary) that maintain the uniformity of discourse and make it appear fixed. The role of the theorist is to explain the rules that lie behind what appears to be a logical and coherent discursive formation. In discourse analysis, one ought to pay particular attention to regularities that emerge in the formation of objects and concepts.

3. Types of Discourse

Several scholars in many different disciplines have theorized about the different types of discourse. Some have classified them into four main categories:

- **Exposition**

The main focus of this type is to inform the audience of the topic of the discussion with relatively neutral language, i.e., it is not meant to persuade or evoke emotion.

- **Narration**

Narration is a type of discourse that relies on telling stories as a medium of communication, often with emotion and empathy involved.

- **Description**

It involves describing something in relation to the senses. Descriptive discourse enables the audience to develop a mental picture of what is being described.

- **Argument**

This type is based on valid logic and evidence and, through correct reasoning, tries to motivate or persuade the audience. Examples include *lectures, essays, and speeches*.

Other literary scholars have divided types of discourse into three categories:

- **Poetic Discourse**

It is a type of literary composition which focuses on imagination, ideas, and events. Poetic discourse relies on the use of literary devices like rhyme, imagery, metaphor, and symbolism.

- **Expressive Discourse**

It comprises those acts of literary writing that is creative, yet non-fiction. Expressive discourse is rather a reflection of our ideas and emotions which form the foundation of our expressions. Examples are academic *essays, diaries, memoirs, and letters*.

- **Transactional Discourse**

The basic aim in this kind is to convey the message in such a way that it is clearly understood without any confusion. Whatever is said has no ambiguity and is clear for the reader. Examples include: *Instructions, Guidelines, Manuals, Patient's Instructions as written by doctors.*

4. Literature as Discourse and Literary Discourse Analysis

In literature discourse means speech or writing longer than sentences or the presentation of language in its entirety which deals with a certain subject. According to Roger Fowler,

> linguistic formalism is of limited significance in literary studies, and educationally restrictive. As an alternative I shall employ some linguistic techniques which emphasize the interactional dimensions of texts. To treat literature as discourse is to see the text as mediating relationships between language-users: not only relationships of speech, but also of consciousness, ideology, role and class. The text ceases to be an object and becomes an action or process . . . What literature is can be stated empirically within the realm of sociolinguistic fact. It is an open set of texts, of great formal diversity, recognised by a culture as possessing certain institutional values and performing certain functions. The values derive from the economic and social structures of particular societies. (78)

From the early twentieth century, literary studies implied a main frontier: on the one hand, the study of “context”, which is supposed to be “outside” text; on the other hand, the study -stylistic or not- of texts considered in themselves. It was in the 1960s that discourse analysis came to be used to comment on texts, like stylistics did, but also to understand the functioning of literary discourse, as part of the discursive practices of a given society. Then, starting in the 1970s, discourse theory became increasingly influential in literary and cultural theory. The influence of feminist and critical race theories led to new challenges for discourse analysis. Nowhere is this more evident than in postcolonial studies. Edward Said was the first to use Foucault’s theories of discourse to analyze the specificities of imperial and colonial cultures. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said examines the strategies used by colonial powers to represent “the Orient.” He notes that Orientalism is a colonial discourse that constitutes not only a simplistic and fictive representation of “the Orient” but more importantly the discursive conditions of possibility for the emergence of a colonial subject. Discourse theory has had a wide-ranging influence on feminist theory as well. Feminist scholars, after Foucault, learned from his work strategies for challenging those aspects of feminist thought bound to or reliant upon essentialist identity politics. Postcolonial and feminist approaches to discourse provided new and influential conceptual tools that have altered in a fundamental way the methodologies of literary and cultural theory.

The object then is literary discourse considered as a network of manifold genres and iterests. That means that anthologies of literature, literary chronicles in newspapers, commentary practices or reviews, interviews that the writers give are part of literary discourse. In addition, the fields of knowledge that help in the study of literary discourse include culture and cultural studies, identity (gender, sexuality, ethnicity/race, queer studies), media analysis, politics, education, and health. From this viewpoint, literary discourse analysis must be viewed as a new way of constructing “Literature.”

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