

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English

# **Literary Theory Lectures**

**Level Master II**

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**Conference lecturer (Class A)**

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## Objectives

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Identify the major critical approaches and use them to criticize literary works of different genres

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### *Key Points*

Traditional criticism is the art of estimating the qualities and character of literary or artistic works.

Modern criticism: in the 19th century, criticism also gained the philosophical meaning of "a critical examination of the faculty of knowledge"

#### *Key Terms*

Formalism

Psychoanalytic approach

Feminism

New historicism

Post colonialism

## **Prerequisites**

The student should have enough literary background

The learner should have a philosophical background

The student should enjoy the capacity and readiness for critical  
Thinking

The learner must have read novels from African literature

The learner must have read novels from American literature

The learner must have read novels from British literature

The learner must have the capacity to compare between literatures and  
writers

# Lecture One

## Criticism and literary Theory

### Defining Criticism

The English word *criticism* is derived from the French *critique*, which dates back to at least the 14th century.

The words *critic* and *critical* existed in the English language from the mid-16th century, and the word "criticism" first made its appearance in English in the early 17th century.<sup>1</sup>

### Defining Criticism

#### 1. Criticism(*noun*)

the rules and principles which regulate the practice of the critic; the art of judging with knowledge and propriety of the beauties and faults of a literary performance, or of a production in the fine arts; as, dramatic criticism<sup>2</sup>

#### 2. Criticism(*noun*)<sup>3</sup>

the act of criticising; a critical judgment passed or expressed; a critical observation or detailed examination and review; a critique; animadversion; censure

In turn, the French expression *critique* has roots in Latin ("*criticus*" – a judge, decider, or critic), and, even earlier, classical Greek language

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<sup>1</sup> *Webster Dictionary* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

("krites" means judge, and "kritikos" means able to make judgements, or the critic). Related Greek terms are *krinein* (separating out, deciding), *krei-* (to sieve, discriminate, or distinguish) and *krisis* (literally, the judgement, the result of a trial, or a selection resulting from a choice or decision). *Crito* is also the name of a pupil and friend of the Greek philosopher Socrates, as well as the name of an imaginary dialogue about justice written by the philosopher Plato in the context of the execution of Socrates.<sup>4</sup>

The early English meaning of criticism was primarily literary criticism, that of judging and interpreting literature. Samuel Johnson is often held as the prime example of criticism in the English language, and his contemporary Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is a significant landmark. In the course of the 17th century, it acquired the more general sense of censure, as well as the more specialized meaning of the "discernment of taste", i.e. the art of estimating the qualities and character of literary or artistic works, implicitly from the point of view of a consumer.<sup>5</sup>

To be critical meant, positively, to have good, informed judgment about matters of culture (to be cultivated, to be a man or woman of distinction), but negatively it could also refer to the (unreasonable) rejection or (unfair) treatment of some outside group ("to be critical of them"). Derivatively, "a criticism" also referred to a nice point or a distinction, a tiny detail, a pedantic nicety, a subtlety, or a quibble (the sense of what today is called a "minor criticism"). Often criticism was governed by very strict cultural rules of politeness, propriety and decency, and there could be immediate penalties if the wrong words were said or written down (in 17th century England, more than half of men and about three-quarters of women could not read or write).

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<sup>4</sup> Williams, Raymond 1976. *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*. Fontana. 74–76

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

In the 19th century, criticism also gained the philosophical meaning of "a critical examination of the faculty of knowledge", particularly in the sense used by Immanuel Kant.<sup>6</sup> Such criticism was carried out mainly by academic authorities, businessmen and men of property with the leisure to devote themselves to the pursuit of knowledge.

## **Historical Overview about Criticism**

Generally speaking, literary criticism is the practice of commenting on the qualities and characteristics of a literary work, usually through a particular lens or theory. Because people have been discussing works of literature as long as literature has existed, it is difficult to determine when literary criticism as a discipline began. The earliest written work considered to deal with literary criticism is Aristotle's *Poetics*, which was published in the 4th century BCE-- which leads historians to begin examining literary criticism in the Classical Period.<sup>7</sup>

### **Classical Period (5th-4th Century BCE)**

Most of the works in this period focus on literary theory, the more abstract side of literary study. Therefore, the works look at the nature of the literature they are examining and suggest methods of analyzing them. Since most of this literary activity was occurring in Greece, Aristotle and Plato's writings on poetry and drama are the most salient examples. Aristotle provided much of the terminology

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<sup>6</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*).

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Raymond 1976. *Op.Cit*

used in literary theory and criticism today, and in many circles he is considered one of the "fathers" of literary criticism. With the exception of Sage Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, which is believed to have been written between 200 BCE and 200 CE in Classical India, literary criticism scholarship remains scarce until the Middle Ages.

### **Medieval Period (5th-15th Century CE)**

Most literary criticism written during the Middle Ages focused on religious literature, which is why some important concepts from religious study became part of literary theory. For example, Jewish tradition has always included the study of Torah, which follows analytical principles known as *hermeneutics*. These principles guide the different ways one can approach a text in order to interpret its contents, and many of them have become part of literary criticism.

Due to the religious orientation of most of the literary criticism in this period, some of the most important works belong to saints Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas<sup>8</sup>.

### **Renaissance Period (14th-17th Century CE)**

As it did in many other domains, the Renaissance brought a return to Classical ideas and texts. For example, Aristotle's *Poetics* was translated into Latin and commented upon by various authors, which cemented the terminology he developed.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, the emphasis on literature as an essential part of culture provided literary critics with a way to approach literature: looking at its cultural impact and significance.

The work of Lodovico Castelvetro is representative of this period's literary criticism. Firstly, its emphasis on using one's own intellect to examine things empowered literary critics to apply new and inventive "lenses" to the works they studied. Secondly, it increased people's access to reading materials due to industrialization--since books were no longer rare and prohibitively expensive, people of various social classes were able to become literate and thus consume literature. Finally, periodicals such as journals and newspapers grew in popularity during this period, which aided in the spread of literary criticism as a popular discipline<sup>9</sup>.

Many of the important writers of this period also contributed to literary criticism, among them Alexander Pope with *An Essay on Criticism* and Mary Wollstonecraft with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

**Romantic Period (Late 18th Century-Early 19th Century )**The Romantic Period's focus on literature as a tool to elevate the mundane to sublime had a strong influence of literary criticism as well as literature itself. Romantics praised literature for its aesthetic as well as content, particularly in England. Conversely, German Romanticism valued wit and inventiveness, and some of their more fragmented literature served as a precursor to several modern movements.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Once again, many important authors of this period also wrote criticism, among them Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, Edgar Allan Poe, and Leo Tolstoy.

### **Matthew Arnold Touchstone Method**

Matthew Arnold is one of the foremost critics of 19th century and is often regarded as the father of modern English criticism. His *The Study of Poetry* is mainly an introduction to T.H. Wards *The English Poets*. Later on it appeared in *Essay in Criticism*.

In *The Study of Poetry*, Arnold delineated his idea of excellent poetry and formulates a practical method for identifying the true poetry. This method is named by him as the touchstone method<sup>10</sup>. Arnold's touchstone method is a comparative method of criticism. According to this method, the specimens of the very highest quality of poetry are compared to the specimen of the work of poetry under study and conclusions are drawn in favor or against the work. This method requires to keep in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetical works. Even single line or selected quotations will serve the purpose. If the other work moves us in the same way these lines and expressions do, then it is really a great work, otherwise

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<sup>10</sup> The term touchstone is It is metaphorically used because in the past the used to test the quality of gold by rubbing it on a stone often described as a touchstone so Arnold adopted the term and use it in criticism

not.<sup>11</sup>

In the process of finding truly excellent poetry, Arnold wants us to avoid certain fallacies : the fallacy of *historical estimate* and the fallacy of *personal estimate*. Both in Arnold's view, a reflection of inadequate and improper response to literature.

According to him, both the historical significance of a literary work as well as its significance to the critic in personal terms tend to obliterate the real esteem of that work as in itself really is. Historical judgements are fallacious because one may regard ancient poets with excessive veneration and personal judgements are fallacious because we are biased towards a contemporary poet. Real estimate can be attained by learning to feel and enjoy the best work of the real classics and thus to appreciate wide difference between it and all lesser work. If one wants to know whether any poetic work is of a high quality, he should compare it with the specimens of poetry of the highest quality. According to him, the most useful method of discovering the worth of poetry is "to have in ones mind lines and expressions of the great masters and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry". The real classics can serve as the touchstone by which the merit of contemporary poetic work can be tested. This is the central idea of Arnold's touchstone method.

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<sup>11</sup> Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Hardy's Notion of Pure Woman

## Literary theory

By definition, “Literary theory” is the body of ideas and methods we use in the practical reading of literature.<sup>12</sup> By literary theory we refer not to the meaning of a work of literature but to the theories that reveal what literature can mean. Literary theory is a description of the underlying principles, one might say the tools, by which we attempt to understand literature<sup>13</sup>

All literary interpretation draws on a basis in theory but can serve as a justification for very different kinds of critical activity. It is literary theory that formulates the relationship between author and work<sup>14</sup>; literary theory develops the significance of race, class, and gender for literary study, both from the standpoint of the biography of the author and an analysis of their thematic presence within texts.<sup>15</sup>

Literary theory offers varying approaches for understanding the role of historical context in interpretation as well as the relevance of linguistic and unconscious elements of the text. Literary theorists trace the history and evolution of the different genres— narrative, dramatic, lyric—in addition to the more recent emergence of the novel and the short story, while also investigating the importance of formal elements of literary structure. Lastly, literary theory in recent years has sought to explain the degree to which the text is more the

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• <sup>12</sup> Jonathan Culler. (1997) *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-285383-X.

• <sup>13</sup> Peter Barry. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. ISBN 0-7190-6268-3.

<sup>14</sup> *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. ISBN 0-8018-4560-2

• <sup>15</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. ISBN 0-8166-1251-X.

product of a culture than an individual author and in turn how those texts help to create the culture.<sup>16</sup>

## What is Literary Theory?

“Literary theory,” sometimes designated “critical theory,” or “theory,” and now undergoing a transformation into “cultural theory” within the discipline of literary studies, can be understood as the set of concepts and intellectual assumptions on which rests the work of explaining or interpreting literary texts. Literary theory refers to any principles derived from internal analysis of literary texts or from knowledge external to the text that can be applied in multiple interpretive situations.<sup>17</sup>

Literary theory is a site of theories: some theories, like “Deconstruction,” are “out” but continue to exert an influence on the field. “Traditional literary criticism,” “New Criticism,” and “Structuralism” are alike in that they held to the view that the study of literature has an objective body of knowledge under its scrutiny. The other schools of literary theory, to varying degrees, embrace a postmodern view of language and reality that calls into serious question the objective referent of literary studies. The following categories are certainly not exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive, but they represent the major trends in literary theory of this century..

All critical practice regarding literature depends on an underlying structure of ideas in at least two ways: theory provides a rationale for what constitutes the subject matter of criticism—“the literary”—and the specific aims

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<sup>16</sup> Literary Theory Vince Brewton University of North Alabama Source: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/literary/#H1>

• <sup>17</sup> *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood. 2nd Ed. ISBN 0-582-31287-6

of critical practice—the act of interpretation itself. For example, to speak of the “unity” of Oedipus the King explicitly invokes Aristotle’s theoretical statements on poetics.

To argue, as does Chinua Achebe, that Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* fails to grant full humanity to the Africans it depicts is a perspective informed by a postcolonial literary theory that presupposes a history of exploitation and racism. Critics that explain the climactic drowning of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* as a suicide generally call upon a supporting architecture of feminist and gender theory.

The structure of ideas that enables criticism of a literary work may or may not be acknowledged by the critic, and the status of literary theory within the academic discipline of literary studies continues to evolve. Literary theory and the formal practice of literary interpretation runs a parallel but less well known course with the history of philosophy and is evident in the historical record at least as far back as Plato<sup>18</sup>. The *Cratylus* contains a Plato’s meditation on the relationship of words and the things to which they refer. Plato’s skepticism about signification, i.e., that words bear no etymological relationship to their meanings but are arbitrarily “imposed,” becomes a central concern in the twentieth century to both “Structuralism” and “Poststructuralism.”

However, a persistent belief in “reference,” the notion that words and images refer to an objective reality, has provided epistemological (that is, having to do with theories of knowledge) support for theories of literary representation throughout most of Western history. Until the nineteenth century, Art, in Shakespeare’s phrase, held “a mirror up to nature” and faithfully recorded an objectively real world independent of the observer. Modern literary theory gradually emerges in Europe during the nineteenth century. In one of the earliest

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<sup>18</sup> Lynn, Steven. *Texts and Contexts: Writing about Literature with Critical Theory*. Addison-Wesley, 2001.

developments of literary theory, German “higher criticism” subjected biblical texts to a radical historicizing that broke with traditional scriptural interpretation. “Higher,” or “source criticism,” analyzed biblical tales in light of comparable narratives from other cultures, an approach that anticipated some of the method and spirit of twentieth century theory, particularly “Structuralism” and “New Historicism.”

In France, the eminent literary critic Charles Augustin Saint Beuve maintained that a work of literature could be explained entirely in terms of biography, while novelist Marcel Proust devoted his life to refuting Saint Beuve in a massive narrative in which he contended that the details of the life of the artist are utterly transformed in the work of art. (This dispute was taken up anew by the French theorist Roland Barthes in his famous declaration of the “Death of the Author.” See “Structuralism” and “Poststructuralism.”)

Perhaps the greatest nineteenth century influence on literary theory came from the deep epistemological suspicion of Friedrich Nietzsche: that facts are not facts until they have been interpreted. And that there is no thing called absolute truth, Nietzsches critique of knowledge has had a profound impact on literary studies and helped usher in an era of intense literary theorizing that has yet to pass. Attention to the etymology of the term “theory,” from the Greek “*theoria*,” alerts us to the partial nature of theoretical approaches to literature. “*Theoria*” indicates a view or perspective of the Greek stage. This is precisely what literary theory offers, though specific theories often claim to present a complete system for understanding literature.

The current state of theory is such that there are many overlapping areas of influence, and older schools of theory, though no longer enjoying their previous eminence, continue to exert an influence on the whole. The once widely-held conviction (an implicit theory) that literature is a repository of all that is meaningful and ennobling in the human experience, a view championed by the

Leavis School in Britain, may no longer be acknowledged by name but remains an essential justification for the current structure of American universities and liberal arts curricula.

The moment of “Deconstruction” may have passed, but its emphasis on the indeterminacy of signs (that we are unable to establish exclusively what a word means when used in a given situation) and thus of texts, remains significant. Many critics may not embrace the label “feminist,” but the premise that gender is a social construct, one of theoretical feminisms distinguishing insights, is now axiomatic in a number of theoretical perspectives.

While literary theory has always implied or directly expressed a conception of the world outside the text, in the twentieth century three movements—“Marxist theory” of the Frankfurt School, “Feminism,” and “Postmodernism”—have opened the field of literary studies into a broader area of inquiry. Marxist approaches to literature require an understanding of the primary economic and social bases of culture since Marxist aesthetic theory sees the work of art as a product, directly or indirectly, of the base structure of society. Feminist thought and practice analyzes the production of literature and literary representation within the framework that includes all social and cultural formations as they pertain to the role of women in history. Postmodern thought consists of both aesthetic and epistemological strands.

Postmodernism in art has included a move toward non-referential, non-linear, abstract forms; a heightened degree of self-referentiality; and the collapse of categories and conventions that had traditionally governed art. Postmodern thought has led to the serious questioning of the so-called metanarratives of history, science, philosophy, and economic and sexual reproduction. Under postmodernity, all knowledge comes to be seen as “constructed” within historical self-contained systems of understanding. Marxist, feminist, and postmodern thought have brought about the incorporation of all human

discourses (that is, interlocking fields of language and knowledge) as a subject matter for analysis by the literary theorist.

Using the various poststructuralist and postmodern theories that often draw on disciplines other than the literary—linguistic, anthropological, psychoanalytic, and philosophical—for their primary insights, literary theory has become an interdisciplinary body of cultural theory. Taking as its premise that human societies and knowledge consist of texts in one form or another, cultural theory (for better or worse) is now applied to the varieties of texts, ambitiously undertaking to become the preeminent model of inquiry into the human condition.

Traditional Literary Criticism Academic literary criticism prior to the rise of “New Criticism” in the United States tended to practice traditional literary history: tracking influence, establishing the canon of major writers in the literary periods, and clarifying historical context and allusions within the text. Literary biography was and still is an important interpretive method in and out of the academy; versions of moral criticism, not unlike the Leavis School in Britain, and aesthetic (e.g. genre studies) criticism were also generally influential literary practices. Perhaps the key unifying feature of traditional literary criticism was the consensus within the academy as to the both the literary canon (that is, the books all educated persons should read) and the aims and purposes of literature. What literature was, and why we read literature, and what we read, were questions that subsequent movements in literary theory were to raise.

Literary Criticism – The analysis of a literary text through various lenses that highlight authorial stance, purpose, and perspective

Part of the fun of reading good literature is looking for all its meanings and messages. Since people have written literature, critics have been interpreting it .... going all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome. For many centuries,

literary criticism has been limited to some basic approaches involving historical, moral and biographical perspectives. But during the 20th century, critical approaches have become much more varied due to the huge increase of educated people and their widely diverse reactions to literature. As the meaning of what literature is and can be or should be has changed, so has the critics' responses to it.

### **Exercises**

What is 'literary theory'?

How has it developed?

What does it do?

Why is it necessary, and/or what is it good for?

What are the arguments for it and why the resistance to it?

Is it, in fact, a single definable entity or phenomenon?

What bearing does the discipline have on literature or criticism?

What are the connections between the subject-matter of the discipline and the subject matter of literature or criticism?

What similarities of method or principle are there?

Can criticism be subordinated to any of the disciplines, or can the principles at work in the disciplines be adapted to literary study but contained within principles peculiar to literary study?

## **Lecture Two**

### **The Major Schools of Literary Criticism**

Below are outlined six of the dozen-or-so “schools” of literary criticism currently deemed valid by the academic world. A critical viewpoint is simply a lens through which we look at a piece of literature, allowing this lens to shape our reaction to the work. These different schools are not exclusive – in fact, most critical essays use ideas from several types of criticism. But depending upon what work you are reading, and what your own ideas about what good literature should do, or your own ideas about life and the world, some critical methods will work better than others or be more helpful for your understanding of a work. The goal of literary criticism is always to help us understand and appreciate a work more fully, no matter what approach(es) we use.

#### **1-Historical-Biographical.**

This approach “seeks to understand a literary work by investigating the social, cultural, and intellectual context that produced it—a context that necessarily includes the artist’s biography and milieu.” A key goal for historical critics is to understand the effect of a literary work upon its original readers. This approach sees a literary work as a reflection of the author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work. Critics using this school of thought investigate how plot details, settings, and characters of the work reflect or are representative of events, settings, and people in the author’s life or a direct outgrowth of — or reaction to— the culture in which the author lived.

**2-Moral-Philosophical.** This approach takes the position that the larger function of literature is to teach morality and probe philosophical issues, such as ethics, religion, or the nature of humanity. Literature is interpreted within the context of the philosophical thought of a period or group, such as Christianity, Existentialism, Buddhism, etc. Often critics will see in the work allusions to other works, people, or events from this perspective, or see the work as allegorical.

**3-Formalistic Criticism.** Using this type of criticism, a reader would see the work as an independent and self-sufficient artistic object. This approach is also sometimes referred to as the “New Criticism,” since it came back in vogue in the 1960s-70s, but it was originally an outgrowth of the “Art for Art’s Sake” movement of the late 1800s. Formalistic critics assume that everything necessary for analyzing the work is present in the work itself and disregard any connection to possible outside influences such as the author’s own life or historical times. This criticism considers what a work says and how it says it as inseparable issues. It focuses on close reading, with sensitivity to the words and their various meanings. It searches for structures, patterns, imagery and motifs, and figurative language along with the juxtaposition of scenes, tone, and other literary techniques in order to come to conclusions about the meaning of the work.

### **Newer Approaches to Literary Criticism**

**4-Psychological Criticism.** This approach deals with a work of literature primarily as it is an expression – in fictional form – of the author’s personality, mindset, feelings and desires. It also requires that we investigate the psychology of the characters and their motives in order to figure out the work’s meanings. This school of criticism got its start with the work of Sigmund Freud, which incorporated the importance of the unconscious or sub-conscious in human behavior. Some typical “archetypal” Freudian

interpretations include: rebellion against a father, id versus superego, death-wish forces, or sexual repression. Dreams, visualizations, and fantasies of characters in modern works usually stem from Freudian concepts.

**5-Feminist / Gender Criticism.** This approach asks us to use a wide variety of issues related to gender, concerning the author, the work itself, the reader, and the societies of the author and reader, to determine the stance of the work on the feminist continuum. These critics would argue that in order to achieve validity, a literary criticism that claims universality must include the feminine consciousness, since till very recently and in many instances yet today, works of literature and criticism have been male-dominated and therefore necessarily skewed in their perspective. Feminist critics look for the development of male and female characters and their motives to see how the author and his or her times affected the gender roles in the work.

**6-Sociological / Marxist Criticism.** This viewpoint considers particular aspects of the political content of the text; the author; the historical and socio-cultural context of the work; and the cultural, political, and personal situation of the reader in relationship to the text. These critics tend to focus on the overall themes of the work as they relate to economic class, race, sex, and instances of oppression and/or liberation. Author, critic and reader bias is explored.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The previous definitions are paraphrased from *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 4th edition, Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman & Willingham. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999

## Formalist Criticism

Formalism and New Criticism “Formalism” is, as the name implies, an interpretive approach that emphasizes literary form and the study of literary devices within the text. The work of the Formalists had a general impact on later developments in “Structuralism” and other theories of narrative. “Formalism,” like “Structuralism,” sought to place the study of literature on a scientific basis through objective analysis of the motifs, devices, techniques, and other “functions” that comprise the literary work. The Formalists placed great importance on the literariness of texts, those qualities that distinguished the literary from other kinds of writing. Neither author nor context was essential for the Formalists; it was the narrative that spoke, the “hero-function,” for example, that had meaning. Form was the content. A plot device or narrative strategy was examined for how it functioned and compared to how it had functioned in other literary works. Of the Russian Formalist critics, Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky are probably the most well known.

The Formalist adage that the purpose of literature was “to make the stones stonier” nicely expresses their notion of literariness. “Formalism” is perhaps best known is Shklovsky’s concept of “defamiliarization.” The routine of ordinary experience, Shklovsky contended, rendered invisible the uniqueness and particularity of the objects of existence. Literary language, partly by calling attention to itself as language, estranged the reader from the familiar and made fresh the experience of daily life. The “New Criticism,” so designated as to indicate a break with traditional methods, was a product of the American university in the 1930s and 40s.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia’s *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, Sixth Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), pages 1790-1818.

Though the New Criticism had its origins in Britain in the criticism of T. S. Eliot, the theory of I. A. Richards and the practice of William Empson, its most powerful impact has been in America. John Crowe Ransom, who published a book entitled *The New Criticism* in 1941, was the leading American influence and he acknowledged a debt to Eliot and Richards. The other major American New Critics were Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren and W. K. Wimsatt. Indirectly related to the New Criticism are such important figures as Kenneth Burke and R. P. Blackmur. The early New Critics were politically conservative and their attitudes to literature were shaped by their opposition to certain twentieth-century tendencies of thought, such as Marxism.

“New Criticism” stressed close reading of the text itself, much like the French pedagogical precept “explication du texte.”<sup>21</sup> As a strategy of reading, “New Criticism” viewed the work of literature as an aesthetic object independent of historical context and as a unified whole that reflected the unified sensibility of the artist. T.S. Eliot, though not explicitly associated with the movement, expressed a similar critical-aesthetic philosophy in his essays on John Donne and the metaphysical poets, writers who Eliot believed experienced a complete integration of thought and feeling. New Critics like Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren and W.K. Wimsatt placed a similar focus on the metaphysical poets and poetry in general, a genre well suited to New Critical practice.

“New Criticism” aimed at bringing a greater intellectual rigor to literary studies, confining itself to careful scrutiny of the text alone and the formal structures of paradox, ambiguity, irony, and metaphor, among others. “New Criticism” was fired by the conviction that their readings of poetry would yield a humanizing influence on readers and thus counter the alienating tendencies of modern, industrial life. “New Criticism” in this regard bears an affinity to the

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<sup>21</sup> Brooks, Cleanth. "The New Criticism." *The Sewanee Review* 87: 4 (1979)

Southern Agrarian movement whose manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, contained essays by two New Critics, Ransom and Warren. Perhaps the enduring legacy of "New Criticism" can be found in the college classroom, in which the verbal texture of the poem on the page remains a primary object of literary study.<sup>22</sup>

1. Literature is a form of knowledge with intrinsic elements--style, structure, imagery, tone, and genre.
2. What gives a literary work status as art, or as a great work of art, is how all of its elements work together to create the reader's total *experience* (thought, feeling, gut reactions, etc.)
3. The appreciation of literature as an art requires close reading--a careful, step-by-step analysis and explication of the text (the language of the work). An analysis may follow from questions like, how do various elements work together to shape the effect on the reader?
4. Style and theme influence each other and can't be separated if meaning is to be retained. It's this interdependence in form and content that makes a text "literary." "Extracting" elements in isolation (theme, character, ploy, setting, etc.) may destroy a reader's aesthetic experience of the whole.
5. Formalist critics don't deny the historical, political situation of a work; they just believe works of art have the power to transcend by being "organic wholes"--akin to a being with a life of its own.
6. Formalist criticism is evaluative in that it differentiates great works of art from poor works of art. Other kinds of criticism don't necessarily concern themselves with this distinction.
7. Formalist criticism is decidedly a "scientific" approach to literary analysis, focusing on "facts amenable to "verification" (evidence in the text).

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<sup>22</sup> Wellek, René. "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 4. (Summer, 1978), pp. 611–624. [1

This approach regards literature as “a unique form of human knowledge that needs to be examined on its own terms.” All the elements necessary for understanding the work are contained within the work itself. Of particular interest to the formalist critic are the elements of *form*—style, structure, tone, imagery, etc.—that are found within the text. A primary goal for formalist critics is to determine how such elements work together with the text’s content to shape its effects upon readers.

### **Intentional Fallacy**

One of the critical concepts of New Criticism, “Intentional Fallacy” was formulated by Wimsatt and Beardsley in an essay in *The Verbal Icon* (1946)<sup>23</sup> as the mistake of attempting to understand the author’s intentions when interpreting a literary work. Claiming that it is fallacious to base a critical judgement about the meaning or value of a literary work on “external evidences” concerning the author’s intention, Wimsatt and Beardsley held that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.” This is closely associated with the New Critical notion of the “autotetic text”,<sup>24</sup> according to which the meaning of a work is contained solely within the work itself, and any attempt to understand the author’s intention violates the autonomy of the work. TS Eliot in “*Tradition and the Individual Talent*” (1919) had argued – that “Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation, are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry.” Stylistically as well as conceptually, Intentional Fallacy was against the Romantic conception

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<sup>23</sup> See *The Verbal Icon* (1946)

<sup>24</sup> Jancovich, Mark (1993). *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

of literature as a vehicle of personal expression.<sup>25</sup> With the entry of structuralism and poststructuralism into the literary arena, literature began to be seen as a purely linguistic artefact, and intentional fallacy was strongly underscored with the Barthesian concept of the “death of the author”<sup>26</sup>

## **Affective Fallacy**

An important concept in New Criticism, coined by Wimsatt and Beardsley in an essay in *The Verbal Icon*, Affective Fallacy refers to the supposed error of judging or evaluating a text on the basis of its emotional effects on a reader. New Criticism represented a largely academic and scientific approach to literary studies and focused on the literary text itself as the object of study and not as a social artefact that expressed the inner life of the artist or the society in which it was written. Affective Fallacy is an answer to impressionistic criticism, which argues that the reader’s response to a poem is the ultimate indication of its value. For Wimsatt and Beardsley, the text was an autonomous entity, independent of both author and reader, and its merit and meaning was considered to be inherent and not attributed. Thus the reader’s reaction to a text was discounted as a valid measure of the text, as what mattered was “what it is” and not “what it does”.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See TS Eliot-in “*Tradition and the Individual Talent*” (1919)

<sup>26</sup> BY NASRULLAH MAMBROL on MARCH 17, 2016 • ( 3 )

<sup>27</sup> Leitch, Vincent B. , et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001

# Lecture Three

## Biographical Criticism

If new criticism calls for treating the text as an independent unit, Biographical criticism begins with the simple but central insight that literature is written by actual people and that understanding an author's life can help readers more thoroughly comprehend the work. Anyone who reads the biography of a writer quickly sees how much an author's experience shapes—both directly and indirectly—what he or she creates. Reading that biography will also change (and usually deepen) our response to the work. Sometimes even knowing a single important fact illuminates our reading of a poem or story

**Biographical criticism** is a form of literary criticism which analyzes a writer's biography to show the relationship between the author's life and their works of literature.<sup>28</sup> Biographical criticism is often associated with historical-biographical criticism, a critical method that "sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times".<sup>29</sup>

Learning, for example, that Edgard Allan Poe was a dug addict and that he committed suicide certainly make us pay attention to certain aspects of his

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<sup>28</sup> <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/criticism>

See also "Biographical Criticism", *Writing essays about literature: a guide and style sheet*(2004), Kelley Griffith, University of North Carolina at Greensborough, Wadsworth Publishing Company, pages 177-178, 400

1. Benson, Jackson J. (1989) "Steinbeck: A Defense of Biographical Criticism" *College Literature* 16(29): pp. 107-116, page 108
2. ^ [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/college\\_literature/v030/30.1knoper.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/college_literature/v030/30.1knoper.html)

<sup>29</sup> Wilfred L. Guerin, *A handbook of critical approaches to literature*, Edition 5, 2005, page 51, 57-61; Oxford University Press, University of Michigan

poems and short stories we might otherwise have missed or considered unimportant. A formalist critic might complain that we would also have noticed those things through careful textual analysis, but biographical information provided the practical assistance of underscoring subtle but important meanings in the poems. Though many literary theorists have assailed biographical criticism on philosophical grounds, the biographical approach to literature has never disappeared because of its obvious practical advantage in illuminating literary texts.

It may be helpful here to make a distinction between biography and biographical criticism. Biography is, strictly speaking, a branch of history; it provides a written account of a person's life. To establish and interpret the facts of a poet's life, for instance, a biographer would use all the available information—not just personal documents like letters and diaries, but also the poems for the possible light they might shed on the subject's life.

A biographical *critic*, however, is not concerned with recreating the record of an author's life. Biographical criticism focuses on explicating the literary work by using the insight provided by knowledge of the author's life. Quite often biographical critics, like Brett C. Millier in her discussion of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," will examine the drafts of a poem or story to see both how the work came into being and how it might have been changed from its autobiographical origins.

A reader, however, must use biographical interpretations cautiously. Writers are notorious for revising the facts of their own lives; they often delete embarrassments and invent accomplishments while changing the details of real episodes to improve their literary impact. John Cheever, for example, frequently told reporters about his sunny, privileged youth; after the author's death, his biographer Scott Donaldson discovered a childhood scarred by a distant mother, a failed, alcoholic father, and nagging economic uncertainty. Likewise,

Cheever's outwardly successful adulthood was plagued by alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, and family tension.

The chilling facts of Cheever's life significantly changed the way critics read his stories. The danger in a famous writer's case—Sylvia Plath and F. Scott Fitzgerald are two modern examples—is that the life story can overwhelm and eventually distort the work. A savvy biographical critic always remembers to base an interpretation on what is in the text itself; biographical data should amplify the meaning of the text, not drown it out with irrelevant material.

1. Real life experience can help shape (either directly or indirectly) an author's work.
2. Understanding an author's life can help us better understand the work.
3. Facts from the author's life are used to help the reader better understand the work; the focus is always on the literary work under investigation.

Eg. Isolation of Emily Dickinson as Revealed in Her Poems; Walt Whitman: A Lover of Death;

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; A Biographical Study of *David Copperfield*

This approach “begins with the simple but central insight that literature is written by actual people and that understanding an author's life can help readers more thoroughly comprehend the work.” Hence, it often affords a practical method by which readers can better understand a text.

However, a biographical critic must be careful not to take the biographical facts of a writer's life too far in criticizing the works of that writer: the biographical critic “focuses on explicating the literary work by using the insight provided by knowledge of the author's life.... [B]iographical data should amplify the meaning of the text, not drown it out with irrelevant material.”

## Lecture four

### Gender Criticism

**Feminist literary criticism** is literary criticism informed by feminist theory, or more broadly, by the politics of feminism. It uses the principles and ideology of feminism to critique the language of literature. This school of thought seeks to analyze and describe the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism". Purdue OWL. Retrieved 29 January 2016. See also Jump up to:<sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Plain, Gill; Sellers, Susan (2007). *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*. Cambridge University Press.

Feminist criticism became a dominant force in Western literary studies in the late 1970s, when feminist theory more broadly conceived was applied to linguistic and literary matters. Since the early 1980s, feminist literary criticism has developed and diversified in a number of ways and is now characterized by a global perspective.

French feminist criticism garnered much of its inspiration from Simone de Beauvoir's seminal book, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949; *The Second Sex*). Beauvoir argued that associating men with humanity more generally (as many cultures do) relegates women to an inferior position in society. Subsequent French feminist critics writing during the 1970s acknowledged Beauvoir's critique but focused on language as a tool of male domination, analyzing the ways in which it represents the world from the male point of view and arguing for the development of a feminine language and writing.

Although interested in the subject of feminine language and writing, North American feminist critics of the 1970s and early 1980s began by analyzing literary texts—not by abstractly discussing language—via close textual reading and historical scholarship. One group practiced "feminist critique," examining how women characters are portrayed, exposing the patriarchal ideology implicit in the so-called classics, and demonstrating that attitudes and traditions reinforcing systematic masculine dominance are inscribed in the literary canon. Another group practiced what came to be called "gynocriticism," studying writings by women and examining the female literary tradition to find out how women writers across the ages have perceived themselves and imagined reality.

While it gradually became customary to refer to an Anglo-American tradition of feminist criticism, British feminist critics of the 1970s and early 1980s

objected to the tendency of some North American critics to find universal or "essential" feminine attributes, arguing that differences of race, class, and culture gave rise to crucial differences among women across space and time. British feminist critics regarded their own critical practice as more political than that of North American feminists, emphasizing an engagement with historical process in order to promote social change.

This theory came to the forefront of the theoretical scene first as feminist theory but has subsequently come to include the investigation of all gender and sexual categories and identities. Feminist gender theory followed slightly behind the reemergence of political feminism in the United States and Western Europe during the 1960s. Political feminism of the so-called "second wave" had as its emphasis practical concerns with the rights of women in contemporary societies, women's identity, and the representation of women in media and culture. These causes converged with early literary feminist practice, characterized by Elaine Showalter as "gynocriticism," which emphasized the study and canonical inclusion of works by female authors as well as the depiction of women in male-authored canonical texts.

Feminist gender theory is postmodern in that it challenges the paradigms and intellectual premises of western thought, but also takes an activist stance by proposing frequent interventions and alternative epistemological positions meant to change the social order.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Adapted from *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* by Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray. Copyright 1998 by Bedford Books.

In the context of postmodernism, gender theorists, led by the work of Judith Butler, initially viewed the category of “gender” as a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social performance. The biological distinction between man and woman eventually came under the same scrutiny by theorists who reached a similar conclusion: the sexual categories are products of culture and as such help create social reality rather than simply reflect it. Gender theory achieved a wide readership and acquired much its initial theoretical rigor through the work of a group of French feminist theorists that included Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva, who while Bulgarian rather than French, made her mark writing in French. French feminist thought is based on the assumption that the Western philosophical tradition represses the experience of women in the structure of its ideas.

As an important consequence of this systematic intellectual repression and exclusion, women’s lives and bodies in historical societies are subject to repression as well. In the creative/critical work of Cixous, we find the history of Western thought depicted as binary oppositions: “speech/writing; Nature/Art, Nature/History, Nature/Mind, Passion/Action.” For Cixous, and for Irigaray as well, these binaries are less a function of any objective reality they describe than the male-dominated discourse of the Western tradition that produced them.

Their work beyond the descriptive stage becomes an intervention in the history of theoretical discourse, an attempt to alter the existing categories and systems of thought that found Western rationality. French feminism, and perhaps all feminism after Beauvoir, has been in conversation with the psychoanalytic revision of Freud in the work of Jacques Lacan. Kristeva’s work draws heavily on Lacan. Two concepts from Kristeva—the “semiotic” and “abjection”—have had a significant influence on literary theory. Kristeva’s “semiotic” refers to the gaps, silences, spaces, and bodily presence within the language/symbol system of a culture in which there might be a space for a women’s language, different in

kind as it would be from male-dominated discourse.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, one should stress the fact that Masculine gender theory as a separate enterprise has focused largely on social, literary, and historical accounts of the construction of male gender identities. Such work generally lacks feminisms' activist stance and tends to serve primarily as an indictment rather than a validation of male gender practices and masculinity. The so-called "Men's Movement," inspired by the work of Robert Bly among others, was more practical than theoretical and has had only limited impact on gender discourse. The impetus for the "Men's Movement" came largely as a response to the critique of masculinity and male domination that runs throughout feminism and the upheaval of the 1960s, a period of crisis in American social ideology that has required a reconsideration of gender roles.

By the early 1990s, the French, American, and British approaches had so thoroughly critiqued, influenced, and assimilated one another that nationality no longer automatically signaled a practitioner's approach. Today's critics seldom focus on "woman" as a relatively monolithic category; rather, they view "women" as members of different societies with different concerns. Feminists of color, Third World (preferably called postcolonial) feminists, and lesbian feminists have stressed that women are not defined solely by the fact that they are female; other attributes (such as religion, class, and sexual orientation) are also important, making the problems and goals of one group of women different from those of another.

Many critics and men of letters have argued that feminist criticism is by definition gender criticism because of its focus on the feminine gender. But the relationship between feminist and gender criticism is, in fact, complex; the two approaches are certainly not polar opposites but, rather, exist along a continuum

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<sup>32</sup> Lanser, Susan S. "Feminist Literary Criticism: How Feminist? How Literary? How Critical?." *NWSA Journal* 3.1 (1991): 3. *Academic Search Complete*.

of attitudes toward sex, sexuality, gender, and language.

As a matter of fact, this approach “examines how sexual identity influences the creation and reception of literary works.” Originally an offshoot of feminist movements, gender criticism today includes a number of approaches, including the so-called “masculinist” approach recently advocated by poet Robert Bly. The bulk of gender criticism, however, is feminist and takes as a central precept that the patriarchal attitudes that have dominated western thought have resulted, consciously or unconsciously, in literature “full of unexamined ‘male-produced’ assumptions.” Feminist criticism attempts to correct this imbalance by analyzing and combatting such attitudes—by questioning, for example, why none of the characters in Shakespeare’s play *Othello* ever challenge the right of a husband to murder a wife accused of adultery. Other goals of feminist critics include “analyzing how sexual identity influences the reader of a text” and “examin[ing] how the images of men and women in imaginative literature reflect or reject the social forces that have historically kept the sexes from achieving total equality.”

## Exercises

### **What are the fundamental assumptions and purposes of feminism?**

Is there a feminist consensus?

That is, are most people who would identify themselves as feminists in agreement on certain basic principles?

If so, what are these principles?

What limitations to consensus, if any, would you identify?

That is, are there basic ways in which some feminists disagree with other feminists?

In what way would you situate any specifically feminist principle in relation to your own basic conceptions about the nature of men, women, culture, and literature?

Is history a basic dimension here? If so, how?

Are there any facts or conditions that transcend specific historical conditions?

If so, what are they?

If not, is there any limitation on the flexibility of cultural identity?

What does all of this have to do with literary theory?

with the canon? with critical practice? How can it be situated in relation to other areas of concern? Does this issue subsume all others, or not?

## Lecture Five

### Psychological Criticism

Modern psychology has had an immense effect on both literature and literary criticism. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories changed our notions of human behavior by exploring new or controversial areas like wish-fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression. Freud also expanded our sense of how language and symbols operate by demonstrating their ability to reflect unconscious fears or desires. Freud admitted that he himself had learned a great deal about psychology from studying literature: Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Dostoevsky were as important to the development of his ideas as were his clinical studies. Some of Freud's most influential writing was, in a broad sense, literary criticism, such as his psychoanalytic examination of Sophocles' Oedipus.

This famous section of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) often raises an important question for students: was Freud implying that Sophocles knew or shared Freud's theories? (Variations of this question can be asked for most critical approaches: does using a critical approach require that the author under scrutiny believed in it?) The answer is, of course, no; in analyzing Sophocles' Oedipus, Freud paid the classical Greek dramatist the considerable compliment that the playwright had such profound insight into human nature that his characters display the depth and complexity of real people. In focusing on literature, Freud and his disciples like Carl Jung, Ernest Jones, Marie Bonaparte, and Bruno Bettelheim endorse the belief that great literature truthfully reflects life.

It is worth noting that Psychological criticism is a diverse category, but it often employs three approaches. First, it investigates the creative process of the artist: what is the nature of literary genius and how does it relate to normal mental functions? (Philosophers and poets have also wrestled with this question, as you can see in selections from Plato and Wordsworth in the “Criticism: On Poetry” ) The second major area for psychological criticism is the psychological study of a particular artist. Most modern literary biographies employ psychology to understand their subject’s motivations and behavior. One recent book, Diane Middlebrook’s controversial *Anne Sexton: A Biography*, actually used tapes of the poet’s sessions with her psychiatrist as material for the study. The third common area of psychological criticism is the analysis of fictional characters. Freud’s study of Oedipus is the prototype for this approach that tries to bring modern insights about human behavior into the study of how fictional people act.

E.g.:

***Sigmund Freud*** (1856—1939)

### **THE DESTINY OF OEDIPUS**

Translated by *James Strachey*. The *lines* from *Oedipus the King* are given in the *version* of *David Qrene*.

If *Oedipus the King* moves a modern audience no less than it did the contemporary Greek one, the explanation can only be that its effect does not lie in the contrast between destiny and human will, but is to be looked for in the particular nature of the material on which that contrast is exemplified. There must be something which makes a voice within us ready to recognize the compelling force of destiny in the *Oedipus*, while we can dismiss as merely arbitrary such dispositions as are laid down in *Die Ahnfrau* or other modern

tragedies of destiny. And a factor of this kind is in fact involved in the story of King Oedipus.

His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours—because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes. But, more fortunate than he, we have meanwhile succeeded, insofar as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers and in forgetting our jealousy of our fathers. Here is one in whom these primeval wishes of our childhood have been fulfilled, and we shrink back from him with the whole.....

E. g. Hamlet's Philosophical and Psychological Dilemma in His "To Be or Not to Be" Soliloquy;

- This approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. Fundamental figures in psychological criticism include Sigmund Freud, whose "psychoanalytic theories changed our notions of human behavior by exploring new or controversial areas like wish-fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression" as well as expanding our understanding of how "language and symbols operate by demonstrating their ability to reflect unconscious fears or desires"; and Carl Jung, whose theories about the unconscious are also a key foundation of **Mythological Criticism**. Psychological criticism has a number of approaches, but in general, it usually employs one (or more) of three approaches:

1. An investigation of “the creative process of the artist: what is the nature of literary genius and how does it relate to normal mental functions?”
  2. The psychological study of a particular artist, usually noting how an author’s biographical circumstances affect or influence their motivations and/or behavior.
  3. The analysis of fictional characters using the language and methods of psychology.
- 1. These critics hold the belief that great literature truthfully reflects life and is a realistic representation of human motivation and behavior.
  - 2. Psychological critics may choose to focus on the creative process of the artist, the artist's motivation or behavior, or analyze fictional characters' motivations and behaviors.

## Lecture Six

### Marxist literary Theory

Marxism and Critical Theory Marxist literary theories tend to focus on the representation of class conflict as well as the reinforcement of class distinctions through the medium of literature. Marxist theorists use traditional techniques of literary analysis but subordinate aesthetic concerns to the final social and political meanings of literature. Marxist theorist often champion authors sympathetic to the working classes and authors whose work challenges economic equalities found in capitalist societies.

Marxism was introduced by Karl Marx. Most Marxist critics, who were writing in what could chronologically be specified as the early period of Marxist literary criticism, subscribed to what has come to be called "Vulgar Marxism." In this thinking of the structure of societies, literary texts are one register of the *superstructure*, which is determined by the economic *base* of any given society. Therefore, literary texts are a reflection of the economic base rather than "the social institutions from which they originate" for all social institutions, or, more precisely human–social relationships, are in the final analysis determined by the economic base. According to Marxists, even literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author. The English literary critic and cultural theorist Terry Eagleton defines Marxist criticism this way:<sup>33</sup>

In keeping with the totalizing spirit of Marxism, literary theories arising from the Marxist paradigm have not only sought new ways of understanding the

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<sup>33</sup> Siegal, K, 'Introduction to Modern Literary Theory', ,

relationship between economic production and literature, but all cultural production as well. Marxist analyses of society and history have had a profound effect on literary theory and practical criticism, most notably in the development of “New Historicism” and “Cultural Materialism.” The Hungarian theorist Georg Lukacs contributed to an understanding of the relationship between historical materialism and literary form, in particular with realism and the historical novel.

Walter Benjamin broke new ground in his work in his study of aesthetics and the reproduction of the work of art. The Frankfurt School of philosophers, including most notably Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse—after their emigration to the United States—played a key role in introducing Marxist assessments of culture into the mainstream of American academic life. These thinkers became associated with what is known as “Critical theory,” one of the constituent components of which was a critique of the instrumental use of reason in advanced capitalist culture. “Critical theory” held to a distinction between the high cultural heritage of Europe and the mass culture produced by capitalist societies as an instrument of domination. “Critical theory” sees in the structure of mass cultural forms—jazz, Hollywood film, advertising—a replication of the structure of the factory and the workplace. Creativity and cultural production in advanced capitalist societies were always already co-opted by the entertainment needs of an economic system that requires sensory stimulation and recognizable cliché and suppressed the tendency for sustained deliberation.

The major Marxist influences on literary theory since the Frankfurt School have been Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton in Great Britain and Frank Lentricchia and Fredric Jameson in the United States. Williams is associated with the New Left political movement in Great Britain and the development of “Cultural Materialism” and the Cultural Studies Movement,

originating in the 1960s at Birmingham University's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Eagleton is known both as a Marxist theorist and as a popularizer of theory by means of his widely read overview, *Literary Theory*. Lentricchia likewise became influential through his account of trends in theory,<sup>34</sup>

After the New Criticism. Jameson is a more diverse theorist, known both for his impact on Marxist theories of culture and for his position as one of the leading figures in theoretical postmodernism. Jameson's work on consumer culture, architecture, film, literature and other areas, typifies the collapse of disciplinary boundaries taking place in the realm of Marxist and postmodern cultural theory. Jameson's work investigates the way the structural features of late capitalism—particularly the transformation of all culture into commodity form—are now deeply embedded in all of our ways of communicating.<sup>35</sup>

1. These critics examine literature in its cultural, economic, and political context; they explore the relation between the artist and the society--how might the profession of authorship have affected what's been written?
2. It is concerned with the social content of literary works, pursuing such questions as: What cultural, economic or political values does the text implicitly or explicitly promote? What is the role of the audience in shaping what's been written?
3. Marxist critics assume that all art is political.

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<sup>34</sup> McIntosh, I, *Classical Sociological Theory: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain, 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Siegal, K, 'Introduction to Modern Literary Theory', ,

4. Marxist critics judge a work's "ideology"--giving rise to such terms as "political correctness."

### **Sociological criticism**

Sociological criticism examines literature in the cultural, economic, and political context in which it is written or received. "Art is not created in a vacuum," critic Wilbur Scott observed, "it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering a community of which he is an important, because articulate part." Sociological criticism explores the relationships between the artist and society. Sometimes it looks at the sociological status of the author to evaluate how the profession of the writer in a particular milieu affected what was written. Sociological criticism also analyzes the social content of literary works—what cultural, economic or political values a particular text implicitly or explicitly promotes. Finally, sociological criticism examines the role the audience has in shaping literature. A sociological view of Shakespeare, for example, might look at the economic position of Elizabethan playwrights and actors; it might also study the political ideas expressed in the plays or discuss how the nature of an Elizabethan theatrical audience (which was usually all male unless the play was produced at court) helped determine the subject, tone, and language of the plays.<sup>36</sup>

An influential type of sociological criticism has been Marxist criticism, which focuses on the economic and political elements of art. Marxist criticism, like the work of the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukacs, often explores the

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<sup>36</sup> Adapted from *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* by Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray. Copyright 1998 by Bedford Books.

ideological content of literature. Whereas a formalist critic would maintain that form and content are inextricably blended, Lukacs believed that content determines form and that therefore, all art is political. Even if a work of art ignores political issues, it makes a political statement, Marxist critics believe, because it endorses the economic and political status quo. Consequently, Marxist criticism is frequently evaluative and judges some literary work better than others on an ideological basis; this tendency can lead to reductive judgment, as when Soviet critics rated Jack London a novelist superior to William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, and Henry James, because he illustrated the principles of class struggle more clearly. But, as an analytical tool, Marxist criticism, like other sociological methods, can illuminate political and economic dimensions of literature other approaches overlook.

E.g. Heathcliff: A Product of Social Environment; The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*;  
Collapse of the American Dream in *Death of a Salesman*; The Twisted Human Nature in *Wuthering Heights*

In a more proper sense, this approach “examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received,” exploring the relationships between the artist and society. Sometimes it examines the artist’s society to better understand the author’s literary works; other times, it may examine the representation of such societal elements within the literature itself. One influential type of sociological criticism is **Marxist criticism**, which focuses on the economic and political elements of art, often emphasizing the ideological content of literature; because Marxist criticism often argues that all art is political, either challenging or endorsing (by silence) the status quo, it is frequently evaluative and judgmental, a tendency that “can lead to reductive judgment, as when Soviet critics rated Jack London better than William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, and Henry James, because he

illustrated the principles of class struggle more clearly.” Nonetheless, Marxist criticism “can illuminate political and economic dimensions of literature other approaches overlook.”

**5. Structuralism and Poststructuralism Like the “New Criticism,”** “Structuralism” sought to bring to literary studies a set of objective criteria for analysis and a new intellectual rigor. “Structuralism” can be viewed as an extension of “Formalism” in that both “Structuralism” and “Formalism” devoted their attention to matters of literary form (i.e. structure) rather than social or historical content; and that both bodies of thought were intended to put the study of literature on a scientific, objective basis. “Structuralism” relied initially on the ideas of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Like Plato, Saussure regarded the signifier (words, marks, symbols) as arbitrary and unrelated to the concept, the signified, to which it referred. Within the way a particular society uses language and signs, meaning was constituted by a system of “differences” between units of the language.

Particular meanings were of less interest than the underlying structures of signification that made meaning itself possible, often expressed as an emphasis on “langue” rather than “parole.” “Structuralism” was to be a metalanguage, a language about languages, used to decode actual languages, or systems of signification. The work of the “Formalist” Roman Jakobson contributed to “Structuralist” thought, and the more prominent Structuralists included Claude Levi-Strauss in anthropology, Tzvetan Todorov, A.J. Greimas, Gerard Genette, and Barthes. The philosopher Roland Barthes proved to be a key figure on the divide between “Structuralism” and “Poststructuralism.”

“Poststructuralism” is less unified as a theoretical movement than its precursor; indeed, the work of its advocates known by the term “Deconstruction” calls into question the possibility of the coherence of

discourse, or the capacity for language to communicate. “Deconstruction,” Semiotic theory (a study of signs with close connections to “Structuralism,” “Reader response theory” in America (“Reception theory” in Europe), and “Gender theory” informed by the psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva are areas of inquiry that can be located under the banner of “Poststructuralism.” If signifier and signified are both cultural concepts, as they are in “Poststructuralism,” reference to an empirically certifiable reality is no longer guaranteed by language.

“Deconstruction” argues that this loss of reference causes an endless deferral of meaning, a system of differences between units of language that has no resting place or final signifier that would enable the other signifiers to hold their meaning. The most important theorist of “Deconstruction,” Jacques Derrida, has asserted, “There is no getting outside text,” indicating a kind of free play of signification in which no fixed, stable meaning is possible.

“Poststructuralism” in America was originally identified with a group of Yale academics, the Yale School of “Deconstruction:” J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartmann, and Paul de Man. Other tendencies in the moment after “Deconstruction” that share some of the intellectual tendencies of “Poststructuralism” would include the “Reader response” theories of Stanley Fish, Jane Tompkins, and Wolfgang Iser. Lacanian psychoanalysis, an updating of the work of Sigmund Freud, extends “Poststructuralism” to the human subject with further consequences for literary theory. According to Lacan, the fixed, stable self is a Romantic fiction; like the text in “Deconstruction,” the self is a decentered mass of traces left by our encounter with signs, visual symbols, language, etc.

For Lacan, the self is constituted by language, a language that is never one’s own, always another’s, always already in use. Barthes applies these

currents of thought in his famous declaration of the “death” of the Author: “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” while also applying a similar “Poststructuralist” view to the Reader: “the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.”

Michel Foucault is another philosopher, like Barthes, whose ideas inform much of poststructuralist literary theory. Foucault played a critical role in the development of the postmodern perspective that knowledge is constructed in concrete historical situations in the form of discourse; knowledge is not communicated by discourse but is discourse itself, can only be encountered textually. Following Nietzsche, Foucault performs what he calls “genealogies,” attempts at deconstructing the unacknowledged operation of power and knowledge to reveal the ideologies that make domination of one group by another seem “natural.” Foucauldian investigations of discourse and power were to provide much of the intellectual impetus for a new way of looking at history and doing textual studies that came to be known as the “New Historicism.”

## Lecture Seven

### **Mythological Criticism**

- . Mythological criticism studies recurrent universal patterns underlying most literary works (for example, "the hero's journey").or anything that evokes a deep universal response.
- . It combines insights from a variety of academic disciplines--anthropology, psychology, history, comparative religion...it concerns itself with demonstrating how the individual imagination shares a common humanity by identifying common symbols, images, plots, etc.
- . Mythological critics identify "archetypes" (symbols, characters, situations, or images evoking a universal response).

Mythological critics look for the recurrent universal patterns underlying most literary works. ("Myth and Narrative," for a definition of myth and a discussion of its importance to the literary imagination.) Mythological criticism is an interdisciplinary approach that combines the insights of anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion. If psychological criticism examines the artist as an individual, mythological criticism explores the artist's common humanity by tracing how the individual imagination uses myths and symbols common to different cultures and epochs.

A central concept in mythological criticism is the archetype, a symbol, character, situation, or image that evokes a deep universal response. The idea of the archetype came into literary criticism from the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, a lifetime student of myth and religion. Jung believed that all individuals share a “collective unconscious,” a set of primal memories common to the human race, existing below each person’s conscious mind. Archetypal images (which often relate to experiencing primordial phenomena like the sun, moon, fire, night, and blood), Jung believed, trigger the collective unconscious.

We do not need to accept the literal truth of the collective unconscious, however, to endorse the archetype as a helpful critical concept. The late Northrop Frye defined the archetype in considerably less occult terms as “a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one’s literary experience as a whole.”

Identifying archetypal symbols and situations in literary works, mythological critics almost inevitably link the individual text under discussion to a broader context of works that share an underlying pattern. In discussing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, for instance, a mythological critic might relate Shakespeare’s Danish prince to other mythic sons avenging their fathers’ deaths, like Orestes from Greek myth or Sigmund of Norse legend; or, in discussing *Othello*, relate the sinister figure of Iago to the devil in traditional Christian belief. Critic Joseph Campbell took such comparisons even further; his compendious study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* demonstrates how similar mythic characters appear in virtually every culture on every continent.

E.g. *Northrop Frye* (1912—1991)

## MYTHIC ARCHETYPES

We begin our study of archetypes, then, with a world of myth, an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience. In terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire. The gods enjoy beautiful women, fight one another with prodigious strength, comfort and assist man, or else watch his miseries from the height of their immortal freedom. The fact that myth operates at the top level of human desire does not mean that it necessarily presents its world as attained or attainable by human beings. . .

- Eg. “Lucifer in Shakespeare’s *Othello*”;

This approach emphasizes “the recurrent universal patterns underlying most literary works.” Combining the insights from anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion, mythological criticism “explores the artist’s common humanity by tracing how the individual imagination uses myths and symbols common to different cultures and epochs.” One key concept in mythological criticism is the *archetype*, “a symbol, character, situation, or image that evokes a deep universal response,” which entered literary criticism from Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. According to Jung, all individuals share a “‘collective unconscious,’ a set of primal memories common to the human race, existing below each person’s conscious mind”—often deriving from primordial phenomena such as the sun, moon, fire, night, and blood, archetypes according to Jung “trigger the collective unconscious.” Another critic, Northrop Frye, defined archetypes in a more limited way as “a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one’s literary experience as a whole.” Regardless of the definition of archetype they use, mythological critics tend to view literary works in the broader context of works sharing a similar pattern.

## Reader-Response Criticism

**Reader-Response Criticism** is the approach that takes as a fundamental tenet that “literature” exists not as an artifact upon a printed page but as a transaction between the physical text and the mind of a reader. It attempts “to describe what happens in the reader’s mind while interpreting a text” and reflects that *reading*, like writing, is a creative process. According to reader-response critics, literary texts do not “contain” a meaning; meanings derive only from the act of individual readings.

Hence, two different readers may derive completely different interpretations of the same literary text; likewise, a reader who re-reads a work years later may find the work shockingly different. Reader-response criticism, then, emphasizes how “religious, cultural, and social values affect readings; it also overlaps with gender criticism in exploring how men and women read the same text with different assumptions.” Though this approach rejects the notion that a single “correct” reading exists for a literary work, it does not consider all readings permissible: “Each text creates limits to its possible interpretations.”

1. This type of criticism attempts to describe the internal workings of the reader's mental processes. It recognizes reading as a creative act, a creative process.
2. No text is self-contained, independent of a reader's interpretive design.
3. The plurality of readings possible are all explored. Critics study how different readers see the same text differently, and how religious, cultural, and social values affect readings.
4. Instead of focusing only on the values embedded in the text, this type of criticism studies the values embedded in the reader. Intersections between the two are explored.

Reader-response criticism attempts to describe what happens in the reader's mind while interpreting a text. If traditional criticism assumes that imaginative writing is a creative act, reader-response theory recognizes that reading is also a creative process. Reader-response critics believe that no text provides self-contained meaning; literary texts do not exist independently of readers' interpretations. A text, according to this critical school, is not finished until it is read and interpreted. The practical problem then arises that no two individuals necessarily read a text in exactly the same way. Rather than declare one interpretation correct and the other mistaken, reader-response criticism recognizes the inevitable plurality of readings. Instead of trying to ignore or reconcile the contradictions inherent in this situation, it explores them.<sup>37</sup>

Probably, the easiest way to explain reader-response criticism is to relate it to the common experience of rereading a favorite book after many years. Rereading a novel as an adult, for example, that "changed your life" as an adolescent, is often a shocking experience. The book may seem substantially different. The character you remembered liking most now seems less admirable, and another character you disliked now seems more sympathetic. Has the book changed? Very unlikely, but *you* certainly have in the intervening years. Reader-response criticism explores how the different individuals (or classes of individuals) see the same text differently. It emphasizes how religious, cultural, and social values affect readings; it also overlaps with gender criticism in exploring how men and women read the same text with different assumptions.

While reader-response criticism rejects the notion that there can be a single correct reading for a literary text, it doesn't consider all readings permissible. Each text creates limits to its possible interpretations. As Stanley Fish admits in

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<sup>37</sup> Gloria Henderson, William Day & Sandra Waller, *Literature and Ourselves*, New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994

the following critical selection, we cannot arbitrarily place an Eskimo in William Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" (though Professor Fish does ingeniously imagine a hypothetical situation where this bizarre interpretation might actually be possible) poem would be forthcoming. This poem is not only a "refusal to mourn," like that of Dylan Thomas, it is a refusal to elegize.

The whole elegiac tradition, like its cousin the funeral oration, turns finally away from mourning toward acceptance, revival, renewal, a return to the concerns of life, symbolized by the very writing of the poem. Life goes on; there *is* an audience; and the mourned person will live through accomplishments, influence, descendants, and also (not least) in the elegiac poem itself. Merwin rejects all that. If I wrote an elegy for X, the person for whom I have always written, X would not be alive to read it; therefore, there is no reason to write an elegy for the one person in my life who most deserves one; therefore, there is no reason to write any elegy, anymore, ever.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> X. J. Kennedy, *An Introduction to Poetry*, New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994

## Lecture Eighth

### **Deconstructionist Criticism**

. Deconstructive critics believe that language doesn't accurately reflect reality because it is an unstable medium; literary texts therefore have no stable meaning. Deconstructive criticism resembles formalist criticism in its close attention to the text, its close analysis of individual words and images. There the similarity ends, because their aims are in fact opposite. Whereas formalist criticism is interested in "aesthetic wholes" or *constructs*, deconstructionists aim to demonstrate irreconcilable positions--they *destruct* (or deconstruct)--by proving the instability of language, its inability to express anything definite.

**Deconstruction** is an approach to understanding the relationship between text and meaning. It was originated by the philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), who defined the term variously throughout his career. In its simplest form it can be regarded as a criticism of Platonism and the idea of true forms, or essences, which take precedence over appearances.<sup>39</sup>

In a more practical sense; Deconstructionist criticism rejects the traditional assumption that language can accurately represent reality. Language, according to deconstructionists, is a fundamentally unstable medium; consequently, literary texts, which are made up of words, have no fixed, single meaning. Deconstructionists insist, according to critic Paul de Man, on “the impossibility

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<sup>39</sup> Lawlor, Leonard (2019), "Jacques Derrida", in Zalta, Edward N. (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 ed.), Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, retrieved 2020-04-11

of making the actual expression coincide with what has to be expressed, of making the actual signs coincide with what is signified.” Since they believe that literature cannot definitively express its subject matter, deconstructionists tend to shift their attention away from *what* is being said to *how* language is being used in a text.<sup>40</sup>

Paradoxically, deconstructionist criticism often resembles formalist criticism; both methods usually involve close reading. But while a formalist usually tries to demonstrate how the diverse elements of a text cohere into meaning, the deconstructionist approach attempts to show how the text “deconstructs,” that is, how it can be broken down—by a skeptical critic—into mutually irreconcilable positions. A biographical or historical critic might seek to establish the author’s intention as a means to interpreting a literary work, but deconstructionists reject the notion that the critic should endorse the myth of authorial control over language.

Deconstructionist critics like Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault have therefore called for “the death of the author,” that is, the rejection of the assumption that the author, no matter how ingenious, can fully control the meaning of a text. They have also announced the death of literature as a special category of writing. In their view, poems and novels are merely words on a page that deserve no privileged status as art; all texts are created equal—equally untrustworthy, that is.

Deconstructionists focus on how language is used to achieve power. Since they believe, in the words of critic David Lehman, that “there are no truths, only rival interpretations,” deconstructionists try to understand how some “interpretations come to be regarded as truth. A major goal of deconstruction is

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<sup>40</sup> "Deconstruction". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved 8 September 2020

to demonstrate how those supposed truths are at best provisional and at worst contradictory.<sup>41</sup>

Deconstruction, as you may have inferred, calls for intellectual subtlety and skill, and isn't for a novice to leap into. If you pursue your literary studies beyond the introductory stage, you will want to become more familiar with its assumptions. Deconstruction may strike you as a negative, even destructive, critical approach, and yet its best practitioners are adept at exposing the inadequacy of much conventional criticism. By patient analysis, they can sometimes open up the most familiar text and find in it fresh and unexpected significance.<sup>42</sup>

This approach “rejects the traditional assumption that language can accurately represent reality.” Deconstructionist critics regard language as a fundamentally unstable medium—the words “tree” or “dog,” for instance, undoubtedly conjure up different mental images for different people—and therefore, because literature is made up of words, literature possesses no fixed, single meaning. According to critic Paul de Man, deconstructionists insist on “the impossibility of making the actual expression coincide with what has to be expressed, of making the actual signs [i.e., words] coincide with what is signified.”

As a result, deconstructionist critics tend to emphasize not *what* is being said but *how* language is used in a text. The methods of this approach tend to resemble those of formalist criticism, but whereas formalists' primary goal is to locate unity within a text, “how the diverse elements of a text cohere into meaning,” deconstructionists try to show how the text “deconstructs,” “how it

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<sup>41</sup> Caputo, John D. (1997). *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (3rd ed.). New York: Fordham University Press. p. 31

<sup>42</sup> Sallis, John (1988). *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida* (Paperback ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 3–4.

can be broken down ... into mutually irreconcilable positions.” Other goals of deconstructionists include (1) challenging the notion of authors’ “ownership” of texts they create (and their ability to control the meaning of their texts) and (2) focusing on how language is used to achieve power, as when they try to understand how some interpretations of a literary work come to be regarded as “truth.”

## **Exercises**

What's the purpose of Deconstruction?

As an analytical tool, how does it help us understand literature better, and what exactly does it help us understand? What are we supposed to examine and talk about when we set out to deconstruct something?

Does this theoretical approach involve 'more' than 'one' analytical step? If so, what are those steps?

How does this theoretical approach differ from that of New Criticism and Reader Response? Reference specific passages to help you address these questions, and be specific in your answers.

## Lecture Ninth

### **Cultural Materialism and New Historicism**

A term *Cultural Materialism* coined by Raymond Williams and popularised by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (in their collection of essays *Political Shakespeare*). In reality one should stress the fact that Cultural Materialism refers to a Marxist orientation of New Historicism, characterised by the analysis of any historical material within a politicized framework, in a radical and subversive manner. Cultural Materialism emphasises studying the historical context, looking at those historical aspects that have been discarded or silenced in other narratives of history, through an eclectic theoretical approach, backed by the political commitment arising from the influence of Marxist and Feminist perspective and thus executing a textual analysis—close reading that critiques traditional approaches, especially on canonical texts

“New Historicism,” a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt, designates a body of theoretical and interpretive practices that began largely with the study of early modern literature in the United States. “New Historicism” in America had been somewhat anticipated by the theorists of “Cultural Materialism” in Britain, which, in the words of their leading advocate, Raymond Williams describes “the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. U Chicago P, 1980.

Both “New Historicism” and “Cultural Materialism” seek to understand literary texts historically and reject the formalizing influence of previous literary studies, including “New Criticism,” “Structuralism” and “Deconstruction,” all of which in varying ways privilege the literary text and place only secondary emphasis on historical and social context. According to “New Historicism,” the circulation of literary and non-literary texts produces relations of social power within a culture. New Historicist thought differs from traditional historicism in literary studies in several crucial ways.

**New historicism**, a form of literary theory which aims to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through its cultural context, follows the 1950s field of history of ideas and refers to itself as a form of "Cultural Poetics". It first developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread influence in the 1990s.<sup>44</sup>

Rejecting traditional historicism’s premise of neutral inquiry, “New Historicism” accepts the necessity of making historical value judgments. According to “New Historicism,” we can only know the textual history of the past because it is “embedded,” a key term, in the textuality of the present and its concerns. Text and context are less clearly distinct in New Historicist practice. Traditional separations of literary and non-literary texts, “great” literature and popular literature, are also fundamentally challenged.

For the “New Historicist,” all acts of expression are embedded in the material conditions of a culture. Texts are examined with an eye for how they

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*and Sarah Maza, "Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicism, and Cultural History, or, What We Talk about When We Talk about Interdisciplinarity", Modern Intellectual History 1, no. 2 (2004):*

<sup>44</sup> David Mikics, ed. *A New Handbook of Literary Terms*, 2007, s.v. "New historicism"

reveal the economic and social realities, especially as they produce ideology and represent power or subversion. Like much of the emergent European social history of the 1980s, “New Historicism” takes particular interest in representations of marginal/marginalized groups and non-normative behaviors—witchcraft, cross-dressing, peasant revolts, and exorcisms—as exemplary of the need for power to represent subversive alternatives, the Other, to legitimize itself.

Louis Montrose, another major innovator and exponent of “New Historicism,” describes a fundamental axiom of the movement as an intellectual belief in “the textuality of history and the historicity of texts.” “New Historicism” draws on the work of Levi-Strauss, in particular his notion of culture as a “self-regulating system.” The Foucauldian premise that power is ubiquitous and cannot be equated with state or economic power and Gramsci’s conception of “hegemony,” i.e., that domination is often achieved through culturally-orchestrated consent rather than force, are critical underpinnings to the “New Historicist” perspective.

The translation of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on carnival coincided with the rise of the “New Historicism” and “Cultural Materialism” and left a legacy in work of other theorists of influence like Peter Stallybrass and Jonathan Dollimore. In its period of ascendancy during the 1980s, “New Historicism” drew criticism from the political left for its depiction of counter-cultural expression as always co-opted by the dominant discourses. Equally, “New Historicism’s” lack of emphasis on “literariness” and formal literary concerns brought disdain from traditional literary scholars. However, “New Historicism” continues to exercise a major influence in the humanities and in the extended conception of literary studies. 7.

## Cultural Studies

Much of the intellectual legacy of “New Historicism” and “Cultural Materialism” can now be felt in the “Cultural Studies” movement in departments of literature, a movement not identifiable in terms of a single theoretical school, but one that embraces a wide array of perspectives—media studies, social criticism, anthropology, and literary theory—as they apply to the general study of culture. “Cultural Studies” arose quite self-consciously in the 80s to provide a means of analysis of the rapidly expanding global culture industry that includes entertainment, advertising, publishing, television, film, computers and the Internet.

**Cultural studies** is a field of theoretically, politically, and empirically engaged cultural analysis that concentrates upon the political dynamics of contemporary culture, its historical foundations, defining traits, conflicts, and contingencies. Cultural studies researchers generally investigate how cultural practices relate to wider systems of power associated with or operating through social phenomena, such as ideology, class structures, national formations, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and generation. Cultural studies views cultures not as fixed, bounded, stable, and discrete entities, but rather as constantly interacting and changing sets of practices and processes.<sup>45</sup> The field of cultural studies encompasses a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives and practices. Although distinct from the discipline

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<sup>45</sup> Cultural studies" is not synonymous with either "area studies" or "ethnic studies," although there are many cultural studies practitioners working in both area studies and ethnic studies programs and professional associations (e.g. American studies, Asian studies, African-American studies, Latina/o Studies, European studies, Latin American studies, etc.).

of cultural anthropology and the interdisciplinary field of ethnic studies, cultural studies draws upon and has contributed to each of these fields<sup>46</sup>

“Cultural Studies” brings scrutiny not only to these varied categories of culture, and not only to the decreasing margins of difference between these realms of expression, but just as importantly to the politics and ideology that make contemporary culture possible. “Cultural Studies” became notorious in the 90s for its emphasis on pop music icons and music video in place of canonical literature, and extends the ideas of the Frankfurt School on the transition from a truly popular culture to mass culture in late capitalist societies, emphasizing the significance of the patterns of consumption of cultural artifacts. “Cultural Studies” has been interdisciplinary, even antidisciplinary, from its inception; indeed, “Cultural Studies” can be understood as a set of sometimes conflicting methods and approaches applied to a questioning of current cultural categories. Stuart Hall, Meaghan Morris, Tony Bennett and Simon During are some of the important advocates of a “Cultural Studies” that seeks to displace the traditional model of literary studies. 10.

## **Exercises**

-What is the relation of any ONE of the schools discussed above to literature or literary theory: Marxist social theory, Foucauldian cultural theory, New Historicism, deconstructive philosophy, and Feminist social critique?\_

\_You might want to consider some of the following issues. What are the basic principles at work in these disciplines?

- Is there a coherent body of accepted scientific principles in the discipline?

Are there fundamental differences in the way different people or different schools conceive of their activity?

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<sup>46</sup> "cultural studies | interdisciplinary field". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved 28

June2017

-Read William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and provide a new historicist analysis by answering the following questions

- What language/characters/events present in the work reflect the current events of the author's day?
- Are there words in the text that have changed their meaning from the time of the writing?
- How are such events interpreted and presented?
- How are events' interpretation and presentation a product of the culture of the author?
- Does the work's presentation support or condemn the event?
- Can it be seen to do both?
- How does this portrayal criticize the leading political figures or movements of the day?
- How does the literary text function as part of a continuum with other historical/cultural texts from the same period?
- How can we use a literary work to "map" the interplay of both traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the culture in which that work emerged and/or the cultures in which the work has been interpreted?
- How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations?

## **Lecture Tenth Post colonialism**

Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Chinua Achebe on the Politics of Language and Literature in Africa

Most African literature is oral. It includes stories, riddles, proverbs and sayings. In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o discusses the importance of oral literature to his childhood. He says:

"I can vividly recall those evenings of storytelling around the fire side. It was mostly the grownups telling the children but everybody was interested and involved. We children would retell the stories the following day to other children who worked in the fields."

The stories' main characters were usually animals. Ngugi said, "Hare being small, weak, but full of innovative wit, was our hero. We identified with him as he struggled against the brutes of prey like lion, leopard and hyena. His victories were our victories and we learnt that the apparently weak can outwit the strong."

According to Ngugi's way of seeing, you can't study African literatures without studying the particular cultures and oral traditions from which Africans draw their plots, styles and metaphors. So where does all of this leave us in a discussion of current African literature? It leads to an ongoing debate—what is African literature? Ngugi sees a structural problem, however. He says that in a given discussion over this subject we may see some of the following questions: "Are we talking of literature about Africa or the African experience? Was it literature written by Africans? What about a non-African who wrote about Africa? What if an African set his work in Greenland—does this qualify?" These are good questions, but, Ngugi explains, they were raised at the conference of

African Writers of English Expression which included only English writing African authors because those that wrote in African languages were not invited.

This blindness to the indigenous voice of Africans is a direct result, according to Ngugi, of colonization. Ngugi explains that during colonization, missionaries and colonial administrators controlled publishing houses and the educational context of novels. This means that only texts with religious stories or carefully selected stories which would not tempt young Africans to question their own condition were propagated. Africans were controlled by forcing them to speak European languages—they attempted to teach children (future generations) that speaking English is good and that native languages are bad by using negative reinforcement.

This is a process recognized by the great Martinique writer, Franz Fanon. Language was twisted into a mechanism that separated children from their own history because their own heritage was shared only at home, relying on orature in their native language. At school, they are told that the only way to advance is to memorize the textbook history in the colonizer's language. By removing their native language from their education they are separated from their history which is replaced by European history in European languages. This puts the lives of Africans more firmly in the control of the colonists.

Ngugi argues that colonization was not simply a process of physical force. Rather, "the bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation." In Kenya, colonization propagated English as the language of education and as a result, orature in Kenyan indigenous languages withered away. This was devastating to African literature because, as Ngugi writes, "language carries culture and culture carries (particularly through orature and literature) the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world." Therefore, how can the African experience be expressed properly in another language? The issue of which language should be

used to compose a truly African contemporary literature is thus one replete with contradictions. Ngugi argues that writing in African languages is a necessary step toward cultural identity and independence from centuries of European exploitation.

However, let us consider critic Susan Gallagher's account below wherein Nigerian author Chinua Achebe discusses why he chose not to write or translate *Things Fall Apart* into "Union Igbo." How does Achebe use the "weapon" of the English language to accomplish in *Things Fall Apart*?

"In response to the now infamous declaration of Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o that African writers should write in African languages, Achebe commented [in a talk at West Chester Univ.]: 'The British did not push language into my face while I was growing up.' He chose to learn English and eventually to write in English as a means of 'infiltrating the ranks of the enemy and destroying him from within.'... 'It doesn't matter what language you write in, as long as what you write is good,' Achebe stated.... Yet Achebe fully recognizes that English is symbolically and politically connected with the despoiler of traditional culture with intolerance and bigotry. 'Language is a weapon, and we use it,' he argued. 'There's no point in fighting a language'"<sup>47</sup>.

And he explicates more:

"When someone asked if *Things Fall Apart* had ever been translated into Igbo, Achebe's mother tongue, he shook his head and explained that Igbo exists in numerous dialects, differing from village to village. Formal, standardized, written Igbo -- like many other African languages -- came into being as a result of the Christian missionaries' desire to translate the Bible into indigenous tongues. Unfortunately, when the Christian Missionary Society tackled Igbo, they brought together six Igbo converts, each from a different location, each speaking a different dialect." The resulting 'Union Igbo' bore little relationship to any of the six dialects--"a strange hodge-podge with no linguistic elegance, natural rhythm or oral authenticity"--yet the missionaries authorized it as the official written form of the Igbo languages. Achebe would not consent to have

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<sup>47</sup> qtd. in Gallagher

his novel translated into this "linguistic travesty" *Union Igbo*. "Consequently, one of the world's great novels, which have been translated into more than 30 languages, is unable to appear in the language of the very culture that it celebrates and mourns. This irony seems an apt symbol for the complex ways Western Christianity has both blessed and marred the cultures of Africa" (Gallagher).<sup>48</sup>

Achebe rejects the Western notion of art for its own sake in essays he has published (e.g. in the collections *Morning Yet on Creation Day* and *Hopes and Impediments*). Instead, he embraces the conception of art at the heart of African oral traditions and values: "art is, and always was, at the service of man," he writes. "Our ancestors created their myths and told their stories with a human purpose;" hence, "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose."

The study of Postcolonial fiction in English gains significance in the fact that the language in which it is written is the same language that was introduced in the native shores through the experience of colonisation. Taking into account the significant role played by the English language in the process of colonisation, postcolonial writers appropriate the language and re-fashion it to suit their own purpose. The attitude towards English in postcolonial writers cannot be defined in a simple and all encompassing fashion. While at the one end of the continuum, a writer like Thiong'o rejects English as culturally and politically alien and reverts back to Gikuyu, to many postcolonial writers it is English that is the language they are most comfortable in. Many can write only in English as their mother tongue does not serve their artistic needs because of various reasons.

So while the position of English itself is ambivalent. This complex and ambivalent attitude towards the coloniser's language expresses itself in the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

way the writer handles it in his work. He not only talks through the medium of language but also talks about it.

Therefore the issue of language in postcolonial writing is vital for it redefines not only the English usages but also the writer's relationship with it. Postcolonial writers appropriate the English language to suit their specific purpose. As they are conscious of the historicity of the language that is incriminated with British colonization they nativise the language to make it culturally relevant to their society. In the process, English no longer remains as the colonizer's language for it becomes a tool in the hands of postcolonial writers as they use it creatively in the project of decolonization.

In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft et al. are of the view that: Language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial center- whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a 'standard' against other variants which are constituted as 'impurities', or by planting the language of empire in a new place- remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. (283) As the language is appropriated, the use and function of English in postcolonial fiction stretches beyond its artistic boundaries to define the author's complex sociopolitical and linguistic identity.

English, thus, is more than a medium in their writing. as it becomes one of the shards of theme in these novels. Postcolonial writers destabilise the supremacy of English by experimenting with the variant forms of English and by incorporating their indigenous language forms into the English language.

Therefore it is not the standard variety of English of the colonisers that these writers strive to write in, but various forms of 'englishes' with its idiosyncrasies of regional and specific sociohistoric features. The tinkering of English as a volitional activity insens itself into the gamut of politics that

concern postcolonial writers. As English is reworked to reflect the life of the colonized, the language is decolonized not only at the content level but also the form of the language is brought closer to the native experience of the writers. Different writers have taken different stances to bring in this effect and this chapter seeks to examine the ways in which English is nativised in the works of the selected writers as they work towards decolonisation.

One needs to stress the fact that colonization and exploitation of Africa for its gold and minerals and forcefully leading the African into slavery. Therefore an African writer, who is committed to the plight of the dark skinned people of the Dark Continent, takes to writing through a new modality of expression, to re-create an identity for himself and his race. As the western assumptions and constructions that negate the identity of an African are questioned there is also an effort to reconstruct the identity of an African and to restore the sense of solidarity with his community.

It is a scramble for the erasure of the images created by the west as well as offering alternative frames of reference for the ameliorative purpose of the black consciousness. The colonial impact has been so severe that the native has learnt to revere the west and accept its autonomy of power without questioning the legitimacy of its authority. The black individual was reprimanded if he followed his traditional cultural practices, were seen as monstrous and barbaric by his colonial authorities. Instead he was forced to learn the ways of the west. which resulted in the negation of his identity and effacement of his self-respect. Therefore the African writer, as a recuperative measure, attempts to create a society, which will be free "without chains on his legs, without chains on his mind. without chains in his soul" <sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Thiong'o. *Petals of Blood* 236).

Therefore, however creative and imaginative a writer be, in the African literary scenario, the writer finds himself shouldering a responsibility to address the evil impacts of colonization. Unlike his western counterpart, he is not an outsider who is alienated from the society. He is not a man who lives in the attic and takes a solitary walk when the city is asleep. Rather he is an integral part of the main stream of his closely-knit society. He has a commitment to the society he lives in and his work is concerned with forces that are at play in his social ambience. It goes to explain the thematic differences among various literatures of the different regions, which form the complex fabric of African literature.

But however committed and responsible the writer be, the debate over the language-choice is a moot point on which the African writers stand divided. With the disintegration of the traditional society and its culture, the traditional means of interaction within the community had to be substituted with the written mode. It is not the old storytellers of the past but the young intellectuals who have been educated in the coloniser's language have taken the center stage.

Therefore the choice of novel as form becomes the natural choice as the new form of story-telling in which many tales of the past are interwoven with the realities of the present. Since English was used as a tool by the colonisers for the cultural indoctrination, critics like Ngugi, Obi Wali and Anthony Appiah call for the linguistic indigenisation of African literature. While the language issue is articulated at an emotional level, writers like Achebe are alive to the indispensability of English that has been left as a colonial legacy in Africa. He discusses the issue of language-choice with all its practical concerns in *Hopes und Impediments: Selected Essays*.

To those colleagues who might be tempted to hasty switch of genres I will say this: consider a hypothetical case: A master singer arrives to perform in a large auditorium and finds at the last moment three quarter of his audience are totally deaf. His sponsors then put the proposition to him that he should dance instead of because even the deaf can see a dancer. Now although our performer had the voice of an angel his feet are as heavy as concrete. What should he do? Should he proceed to sing beautifully to only a quarter or less of the auditorium or dance atrociously to a full house? I guess it is clear where my stand would be! The singer should sing well even if it is merely to himself, rather than dance badly for the whole world. (60-61)<sup>50</sup>

Though a novel written in English will not gain much currency with the peasants of Africa Achebe prefers to write in English, as it is the language that he is proficient in and which also suits his creative expression. Therefore writers like Achebe are more concerned with immediate issues that need to be addressed in a neo-colonial situation rather than rejecting or redefining the position of English in the African scenario.

Chidi Amuta is of the view that, Even if all of African literature were suddenly to be created in African languages without due attention to the ideological content of the literature and its relationship with its audience, the revolutionary dreams of the advocates of linguistic indigenization would be thwarted. (1 13) Choosing a medium and mode of expression is also to choose one's audience. While the problem of readership is something an African writer has to contend with, the shift in the mode of expression and the transition in the strategies of cultural communication are issues that cannot be sidelined. Fixing the problem in its current historical perspective, Chinweizu et al. point out:

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<sup>50</sup> Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*. 1988. New York: AnchorDoubleday, 1990.

Ideally, African literature should be written in African languages. But the same historical circumstances that presently compel African nations to use Western languages as their official languages also compel African writers to write in them. (242) However when an African writer uses the English language as his mode of expression, it is not the same standard variety of the British English, but a new form of English in essence is brewed with an unmistakably distinct African flavour enriched with African cultural terms. Achebe, in his effort to recreate a pre-westernized African reality, bends the English language to express his Igbo proverbs and idioms. Tutuola has developed a style, where he experiments with his Yoruba forms and inserts traditional oral forms with the English language.

Ken Saro-Wiva has been brave to call his novel *Sozohoy: A novel in rotten English*. Incidentally, it is a war novel, which highlights the gruesome nature of war that can annihilate people, relationships, dreams, desires, families and societies. 'War' is a major motif in the novel and is fought at various levels between different people and ideologies.

It is also a war against British Standard English as the novelist has broken every possible grammatical rule and structure. To cite a passage from the novel *Sozohoy*: So that night, I was in the Upwine Bar. No plenty people at first. I order one bottle of palmy from the service. This service is young girl. Him bottom dey shake as she walk. Him breast na proper J.J.C. Johnny Just Come- dey stand like hill. As I look am, my man begin to stand small small. I beg am make 'e no disgrace me especially as I no wear pant that night. I begin to drink my palmy. The service sit near my table & y look me from the comer of him eye. Me I dey look am too with the comer of my eye. I want to see how him breast dey. As I dey look, the baby catch me". (13) Even as it is a conscious and deliberate reworking of the language, it is a mixture of Nigerian Pidgin English with local varieties, written as if spoken.

Commenting on the language, the novelist himself has stated in his author's note of the novel that, To its speakers, it has the advantage of having no rules and no syntax. It thrives on lawlessness, and is pan of the dislocated and discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move and have not his being.

By carving out a new identity for himself, an African writer is concerned, at the content level, not only with the cultural values of his society but also with the English language as he includes it as part of the thematic structure of his novel. It is also a part of the bigger project of decolonization where the language is forcefully made to hear the cultural heritage which is unique to Africa. As English is a foreign language in a foreign soil, the writer who employs it has to be sensitive to the untranslatability of his cultural components which the language has to confront.

It was in English that the history of Africa was consulted, and its pre-colonial past was effaced and denounced. English functions to generate racism as it expresses the whole negativeness of the idea of blackness in its imagery and vocabulary. Therefore the African writer posits, in English, a counter narrative and tries to rewrite the history of his past, race and injustices from the African perspective. While doing so, the writer dons the mantle of a historian who interrogates the European versions of truth and presents an alternate history of the people that comprises of legends, myths stories and songs

## **Exercises**

What is postcolonialism theory?

What does post colonial mean?

Who started postcolonial theory?

When did postcolonialism begin?

Discuss the ways and extent to which colonialism influence the political behaviour of past colonial Africa?

How does the postcolonial theory explain identity formation?

What is the difference between post-colonial and decolonial thinking?

In what ways can Dramatic Literature stimulate critical postcolonial discourses?

How is 'personal identity' discussed within the context of anti- colonial work in critical psychology?

## **Lecture Eleventh**

### **Post colonial Literature: Otherness and New Colonialism**

Undoubtedly, the image of Africa in Western literature has often constituted a wide space of debate. Thinkers working in a remarkable array of ideology, history, and politics have taken an intense interest in questions concerning this important issue. As far as literature is concerned one can notice that the great bulk of critics from both Africa and Europe have agreed that in Western literature, Africa was often portrayed as the antithesis of Europe and as a place of negation. After independence; the African intellectuals were shocked by such a racist representation of the other in the Eurocentric literature. Consequently, they tried to create a purely African literature that would criticize, debate, and even undermine the racist Western literature. The present lecture

Thoroughly discusses the contribution of Albert CAMUS and Joseph CONRAD to the emergence of post colonial literature. In fact, the primary focus of the lecture is the analysis of the two writers' representation of Africa and how the African writers responded to this representation.

#### **1-African Literature through a Euro Centric Eye**

Since the nineteenth century the European reader knew little about Africa through what he used to read in Western literary works. In fact, Western novels and tales often gave him a highly negative image of Africa simply because Africa in Western literature was always seen with a racist Eurocentric eye. Indeed, Western writers wrote huge volumes about Africa, but they often portrayed it as a jungle, a primitive continent, and a place of negation. In other words, they presented it not only as the antithesis of Europe but as the antithesis of civilization. Perhaps, this reason why it is found that the great bulk of

Western writers when writing about the African world they tend to argue that the major source of African history was Europe .

In addition , they often tried to prove that the African individual was a mindless man who had totally ignored what is meant by civilization or culture till the fortunate coming of the European colonizer. In fact, the European men of letters created a myth that would justify the European arrogance when colonizing an alien territory .It is the myth of *la mission civilatrice* which put Europe in the centre and Africa in the periphery. About the difference between the image of Africa in the Western eyes and Africa in the African eyes .In this context, Curtis KEIM, a British Professor of History and Political Science writes:

Many such images overemphasize what are considered to be African problems and are thus defined as cultureless, because they focus on cultural differences and attempt to explain those differences in terms of Africa's supposedly less-evolved cultures. By contrast, the images that have emerged in modern Afro centrism, a movement among African Americans, tend to overemphasize and romanticize the achievements of Africa's societies and their cultural contributions.( KEIM )

## **2-The Emergence of Afro Centric Literature**

There is no denying that After independence ,the African intellectuals who have been exposed to the European literature were choked by its racist representation of the other or the African and they hated its defense of imperialism and colonialism since most of the Western writers and novelist hailed colonialism and tended to launch its echoes through their literary works.

As a retaliation ,the African writers like the Nigerian Chinois ACHEBE and the Sudanese Tayeb SALIH and many others did not stand aloof from this Western literary policy; rather they started producing literary works that would

represent Africa as it is and not as the imperialist European wanted it to be the result was Anglophone and Francophone literature that aims at deconstructing and demythologizing Euro centrism and replacing it by Afro centrism at least in the African literary sphere (SMITHE , 2002:123).

From the foregoing ,it becomes important to understand that Western literature contributed in a way or another to the emergence of the African post colonial literature .As a matter of fact, one can easily notice that the discourse in modern African literature is a counter hegemonic discourse which often reacts against the hegemony of the West.

The Western novelist Joseph CONRAD ,for instance, despite the fact that he wrote against European imperialism in Africa and he even attacked colonialism in his *Heart of Darkness* through his direct indictment of the imperialist policy of Europe he could not , as a European ,shift the centre of his vision . In other words , CONRAD was bound with Europe, the centre of his upbringing and culture and this that made him consider Europe as a centre and Africa as a periphery .

In this respect, it is important to note that *Heart of Darkness* , though considered by Louis NKOSI ,the Southern African critic and writer as an indictment to colonialism and as a non racist novel because it offers a valuable and a skeptical account of European imperialism, it has been considered by most of the African writers of the sixties as a genotext which should be reacted against. (ELDRED,1996:123) ACHEBE states that "The point of my observations should be quite clear by now, namely that Joseph CONRAD was a thoroughgoing racist"(ACHEBE,1961:251) Indeed, one can confirm that *Heart of Darkness* reveals CONRAD as ,to use ACHEBE 's words , "a thorough going bloody racist"(Ibid) simply because CONRAD seems to use the Africans as a décor for his novel he did not concern himself with the natives in the Congo but he used them only to justify his political and social beliefs expressed in the

novels . This belief is strengthened by the fact that he represented Africa as a jungle whose people were jumping on the beaches like beasts:

White men view the native Africans as "savages" in their paint and armed with their strange weapons. Their language is so alien that it sounds like a "satanic litany." Which, unless it says "here's to my sweet Satan" when played backwards, sounds like a stretch to us. <sup>51</sup>

To understand how CONRAD viewed the Africans, it is important to recognize that in his novel ,he did not give the right to the voice of the African to be heard nor to his way of thinking to be known. He did not give them names and they seemed to be mere shadows making noise by drums:

[When leaving the Inner Station with Kurtz]: "In front of the first rank, along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly. When we came abreast again, they faced the river, stamped their feet, nodded their horned heads, swayed their scarlet bodies; they shook towards the fierce river-demon a bunch of black feathers, a mangy skin with a pendant tail— <sup>52</sup>

It is worth noting that the Nigerian novelist Chinoinis ACHEBE was among the African men of letters who responded to the imperialist echoes of *Heart of Darkness* through writing *Things Fall Apart* and *The Arrow of God*. In both novels, ACHEBE wanted to show that those natives who were neglected in CONRAD's novel had their own culture and their own identity. Their life was organized by customs and traditions and he tried to prove to the reader how the Africans had been living a peaceful life until disorder and disruption came with the coming of the European colonizer.

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<sup>51</sup> CONRAD, 67

<sup>52</sup> (ibid.,3.30)

In this regard ,there is a need to draw attention to the important fact that in his *The Arrow of God*, ACHEBE uses irony to put into question *la mission civilatrice* of *Heart of Darkness* Winterbettem ,the embelemic figure of the West is mocked at and is portrayed as worth not being respected . His downfall is much less dignified then that of Ezeulu the embelemic figure of e of the African culture . In fact, Winterbottom can be seen as a degraded replica of *Kurtz of Heart of Darkness* .

Interestingly , the Ghanaian writer ,Ayi Kwei ARMAH also reacted against *Heart of Darkness* through his brilliant novel *Why Are We So Blest* .In this novel ARMAH seems to use the Conradian scheme to demythologize Eurocentrism . In *Why Are We So Blest*, it is Europe that is portrayed as a place of negation and a hell .Modin and Solo are Africans who are sexually devoured by the Western civilization .In reality, *Why Are We So Blest* can be considered as the rewriting of *Heart of Darkness*. Simply put ,it is rather the Heart of Whiteness. (GILLARD,1992:4):

Place-identity, in this collage of superimposed spatial images that implode in upon us, becomes an important issue, because everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity. (HARVEY, 1987:302)

The same thing could be said about the Sudanese writer Taib SALIH<sup>53</sup>.In reality , SALIH has been described by many critics as the "genius of the modern Arabic novel." He has lived abroad for most of his life, yet his fiction is firmly rooted in the village in which he spent his early years. His most well-known work is the modern classic *Mawsim al-hijra ila'l-shamal* (1967; *Season of Migration to the North*), which received great critical attention and brought new vitality to the Arab novel .

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<sup>53</sup> Arabic: الطيب صالح

In connection with this , it is worth noting that SALIH has not been a prolific writer; his early work, including *Season of Migration to the North*, remains the best of his oeuvre. He has received critical acclaim in both the West and the East. In Sudan he is without rival, and his writings have played a considerable part in drawing attention to Sudanese literature. Arabic literature has been dominated by social criticism, social realism, and committed literature depicting the bitter realities of life; SALIH managed to break with this trend and return to the roots of his culture, capturing the mystery, magic, humor, sorrows, and celebrations of rural life and popular religion. He expressed his opinion about the West in his novel *Season of Migration to the North* in which he tended to portray the European world as the cause of the protagonist , Said 's dilemma :

I preferred not to say the rest that had come to my mind: that just like us [the Europeans] are born and die, and in the journey from the cradle to the grave they dream dreams some of which come true and some of which are frustrated; that they fear the unknown, search for love and seek contentment in wife and child; that some are strong and some are weak; that some have been given more than they deserve by life, while others have been deprived by it, but that the differences are narrowing and most of the weak are no longer weak<sup>54</sup>.

Here, SALIH intelligently reveals one of the most important messages of the novel—that despite the differences wrought by culture and centuries of imperialism, individuals in Europe and the Islamic world are more alike than they are different. Although Europeans are blamed for the damage done by their occupation of Africa, the Sudanese politicians who come to power after the British leave are just as corrupt as their predecessors

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<sup>54</sup> (SALIH, P 5)

In this regard ,it should be equally added that ,for his part, Louis NKOSI, also reacted to *Heart of Darkness*. Through his novel *Mating Birds* in which he dealt with the cruelty of the Europeans *vis a vis* the African Sibyi. He shows how the central character has been executed more for what he is than for what he has done (raping a white woman)

Undoubtedly , all those writers contributed to the creation of an African literature through which they aimed at debating what was written in CONRAD's *Heart of Darkness*, and Algerian literature of that period does not seem to be different.( PALMBERG 2001:234)

### **3-Algerian Postcolonial Literature and Afro centrism**

Interesting is the idea that Algerian literature, as part of African literature, was not aloof from the African literary policy of writing back to the Europeans .This leads us to shed light on the French writer Albert CAMUS and his provocative role in the emergence of this part of North African literature. In fact, CAMUS' views of the African world ,or in a more particular sense , the Algerian environment and community is quite obvious in his novel *L'etranger* or *the Stranger*.

Simply put, *The Stranger* traces a year in the life of a young clerk working for a shipping company in 1940s Algiers. The setting – both time and place – are important to understand one vital piece of background information about *The Stranger* .In this novel CAMUS seems to totally undermine the Algerians .He does not give them names and more than that he associates the Algerian man with violence and the Algerian woman with prostitution .

Historically speaking , the French started "colonizing" or in other words invading Algeria in 1830. By the time we get to the 1940's, Algiers, the city in which *The Stranger* takes place, is French territory. The protagonist Meursault

kills an Arab but because in Meursault's world, the French are considered superior to the Arabs here it is meant the Algerians, Killing an Arab was a minor offense, but not obeying French and Christian customs was apparently punishable by death. That's why Meursault's trial is so important – and so interesting to watch.

Consequently, it should be readily apparent that when Meursault himself says that he has been convinced of his own guilt, he was probably not talking about murder at all. In fact, this novel portrays the Arabs in general as people without culture and without identity. Undoubtedly, CAMUS tended to use them as a background or as a décor through which he wanted to express his discontent with the Vichist government. Taking the novel from this prospective, it becomes obvious that the protagonist Meursault is executed more for his nonconformist attitude towards the Vichist government than for his criminal act against the Algerian or to use CAMUS's words the Arab. It is interesting to see racism and colonialism in the background throughout the first part of *The Stranger*. Obviously, it becomes more obvious when Meursault kills the Arab, but even before that, the book is making an interesting commentary on race<sup>55</sup>.

When one looks at the image of the other in the novel, it becomes obvious that Meursault is clearly not giving race a lot of thought. Algeria seems to be pretty segregated against and there are not a lot of interactions with Arabs. The only interactions that Meursault has with Arabs are through Raymond, who does not seem to be the most scrupulous character. The Arabs are all portrayed negatively and as part of the underworld; Raymond's girlfriend cheats on him

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<sup>55</sup> GULLETTE, 1979

and the Arab men who follow Raymond and Meursault are described as indifferent.

On the other hand, the book does reveal the prejudice that Arabs in Algeria had to deal with. The police let Raymond off with a warning after he savagely beats his girlfriend. They accept Meursault's claim that she was cheating on him without question. And, at the end of part one, Meursault kills an Arab without remorse.

For her part, the critic Jacqueline ARNAUD maintains that Algerian literature with the outbreak of the Algerian war of independence in November 1954 broke away from mimeses and folklore to become a literature of denunciation<sup>56</sup>Perhaps, this is reason why CAMUS's view of the Algerians was attacked by many Algerian writers. One of them was Mouloud MAMMRI who seems to parody or to question CAMUS's *The Stranger* in his *Le sommeil de Juste* because he tended to portray the Algerian who was denied the right to speak in CAMUS's novel as one who has his own culture, identity, and origin. In MAMMRI's novel, Europe was portrayed as a hell for the Algerian who goes to study and to acquire the Western culture. Areski, the protagonist who is jailed for what he is. Perhaps, this is the reason why most Western critics and readers saw Maammri's novel as a reaction to CAMUS's *The Stranger*.

Certainly, it is through *Le Sommeil de Juste* that the reader can clearly perceive the difference between the Algerian society as it is and the one the French wanted it to be. Simply put, the hidden polemic between CAMUS's *The Stranger* and Maammri's *Le Sommeil de Juste* can easily realized by any reader. (Ibid.)

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<sup>56</sup>AOUDJIT, 2010:25)

It is certain that when one looks at all that was said by the critics about CONRAD and CAMUS, it becomes obvious that both adopted an escapist attitude. Simply put, one can easily observe that both preferred to escape from their historical context to a metaphysical, philosophical one. Undoubtedly, their philosophy depended more on neglecting the other. Additionally, both were existentialist concerned more with their own beliefs than with the others' beliefs. In other words, CONRAD wrote to criticize imperialism while CAMUS wrote to attack the Vichist government. Both criticized what goes against their existentialist philosophy.

As it has been pointed out earlier, the two writers tended to put the African, or the other in general, in the periphery while the European is always put in the centre, and this what led the African writers to try to answer back to all the European prejudices against all what is African. To use NGUGI's words "...culture is the result of history but it also reflects it because it offers a set of values through which people know their place in the world (Ashcroft, 2006: 23). It seems that both CAMUS and CONRAD have neglected this fact while the African writers among them the Algerian writers of the post colonial era who being aware of this fact created postcolonial literature through which they wanted to move the center from Europe to Africa by emphasizing their own culture and putting it in a historical context.

After thoroughly analyzing the image of Africa in Western literature and the African literary response to it, one can finally establish the important fact that Western writers such as CONRAD and CAMUS were catalysts to some extent of the emergence of post colonial literature in Africa. When one examines Algerian post colonial literature, it becomes clear that, like the major part of post colonial African literature, it can be considered to a great extent as a reaction to the Eurocentric French literature that tended to portray Algeria and the Algerians in a very negative way. It should be clear from the foregoing

analysis that the Western readers and critics who have long been the victims of euro centrism could easily perceive the dialogue between Western literature and the African postcolonial literature and then take a final critical judgment and even perceive Africa and the Africans as they are and not as the European men of letters wanted them to be.

## Postcolonial Criticism

The Central ideas in Postcolonial literature Postcolonial has many common motifs and themes like ‘cultural dominance’ and Racism’, ‘quest for identity’, ‘racial discrimination’, ‘inequality’, ‘hybridity’ along with some peculiar presentation styles. Most of the postcolonial writers reflected and demonstrated many thematic concepts which are quite connected with both ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’. White Europeans continually accentuated on racial discrimination for their superiority over colonized. It was most evident in South Africa that the apartheid was incorporated in national laws. Among the most notable acts of this kind were ‘The Groups Areas Act’, ‘Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act’, ‘Immorality Act’, ‘The Population Registration Act’, ‘Bantu Authorities Act’, and ‘The Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act. Each of these acts were limiting, restricting and discriminating colonized from the ruling White.

Both the writers Nadine Gordimer and Coetzee in their fiction showed how apartheid destroyed South Africa in many ways as emotionally, morally and economically. In postcolonial context, language played crucial role in control and subjugation of colonized people. Colonizers often imposed their language upon their subjects in order to control them. So most postcolonial writers address the issues in many ways by mixing the local language with imposed language, the result is a hybrid one that underscores the broken nature of the colonized mind

The term ‘Postcolonialism’ is widely refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era, mostly after many colonised countries got their independence. It is connected with imperialism from the moment of colonization until 21st century; “The word imperialism derives from the Latin imperium, which has numerous meanings including power, authority, command, dominion, realm, and empire” (Habib 737). It

describes many interactions between ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised.’ Majority of the world was under the control of European countries. Especially the British Empire consisted of “more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the earth: one in four people was a subject of Queen Victoria.”

It is the literature and the art produced in the countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Senegal and Australia after their independence, called as Postcolonial literature. Edward Said’s prominent book *Orientalism* is an assessment of Western representation of the Eastern culture under the label ‘Postcolonial Studies’. Canada and Australia are often treated as ‘settler’ countries as they are part of British Commonwealth of Nations. Most famous postcolonial writers like Rushdie, Achebe, Ondaatje, Fanon, Derek Walcott, J. M. Coetzee, Jamaica Kincaid, Isabelle Illende, and Eavan Boland etc. Most of their literary works were representing interrelations between the coloniser and the colonised, such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *Midnight Children* (1981), *The Waiting for the Barbarians* (1990), *Disgrace* (1990) and *English Patient* (1992) etc. Spread of Postcolonialism There is a single largest defining factor in outlining world politics in the second half of 20th century i.e. Britain’s loss of empire at the outset of World War II.

Edward Said, in full Edward Wadie Said, sometimes Edward William Said, (born November 1, 1935, Palestine—died September 25, 2003, New York, New York, U.S.), Palestinian American academic, political activist, and literary critic who examined literature in light of social and cultural politics and was an outspoken proponent of the political rights of the Palestinian people and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. was born in Pelestine but grew up with his family in Cairo and at various schools in the United States.

Said was already an influential literature critic when he published *Orientalism* in 1978. Throughout his life, Said was active both as a cultural critic and a political activist combining his work as professor of

comparative literature at Columbia University with a (often) tense political engagement in the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The two strands of his engagement as both a political activist and an academic provoked claims from the academic conservatives that he was unjustly politicizing in his writings on Orientalism.

In 1969, Said was promoted to full professor, received his first of several endowed chairs in 1977, and in 1978 published his iconic book entitled *Orientalism*, his best-known work and one of the most influential scholarly books of the 20th century. In it Said examined Western scholarship of the “Orient,” specifically of the Arab Islamic world (though he was an Arab Christian), and argued that early scholarship by Westerners in that region was biased and projected a false and stereotyped vision of “otherness” on the Islamic world that facilitated and supported Western colonial policy. 1978 published *Orientalism*, his best-known work and one of the most influential scholarly books of the 20th century. In it Said examined Western scholarship of the “Orient,” specifically of the Arab Islamic world (though he was an Arab Christian), and argued that early scholarship by Westerners

In clarifying the context in which he started conceiving Orientalism ,Said says :

My interest in Orientalism began for two reasons, one it was an immediate thing, that is to say, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which had been preceded by a lot of images and discussions in the media in the popular press about how the Arabs are cowardly and they don't know how to fight and they are always going to be beaten because they are not modern. And then everybody was very surprised when the Egyptian army crossed the canal in early October of 1973 and demonstrated that like anybody else they could fight. That was one immediate impulse. .”(Said1995)

However, Said himself maintained that it was rather his moral and political obligations to the Palestinian cause that led him to pursue a deeper and broader understanding of Western culture and its colonial context, for example, in the novels of Joseph Conrad and Jane Austen.

## **Orientalism in the Eyes of Edward Said**

Generally speaking, Orientalism is a way of seeing that imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates and distorts differences of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the U.S. It often involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous. Edward W. Said, in his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism*, defined it as the acceptance in the West of “the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny and so on.”Said explicates:

If somebody, in the nineteenth century in Paris or London, wished to talk about or read about India or Egypt or Syria, there would be very little chance for that person to simply address the subject, as we like to think in a kind of free and creative way. A great deal of writing had gone before and this writing was an organized form of writing, like an organized science. What I've called Orientalism. And it seemed to me that there was a kind of repertory of images that kept coming up: The sensual woman who is there to be sort of used by the man, the East as a kind of mysterious place full of secrets and monsters, you know, “the marvels of the East,” was a phrase that was used( Ibid.)

In reality, this meaning of the concept of Orientalism has been coined by the Palestinian-American intellectual and cultural critic Edward Said Rooted in a post-structuralist approach partly inspired by the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–84), Said coined the notion of Orientalism as a term comprising the whole of European (and later US) ideas, thoughts, cultural

depictions, military reports, and claims to superiority over the Middle East, in particular the Arab/Muslim countries of Northern Africa and the Mediterranean.

In newsreels or news-photos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world. (Said1995)

In the lecture, the concept of the Orient refers to the construction of people and places in the Middle East and North Africa; however, in a broader general parlance as well as within the concept of 'Oriental Studies', Central, South, and East Asia are also included. Later work by both Said as well as several authors engaged in geography, literature, cultural studies, anthropology, development studies, social science, and so on have sought to broaden the concept, applying it to a variety of other historical-geographical contexts and phenomena.

Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization. Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being. . (Said1995)

In fact ,one can draw attention to the important fact that Orientalism has three distinct meanings. First, it refers to a specific esthetic movement, especially in painting and also more generally within the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artwork, which after the French conquest of Egypt sought inspiration in ‘Oriental’ motives and themes, often using them in highly eclectic and idiosyncratic ways .

Second, it refers more broadly to the study of countries and regions in ‘the Orient’. During the period of colonial conquest, several European states set up institutions for dealing specifically with the Orient in trade and scientific study and by the nineteenth century ‘Oriental Studies’ was a well-established discipline.

And the more I looked the more I saw that this was really quite consistent with itself. It have very little to do with people who had actually been there. And even if they had been there, there wasn't much modification. In other words you didn't get what you could call realistic representations of the Orient, either in literature or in painting or in music or any of the art

Third, Orientalism refers to a particular discourse of knowledge about the Orient produced by the colonial powers of Europe (and North America) from the nineteenth century onward; a discourse still prevalent in popular understandings of ‘oriental culture’, foreign policy strategies, and interventions directed toward Muslim countries in the Middle East, and, more generally, cultural encounters with people and cultures originating from these countries.

From the historical point of view, and according to Said, the idea of Orientalism dates from the period of European Enlightenment and colonization of the Arab World. Orientalism provided a rationalization for European colonialism based on a self-serving history in which “the West” constructed “the East” as extremely different and inferior, and therefore in need of Western intervention or “rescue”. Examples of early Orientalism can be seen in European

paintings and photographs and also in images from the World's Fair in the U.S. in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The paintings, created by European artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, depict the Arab World as an exotic and mysterious place of sand, harems and belly dancers, reflecting a long history of Orientalist fantasies which have continued to permeate our contemporary popular culture.

France colonized Algeria from 1830 to 1962. From roughly 1900 to 1930, French entrepreneurs produced postcards of Algerian women that were circulated in France. While Algerian women are portrayed in these photographs as if the camera is capturing a real moment in their everyday lives, the women are actually set up in the photographer's studio. As demonstrated in Malek Alloula's book, *The Colonial Harem*, these photographs were circulated as evidence of the exotic, backwards and strange customs of Algerians, when, in fact, they reveal more about the French colonial perspective than about Algerian life in the early 1900s.

This is an example of how Arab women have been exoticized and eroticized for the pleasure of the European male voyeur, as these photographs make visible French colonial fantasies of penetrating the harem and gaining access to Arab women's private spaces. .( Bhambra, 2014)

*The World's Fairs in Chicago* (1893) and *St. Louis* (1904) helped to reinforce Orientalist imagery in the United States. The crossover from European to U.S. Interesting is the idea that Orientalism can be seen in the images from James Buel's photographic book that catalogued the 1893 *World's Fair* in Chicago. This publication includes photographs of recreated Arab streets, accompanied by captions that capture the Orientalist thinking of the time. For example, the caption that accompanies the image "Egyptian Girl in Street of Cairo" refers to the "peculiar manners of the Egyptians," and her "unsightly

disguise.” In addition to being written about as an object on display, her characteristics are described as belonging to a backwards culture. Said maintains:

Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the “Oriental” world. It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts

One needs to emphasize the very fact that Edward Said’s prominent book *Orientalism* is an assessment of Western representation of the Eastern culture under the label ‘Postcolonial Studies’. In this context, it is worth noting that Said’s *Orientalism* critiques Western representation of the East as irrational, antiwestern, primitive and dishonest. According to Said, Orientalism is an ideology born of the colonizers’ desire to know their subjects to control them in a better manner. Said argues, “To write about the Arab Oriental world...is to write with the authority of a nation...with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force.” Said notes:

The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist’s work.” . (Said 1995)

Important is the idea that Edward Said's deployment of the Italian philosopher and thinker Antonio Gramsci's thought in works such as *Orientalism*, helped making this book to become one of the founding texts of contemporary postcolonial studies. Said indicated early in this work his debt to

Gramsci, when he said that it was particularly cultural hegemony that gave Orientalism durability and strength. As Said developed this argument, his point was that the cultural dimensions of European colonizing ventures in the Near East, exemplified by the scholarly projects constituting the field of Orientalism, were a crucial dimension of imperialism, functioning in conjunction with – and even enabling – the deployment of military and economic forces.( Bhabra, 2014) In this context, in his book, *Orientalism*, Said maintains :

It is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of “interests” which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment( Said1995)

Moreover, one can easily observe that Said's project directly invoked a Gramscian strategy for analyzing this hegemony when he noted that in the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci called on critical intellectuals to understand themselves as products of historical processes, which have “deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.” It was imperative at the outset, then, to compile such an inventory. The special significance of this passage for Said, as he pointed out, related to his own experiences as a Palestinian growing up in the British colonies of Palestine and Egypt, which inspired him to understand Orientalism as part of understanding his own life.

One can also notice that the passage also pointed toward Said's approach to the interpretation of Orientalism, which focused on compiling an inventory of the traces left in the perceptions of Westerners by the products of Orientalist discourse – specifically, the major literary texts about the Orient which comprise the centerpiece of Said's analysis. Said notes that

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest *mission civilizatrice*. (Said 1995)

It is obvious that according to Said, Orientalism was created by Western archaeologists, artists, and writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it became part of the discourse of domination of the East by the West. The Middle East constituted the principal region for Said's examination and critique of the West's Orient, although India and other Asian 'Oriental' cultures are included as well. His concentration on culture and power influenced contemporary human geography by creating a greater focus on race, power, and representation, including imperial landscapes. This legacy also has had a major impact in furthering the colonial discourse and contributing to the development of postcolonial theory – even if much of that theory has been to counter and object to Said's Orientalism arguments. .( Bhambra, 2014)

It is worth stressing that Edward Said also had another, but related, passion. As a Palestinian his writings and energies were also directed toward the plight of the Palestinian Arabs, focusing on the injustices that have been inflicted on these people throughout the twentieth century and continuing today. He linked his critique of Orientalism with how the Palestinians were represented

in the West. The Palestinian Arabs, as one of the uncivilized and degenerate 'Orientals', were seen as backward, while the Zionists were depicted as capable and civilized, besides the acceptance in the West of the prophesied claims to the biblical 'promised land'.

According to Said, it was on purpose that Palestinians were associated with terrorism, ignorance, and despotism, while the Zionists were associated with democracy and liberal ideas. Hence, related to his Orientalism discourse, Said emphasized how the nature of power and representation meant that the Palestinians were being represented by others – and as the Other. His works, such as *The Question of Palestine* in 1980, in fact not only brought worldwide attention to the plight of the Palestinians but also provided a framework for countering identicide, the concerted attempt to erase historical Palestine and the Palestinian cultural identity – and, hence, giving the Palestinians a voice to the international community.

After that Britain lost most of its formal colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, South-East Asia and the far East including Persian Gulf etc., In the 17th century, Britain had gained control over many parts of North America, Canada and Caribbean Islands along with slaves from Africa and market development in India. Nevertheless, Britain viewed its imperialistic expansion as a moral responsibility and exerting greater control over the countries like India, Africa and China. A famous British writer Kipling referred this responsibility, 'the white man's burden' of civilizing the people who were obviously incapable of self-governing.

Many colonized countries such as India, Pakistan, Ireland, Kenya, Nigeria and so on started writing a type of literature reflecting and representing their own experiences while and after colonization. Frantz Fanon laid essential theoretical foundation for the future colonial theories in his famous book *The*

Wretched of the Earth (1962). He argues that a new world can come into being only with a violent revolution by African farmers. In another instant, he used his personal experiences in his book *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952) to show relationship between colonized and colonizer in terms of psychology in observing emotional damage to both colonized and colonizer.

His work anticipated Said's *Orientalism*. Said's *Orientalism* critiques Western representation of the East as irrational, antiwestern, primitive and dishonest. According to Said, *Orientalism* is an ideology born of the colonizers' desire to know their subjects to control them in a better manner. Said argues, "To write about the Arab Oriental world...is to write with the authority of a nation...with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force." Another postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak whose writings focused on the intersections of gender, ethnicity of postcolonial subjects viewed her job as a postcolonial critic. Bhabha illustrates his "conception of 'cultural difference' in terms of what he describes as 'the language metaphor', which represents cultures in semiotic terms as functioning and assigning value in the same way that systems of language provide meaning" (Gilbert, 124).

Homi Bhabha's theory and criticism investigates ideas of 'Hybridity' and 'Ambivalence' to construct national and cultural identities. "Hybridity, perhaps the key concept throughout Bhabha's career in this respect, obviously depends upon a presumption of the existence of its opposite for its force" (Gilbert, 128). In his famous books *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994) used psychoanalysis and semiotics to explore the 'spaces' created by dominant social formations in the works of Morrison, Gordimer etc.

**Postcolonial Authors** Some of the most prominent authors of Postcolonial literatures are Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Franz Fanon, Michael Ondaatje,

Salman Rushdie, Li-Young Li, Derek Walcott and Jamaica Kincaid,, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak etc. “The four names appear again and again as thinkers who have shaped postcolonial theory: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak” (Innes, 5). Though all these writers had different lands, nationalities and social backgrounds, they could all create their own distinction in producing wonderful works of literature of which many would certainly come under the label ‘Postcolonial literature. Chinua Achebe of Nigeria with his first novel, *The Things Fall Apart* (1958) writes about the tensions between the people and the values of the native Igbo community and the Christian colonizers.

He worked in many universities in Nigeria and America for more than three decades. In addition to his fictional writings, he wrote some non-fiction collection of essays *Home and Exile* (2000). Achebe got the Man Booker International Prize in 2007 for his literary merit so as J. M. Coetzee who was apartheid writer. J. M. Coetzee developed vigorous anti-imperialist attitudes as a white writer living in South Africa for the apartheid. In most of his novels, he represented his own alienation from his fellow Africans. *The Life and Times of Michael K* is an award winning novel set in Cape Town with a protagonist Michael K who is a gardener. His novels *Research Journal of English Language and Literature* are allegorical and accentuating the everlasting nature of human vindictiveness. Coetzee received his second Booker Prize for his *Disgrace* (1999).

Though he got numerous awards, the highest one is Nobel Prize in literature in 2003. Another notable writer in Postcolonial literature, Frantz Fanon who was interested in the emotional effects of colonization and racism on blacks, his most known work *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961 and become a leading critic of colonial power and influenced aggressive revolution. Moreover he had significant influence on many thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, Jean Paul

Sartre, and Edward Said. Edward “ Said is concerned with the ways in which knowledge is governed and owned by Europeans to reinforce power, and to exclude or dismiss the knowledge which natives might claim to have” (Innes, 9). Michael Ondaatje is a novelist, critic, poet born in Sri Lanka and moved to London with his mother.

He is best known for his Booker Prize winning novel the English Patient which features the interactions of characters of various nationalities during the last days of WWII. Salman Rushdie is an Indian postcolonial writer who wanted to become a writer from his childhood. His most successful and Booker Prize winning novel is *Midnight's Children* which got him international reputation. By sketching Indian history from 1910 to 1976 he weaved personal experiences with history. His *The Satanic Verses* got banned and caused a Muslims protest throughout the world termed the book blasphemous. He had to face troubles in the name of ‘fatwa’ for the novel *The Satanic Verses*. In most of his writings, Rushdie explores the intersections of history, religion, culture and identity. On par with male writers in postcolonial literature, there are notable female writers such as Jamaica Kincaid, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have contributed in a greater extent. Kincaid’s novel *A Small Place* describes about Antigua.

Mostly she wrote about women’s experiences with other women in addition to the effects of patriarchy and colonialism women’s own image. Another female writer and one of the prominent theorists of postcolonial literary theory is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who translated Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* in to English along with its preface. She gave numerous interviews on her critical opinions about postcolonial literature. Postcolonialism literature in English One of the most influential novels of Postcolonialism is *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, explores the interaction between traditional African society and British colonizers. In this novel the character Okonkwo struggles to understand and cope up with the changes got from

Christianity and British control. His novel examines various situations occurred after the postindependence fictional West African village. Achebe conveyed through his novels how the British legacies continue to weaken possibility of uniting the country.

South African novelist and Booker Prize winner J. M. Coetzee explores the themes of crime, revenge, land rights and racial justice post-apartheid South Africa. The plot of the novel strongly connected with the character David Lurie was expelled from for sexual harassment. Salman Rushdie's most popular novel *Midnight's Children* intertwines personal events into the history of India. The narrator in the novel is Saleem Sinai. Author used many devices like Magic Realism, Hindu story telling etc. In addition Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* surveys lots of postcolonial themes such as intersections between national and individual identity which caused in consciousness.

It is set in a country house in Florence and describes the lives of a young woman and three men from various countries including a badly burnt English patient dying in a room. Some significant writers in postcolonial literature are like Ngugu wa Thiongo, Edwidge Danticat Leslie Marmon Silko, Jamaica Kincaid including Li-Young Lee contributed considerably. Ngugi's *Decolonizing the Mind* is a kind of multiple type genre and it describes various traditions of his people. It also presents how British education system tried to destroy the local culture and its language Gikuyu. Silko in his novel *Ceremony* celebrates various traditions and myths of the Laguna Pueblo and influence of white relation on local culture. It also shows how Native Americans hold a special position in postcolonial discourse.

In addition to many male postcolonial writers whose works have been examined just *Research Journal of English Language and Literature* before, there are some renowned female novelists also contributed, especially Jamaica Kincaid with her famous novel *Small Place* is one of the postcolonial discourse

with which she draws on her personal experience of living in British colony of Antigua. Kincaid expresses her contempt for the British ways for colonized. In this novel she focuses on the English Educational system which attempted to turn natives into English. Further she points out that the native people like to adopt the worst of foreign culture and pay no attention to the best.<sup>57</sup>

Another novelist Edwidge Danticat from Haiti is the writer of the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Her novel presents many themes like migration, sexuality, gender and history as they are the most common postcolonial themes. In this novel the protagonist Sophie struggles to get an identity out of desperate cultures and languages such as French, English to adapt to American ways after she reaches Brooklyn, New York. Danticat become a leading female voice of postcolonial literature. The Central ideas in Postcolonial literature Postcolonial has many common motifs and themes like ‘cultural dominance’ and ‘Racism’, ‘quest for identity’, ‘racial discrimination’, ‘inequality’, ‘hybridity’ along with some peculiar presentation styles. Most of the postcolonial writers reflected and demonstrated many thematic concepts which are quite connected with both ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’.

White Europeans continually accentuated on racial discrimination for their superiority over colonized. It was most evident in South Africa that the apartheid was incorporated in national laws. Among the most notable acts of this kind were ‘The Groups Areas Act’, ‘Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act’, ‘Immorality Act’, ‘The Population Registration Act’, ‘Bantu Authorities Act’, and ‘The Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act. Each of these acts were limiting, restricting and discriminating colonized from the ruling White. Both the writers Nadine Gordimer and Coetzee in their fiction showed

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<sup>57</sup> (RJELAL) A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Journal <http://www.rjelal.com>

how apartheid destroyed South Africa in many ways as emotionally, morally and economically.

In postcolonial context, language played crucial role in control and subjugation of colonized people. Colonizers often imposed their language upon their subjects in order to control them. So most postcolonial writers address the issues in many ways by mixing the local language with imposed language, the result is a hybrid one that underscores the broken nature of the colonized mind.

It sometimes referred to as “Minority Studies,” has an obvious historical relationship with “Postcolonial Criticism” in that Euro-American imperialism and colonization in the last four centuries, whether external (empire) or internal (slavery) has been directed at recognizable ethnic groups: African and African-American, Chinese, the subaltern peoples of India, Irish, Latino, Native American, and Philipino, among others. “Ethnic Studies” concerns itself generally with art and literature produced by identifiable ethnic groups either marginalized or in a subordinate position to a dominant culture. “Postcolonial Criticism” investigates the relationships between colonizers and colonized in the period postcolonization.

Though the two fields are increasingly finding points of intersection—the work of bell hooks, for example—and are both activist intellectual enterprises, “Ethnic Studies and “Postcolonial Criticism” have significant differences in their history and ideas. “Ethnic Studies” has had a considerable impact on literary studies in the United States and Britain. In W.E.B. Dubois, we find an early attempt to theorize the position of African Americans within dominant white culture through his concept of “double consciousness,” a dual identity including both “American” and “Negro.”

Dubois and theorists after him seek an understanding of how that double experience both creates identity and reveals itself in culture. Afro-Caribbean and African writers—Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe—have made significant early contributions to the theory and practice of ethnic criticism that explores the traditions, sometimes suppressed or underground, of ethnic literary activity while providing a critique of representations of ethnic identity as found within the majority culture.

Ethnic and minority literary theory emphasizes the relationship of cultural identity to individual identity in historical circumstances of overt racial oppression. More recently, scholars and writers such as Henry Louis Gates, Toni Morrison, and Kwame Anthony Appiah have brought attention to the problems inherent in applying theoretical models derived from Euro-centric paradigms (that is, structures of thought) to minority works of literature while at the same time exploring new interpretive strategies for understanding the vernacular (common speech) traditions of racial groups that have been historically marginalized by dominant cultures.

Though not the first writer to explore the historical condition of postcolonialism, the Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said's book *Orientalism* is generally regarded as having inaugurated the field of explicitly "Postcolonial Criticism" in the West. Said argues that the concept of "the Orient" was produced by the "imaginative geography" of Western scholarship and has been instrumental in the colonization and domination of non-Western societies. "Postcolonial" theory reverses the historical center/margin direction of cultural inquiry: critiques of the metropolis and capital now emanate from the former colonies.

Moreover, theorists like Homi K. Bhabha have questioned the binary thought that produces the dichotomies—center/margin, white/black, and colonizer/colonized—by which colonial practices are justified. The work of Gayatri C. Spivak has focused attention on the question of who speaks for the colonial “Other” and the relation of the ownership of discourse and representation to the development of the postcolonial subjectivity.

Like feminist and ethnic theory, “Postcolonial Criticism” pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourse. “Postcolonial Criticism” offers a fundamental critique of the ideology of colonial domination and at the same time seeks to undo the “imaginative geography” of Orientalist thought that produced conceptual as well as economic divides between West and East, civilized and uncivilized, First and Third Worlds. In this respect, “Postcolonial Criticism” is activist and adversarial in its basic aims. Postcolonial theory has brought fresh perspectives to the role of colonial peoples—their wealth, labor, and culture—in the development of modern European nation states. While “Postcolonial Criticism” emerged in the historical moment following the collapse of the modern colonial empires, the increasing globalization of culture, including the neocolonialism of multinational capitalism, suggests a continued relevance for this field of inquiry.

Every Literary text is constructed with language. Therefore, it is imperative to determine how a particular writer has utilized the potentials of language to negotiate meaning(s) for his text This thesis is anchored on the premise that, as Brumfit and Carter (1986) put it, we need to show "how what is said is said and how meanings are made" within the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic ambience of the text.

As a bilingual and bicultural text, the structure of language use in Okara's *The Voice* "calls attention to itself" (Murakarovsky, 1964:58), in the sense that the author manipulates and adapts the rhythm, register, syntax and semantics of the English Language to the linguistic and cultural nuances of his native ijaw Language. Specifically, the peculiarity of Okara's linguistic style in the text under study is a product of, or direct response to, the lingering problem of language in African literature.

This problem borders on whether or not the colonial linguistic media (i.e. Portuguese, English, French etc), would be able to adequately and authentically express the socio-cultural and linguistic realities of the African continent. Scott (1990) refers to it as: ....the long-standing debate among critics of African literature over the relation between African authors and the colonial linguistic legacy. This debate which has dominated Africa literature in the past fifty years (Osundare, 2004), stems from the recognition among African scholars/writers of the centrality of language to literature, and the close connection between political independence and cultural emancipation. As literary works are cultural artifacts, the basic thinking is that, the use of colonial languages in African literature is a willing perpetuation of imperialism. Significantly, there has been a sustained polarity of opinion about the appropriate attitude the African writer should adopt to this phenomenon.

These range from the fervidly nationalist to the stridently compromising. Osundare (2004) identifies three "attitudes" viz: (i) accomodationist, (ii) gradualist, and (iii) radicalist. According to this scholar, the first group (i.e. accommodationist), which has as its chief promoter, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, favours an outright use of imperialist languages; while the "gradualists" are "the dwellers of the middle of the road", prominent among whom is Ali Mazrui who advocates a de-Anglicization and reAfricanization of the English language, to authentically convey Africa's literary sensibilities. The third group,

on the other hand, is the “radicalist” composed of writers who call for an immediate adoption of indigenous African languages as the media of literary expression.

Obi Wali and Ngugi Wa Thiongo are proponents and exponents of this attitude. Instructively, majority of African writers belong to the "gradualist" group identified above (i.e. indigenizing the colonial language). The Special Issue on Social Science Research © Centre for Promoting Ideas, USA www.ijhssnet.com 203 Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Elechi Amadi, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, Kofi Awoonor, etc. all fall into this category. In the main, this linguistic constraint would have informed the device of "transliteration" adopted in Okara's *The Voice*.

On his part, Ushie (2001), summarizes some of the major positions canvassed by scholars on the problem of language in African literature as follows: a) Those who, following Obi Wali, have continued to advocate the use of African indigenous languages, e.g. Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Immeh Ikiddeh. b) Those who have followed the sophisticated formal English expression e.g. Okigbo, Soyinka, Dennis Brutus, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, e.t.c. c) Those who, following Janheiz Jahn, have suggested that European languages, for instance, English, be used in such a way that languages bear the African cultural experience while remaining intelligible internationally.

Chinua Achebe's novels, especially *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, and the poetry of Okot P „Bitek and Kofi Awoonor illustrate this category. d) Those who advocate transliteration as a way of keeping intact African cultural heritage while using foreign words, e.g. Gabriel Okara, AS illustrated in his novel, *The Voice* e) Those who may be described as following a plural code e.g. Ken Saro Wiwa (whose literary oeuvre is a pot-pourri of linguistic codes with which he has experimented in his work.

His novel, *Sozaboy*, for instance, comes in Nigerian pidgin English; his poetry collection *Songs in a Time of war*, is in both Nigerian “Standard” English and in Nigerian pidgin English; while several of his biographical works are in sophisticated Nigerian English, just as his posthumously published novel. Generally, it is germane to note that African scholars who advocate the use of indigenous languages are goaded on by nationalist sentiments, while their counterparts who favour colonial languages place a high premium on the global intelligibility and outreach of a work of art. Bilingualism and African Literature We have established Gabriel Okara's text as a bilingual text.

It is, therefore, pertinent to shed some light on the term “bilingualism”, in relation to African literature. Bloomfield (1933) defines the term as “the native-like control of two languages”. Lambert (1977) sees it as “the existence of two languages in the repertoire of an individual or a speech community”. The significant thread that runs through both definitions is that the term reflects a situation where two languages are used side by side, whether by an individual or a given society. Bilingualism is a product of language contact. <sup>58</sup>Appel and Muystan (1987:1) confirm inter alia: “Language contact inevitably leads to bilingualism.” The inference of this is that, at least, two different languages with distinctive features (i.e. lexical, semantic, phonological and syntactic) must come into contact for bilingualism to occur or manifest. Akindele and Adegbite (1992)<sup>59</sup> identify factors such as colonialism, commerce, conquest, annexation and war, etc, as having the potentials to precipitate such language contacts.

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