

NEHA  
JAIN

# AN INTRODUCTION TO POSTMODERN LITERARY THEORIES



A PRESENTATION  
BY

NEHA  
JAIN

**NEHA JAIN**

**ENGLISH NET/SET  
CONSULTANT**

**DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092**

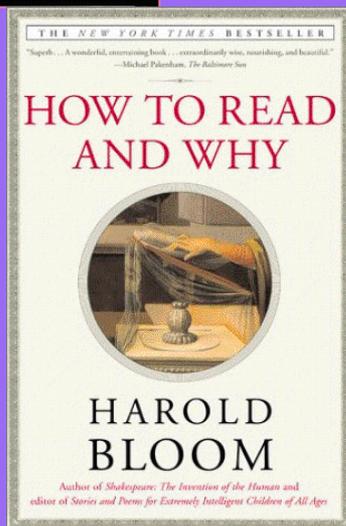
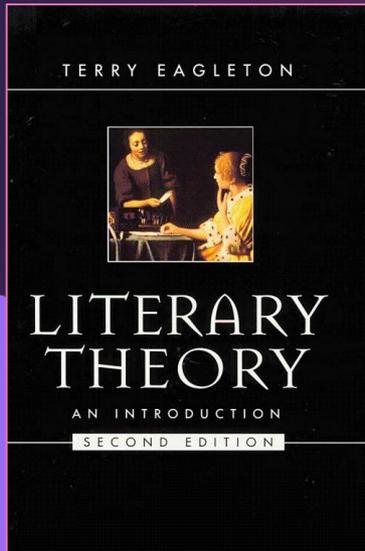
**Mobile : +1 9599460562**

**[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)**



# TOPICS

NEHA  
JAIN



- New Criticism
- Archetypal / Myth Criticism
- Phenomenology & Reader-reception theory
- Marxist / Ideology
- Psychoanalytical
- Structuralism & Semiotics
- Poststructuralism
  - New Historicism
  - Deconstruction theory
  - Cultural materialism
  - Feminism
  - Queer theory
  - Postcolonialism

# WHY TO STUDY LITERARY THEORIES?

NEHA  
JAIN

- ❑ It's about more than finding meaning in a text
- ❑ Current theories of language, knowledge and the self
- ❑ Reflects a recent revolution in the humanities
- ❑ A complete overhauling of long-accepted *Western* assumptions and biases
- ❑ Literature is power
- ❑ To help you become citizens of the postmodern world

# Language & Truth

## THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

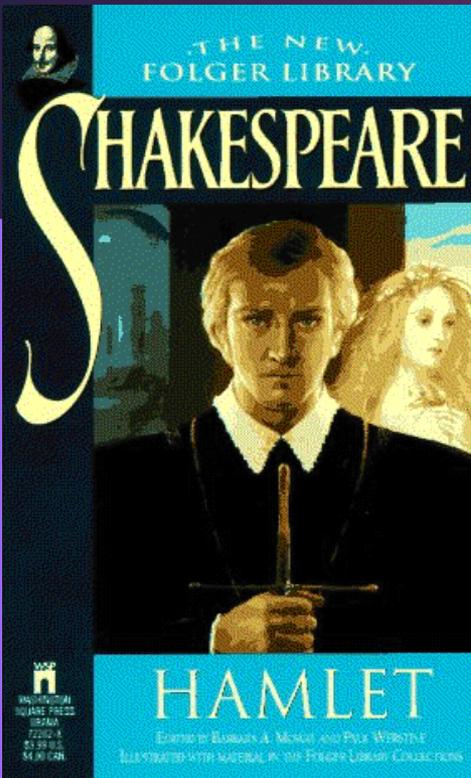
DAVID CRYSTAL



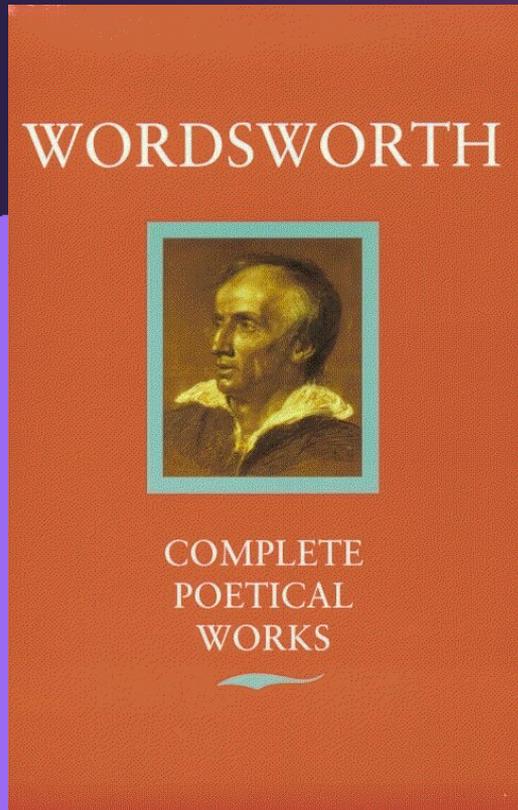
- ❑ People are the same everywhere
- ❑ There are universal laws and truths
- ❑ Knowledge is objective, independent of culture, gender, etc.
- ❑ Language is a man-made tool that refers to real things / truths
- ❑ I, the subject, speak language
- ❑ I have a discernible self
- ❑ The self is the center of existence

# Liberal Humanism: View of Literature

- Good literature is of timeless significance.
- The literary text contains its own meaning within itself.
- The best way to study the text is to study the words on the page, without any predefined agenda for what one wants to find there.
- The text will reveal constants, universal truths, about human nature, because human nature itself is constant and unchanging.

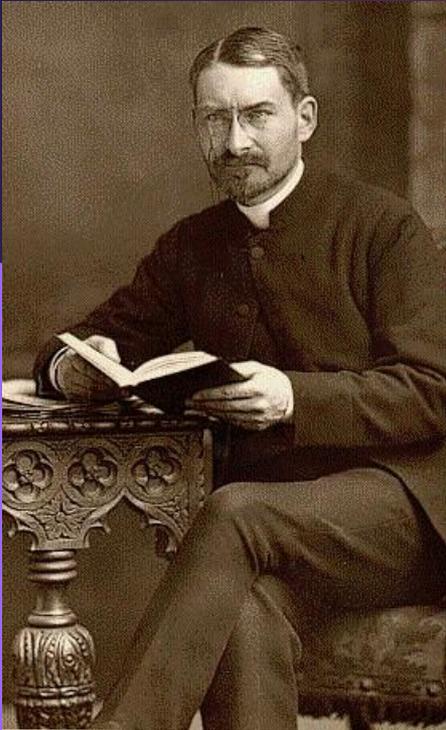


# Liberal Humanism: View of Literature



- A literary work is "sincere," meaning it is honest, true to experience and human nature, and thus can speak the truth about the human condition.
- What is valuable in literature is that it shows us our true nature, and the true nature of society, without preaching
- What critics do is interpret the ~~text~~ (based largely on the words on the page) so that the reader can get more out of reading the text.

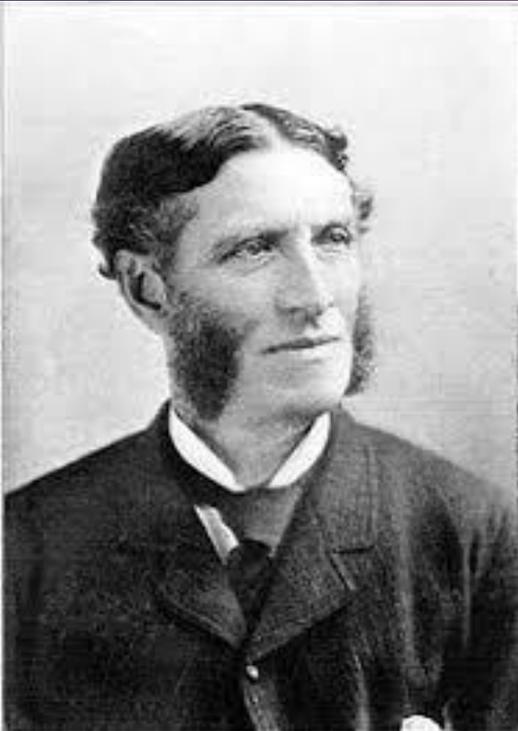
## Beginning...



- 18th C England—standards of polite letters
- Industrial revolution created oppressed workingclass
- Role of literature was to uplift society
- Victorian period: scientific discovery & social change
- Dominance of religion began to erode (*powerful ideological control of image, symbol, habit, ritual*)
- The view was “England is sick and English literature must save it...to delight and instruct us, to save our souls and heal thestate.”

## Beginning...

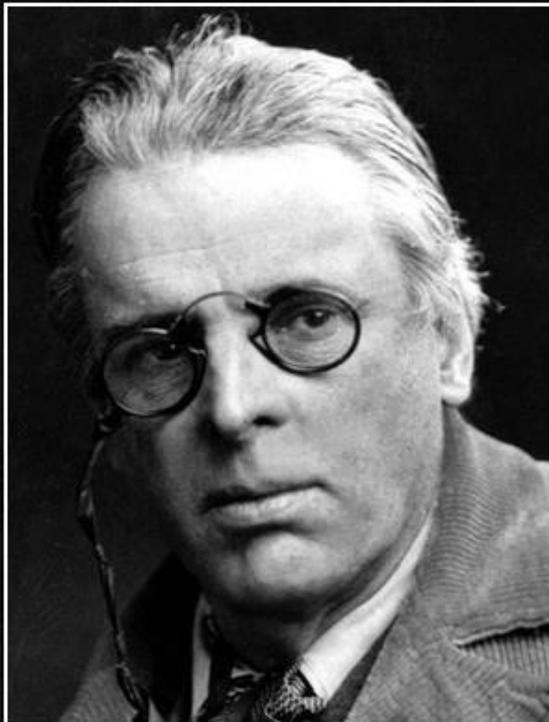
- **Mathew Arnold**—saw need to cultivate the middle class
- Not in universities, but in working men's schools
- English was the poor man's "classics"
- Goal—transmission and reinforcement of moral & social values
- Ideological control
- Royal Commission—"English is a suitable subject for women and second and third-rate men who became schoolmasters."



# MODERN LITERATURE AND MODERN CRITICISM GOES WITH HAND IN HAND



# Modernist Literature

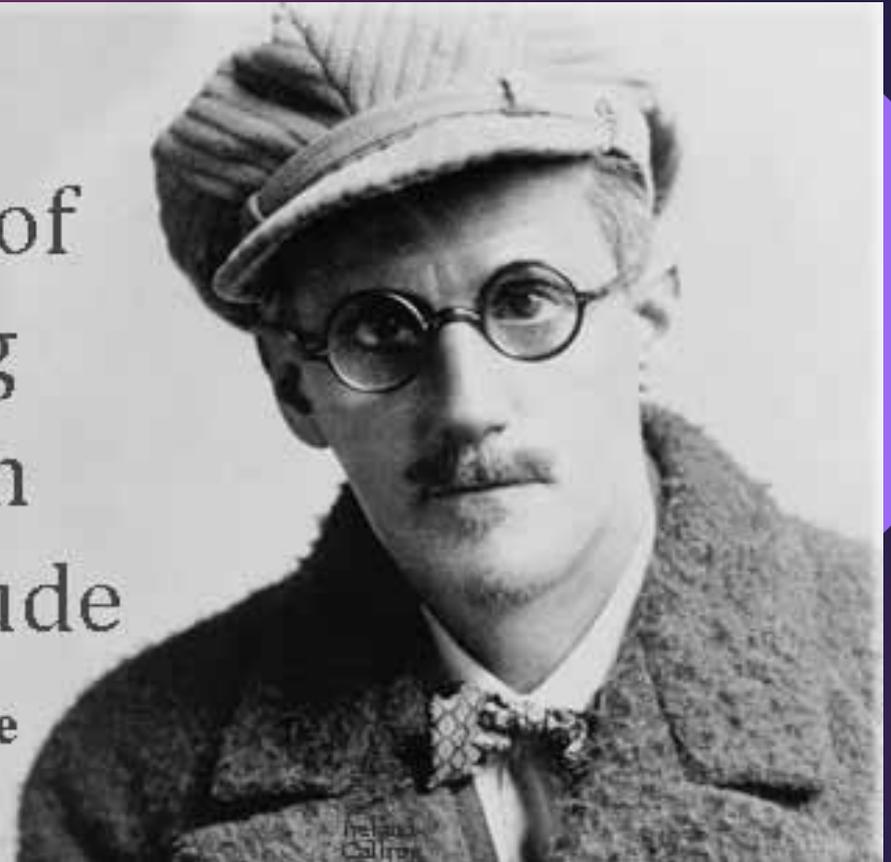


Things fall apart; the center cannot  
hold...

— *William Butler Yeats* —

The light music of  
whiskey falling  
into a glass – an  
agreeable interlude

James Joyce

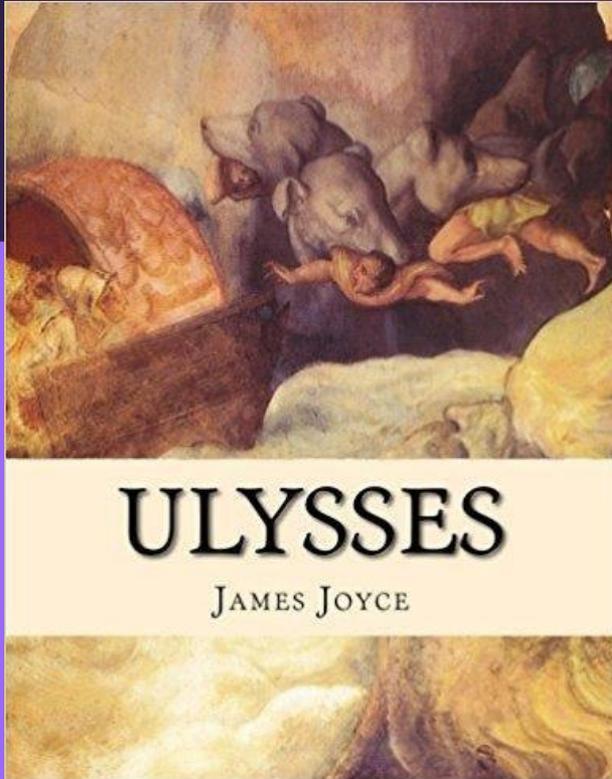




I have measured out my life with  
coffee spoons.

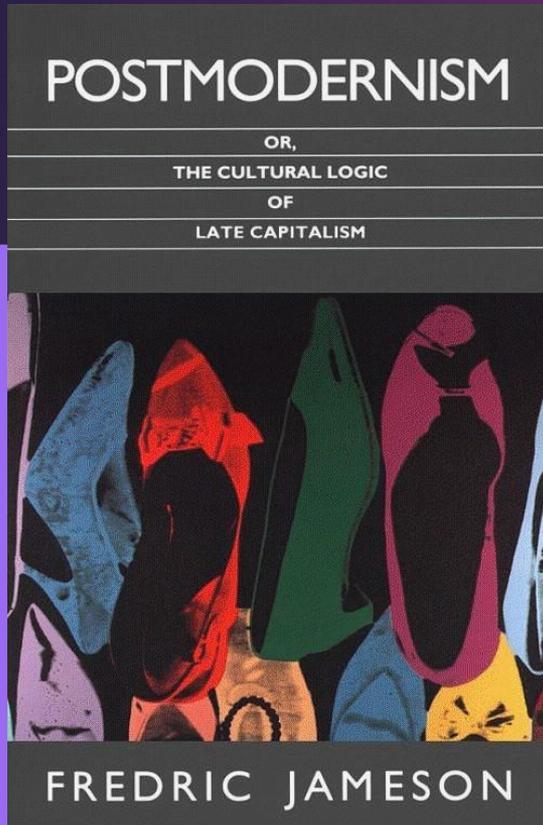
— T. S. Eliot —

# Modernist Literature



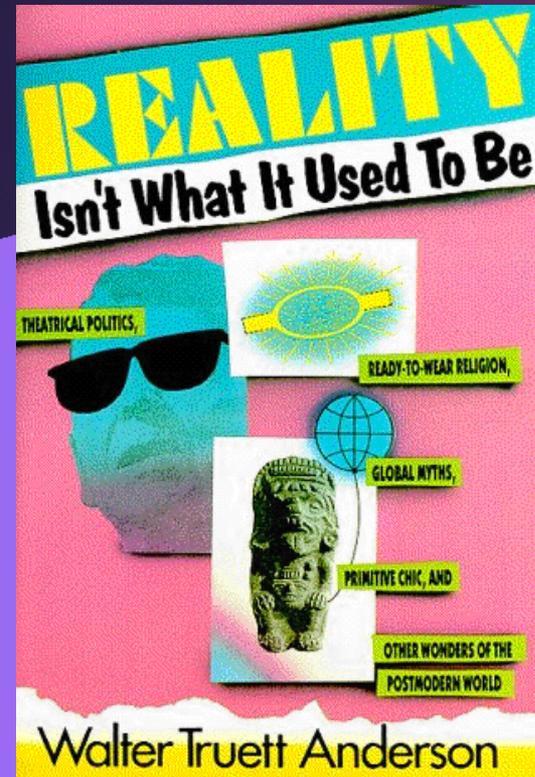
- ❖ Emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity
- ❖ Movement away from “objective” third-party narration
- ❖ Tendency toward reflexivity and self-consciousness
- ❖ Obsession with the psychology of self
- ❖ Rejection of traditional aesthetic theories
- ❖ Experimentation with language

# What is Postmodernism?



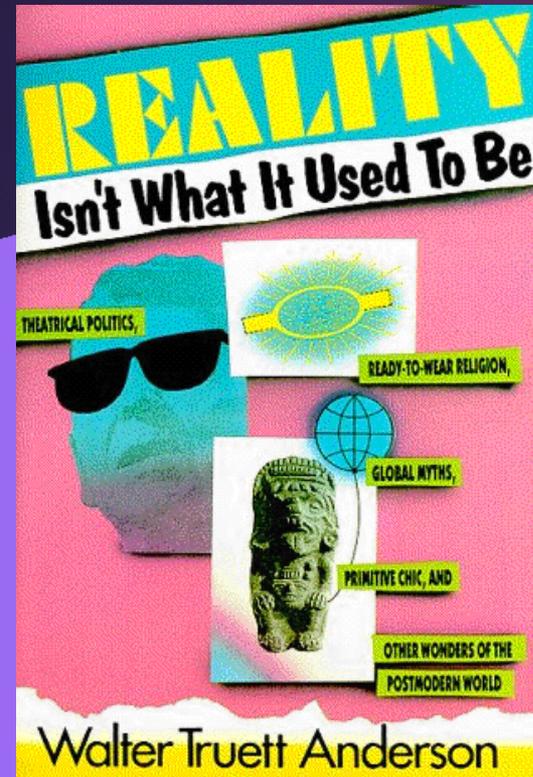
- ❖ Continuation of modernist view
- ❖ Does not mourn loss of history, self, religion, center
- ❖ A term applied to all human sciences — anthropology, psychology, architecture, history, etc.
- ❖ Reaction to modernism; systematic skepticism
- ❖ Anti-foundational

# Postmodernism: Basic Concepts



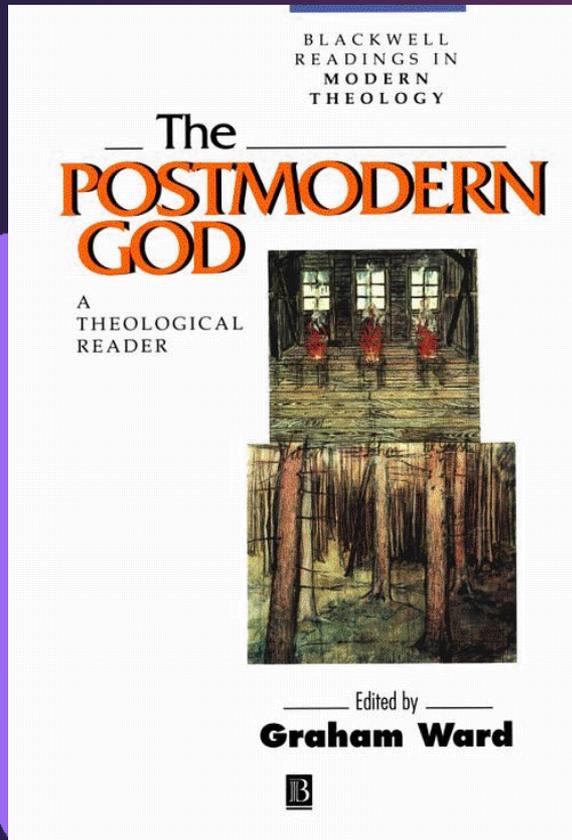
- ❖ Life just is - Rejection of all master narratives
- ❖ All “truths” are contingent cultural constructs
- ❖ Skepticism of progress; anti-technology bias
- ❖ Sense of fragmentation and decentered self
- ❖ Multiple conflicting identities
- ❖ Mass-mediated reality

# Postmodernism: Basic Concepts



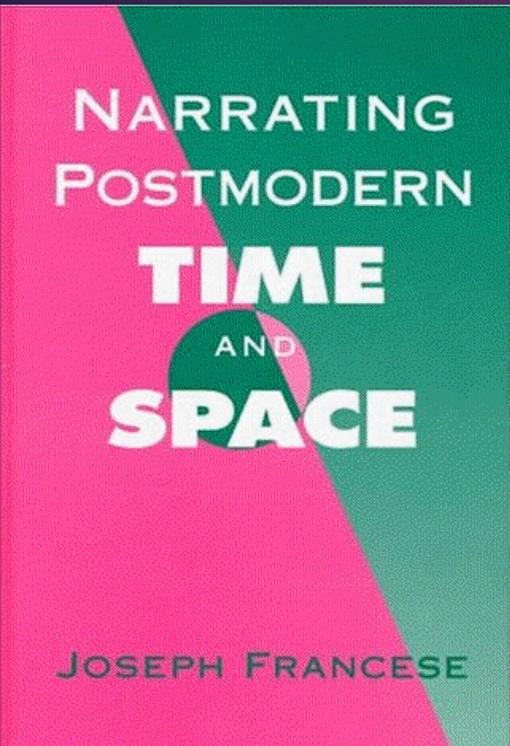
- ❖ All versions of reality are SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS
  - ❖ Concepts of good and evil
  - ❖ Metaphors for God
  - ❖ Language
  - ❖ The self
  - ❖ Gender
  - ❖ EVERYTHING!

# Postmodernism: Basic Concepts



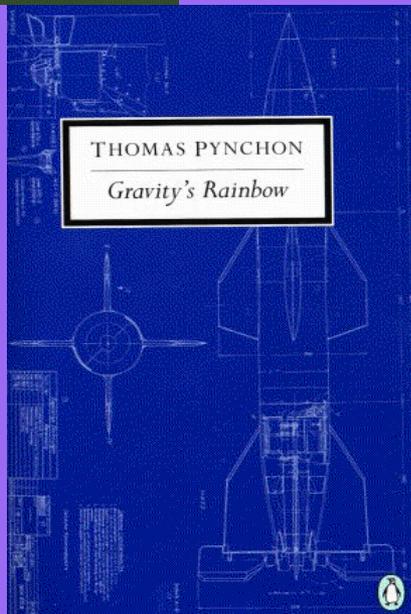
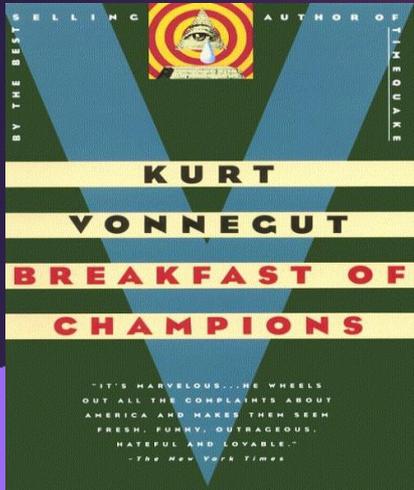
- Language is a social construct that “speaks” & identifies the subject
- Knowledge is contingent, contextual and linked to POWER
- Truth is pluralistic, dependent upon the frame of reference of the observer
- Values are derived from ordinary social practices, which differ from culture to culture and change with time.
- Values are determined by manipulation and domination

# Postmodern View of Language



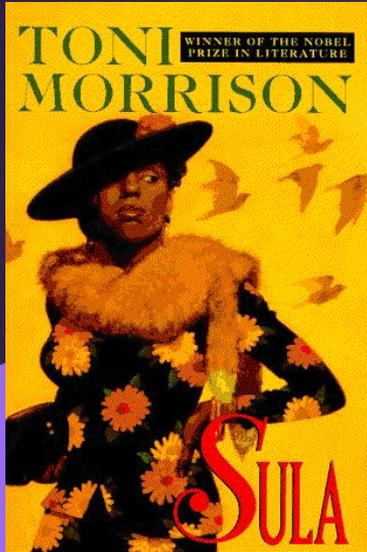
- ❖ Observer is a participant/part of what is observed
- ❖ Receiver of message is a component of the message
- ❖ Information becomes information only when contextualized
- ❖ The individual (the subject) is a cultural construct
- ❖ Consider role of own culture when examining others
- ❖ All interpretation is conditioned by cultural perspective and mediated by symbols and practice

# Postmodern Literature

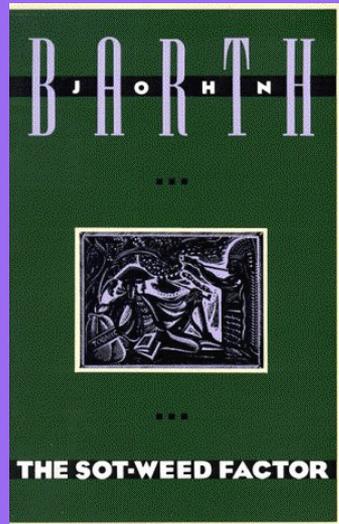


- ❖ Extreme freedom of form and expression
- ❖ Repudiation of boundaries of narration & genre
- ❖ Intrusive, self-reflexive author
- ❖ Parodies of meta-narratives
- ❖ Deliberate violation of standards of sense and decency (which are viewed as methods of social control)
- ❖ Integration of everyday experience, pop culture

# Postmodern Literature



- Parody, play, black humor, pastiche
- Nonlinear, fragmented narratives
- Ambiguities and uncertainties
- Conspiracy and paranoia
- Ironic detachment
- Linguistic innovations
- Postcolonial, global-English literature



# VISIT MY BLOG TO KNOW ABOUT POSTMODERNISM

NEHA  
JAIN

<http://anilawad.blogspot.in/2016/01/postmodernism-simplified-lecture-notes.html>

## Anil Awad's Quest For Literature

Anil Awad's Quest For Literature

Friday, 1 January 2016

I am the Post-Modernist.....  
Don't try to define me.....



### **POSTMODERNISM Simplified (lecture notes)**

**From the Desk of Prof. Anil Awad**

POSTMODERNISM

Let me tell you the story of 'King Lear'. King Lear divides his Kingdom between his two daughters and banishes his beloved daughter Cordelia, for trivial ego. And the tragedy begins. Plot, sub-plot, moves and counter moves, madness, deaths and disasters. Nemesis - the evils meet their fate but the

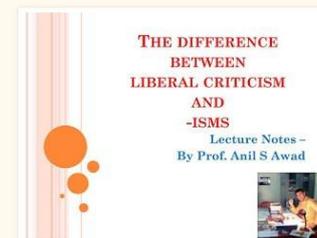
# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIBERAL CRITICISM AND MODERN CRITICISM?

<http://anilawad.blogspot.in/2016/01/the-difference-between-liberal.html>

## Anil Awad's Quest For Literature

Anil Awad's Quest For Literature

Friday, 1 January 2016



### **The difference between Liberal criticism and -isms....**

#### **Lecture Notes By - Anil S Awad...**

If we start to study the traditional criticism and modern/recent /contemporary criticism, particularly after 1950s...we can notice many changes and differences in-between the two. Traditional criticism is also known as Liberal Criticism. In such criticism the genre (poetry, drama, fiction etc.) find prior place and is treated (instead say...criticized) liberally. It means that the critic can take any form or piece of literature and start to analyze it from his viewpoint. Take the example of ancient Greek Literature... Plato or Aristotle... they have chosen Drama as well as an epic form (Which is called 'Poetry' in amalgamation) to make the part of their criticism. Liberal criticism

# HOW DOES A LITERARY THEORY WORK?

# Literary Theory

## ❖ THE AUTHOR



[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



## Literary Theory

### □ THE AUTHOR



### THE TEXT

#### The Tragedie of HAMLET, Prince of Denmarke.

*Actus Secundus. Scena Secunda.*

TO BE, or not to be, that is the Question :  
Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer  
The Slings and arrowes of outragious Fortune;  
Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them : to dye, to sleepe  
No more ; and by a sleepe to say we end  
The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall fhockes  
That Flesh is hey're to? 'Tis a consummation  
Deuoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe,  
To sleepe : perchance to Dreame ; I , there's the rub,  
For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come,  
When we haue shuffel'd off this mortall coile.

# Literary Theory

## THE AUTHOR



## THE TEXT

### The Tragedie of HAMLET, Prince of Denmarke.

*Actus Secundus. Scena Secunda.*

TO BE, or not to be, that is the Question :  
Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer  
The Slings and arrowes of outrageous Fortune;  
Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them : to dye, to sleepe  
No more ; and by a sleepe to say we end  
The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes  
That Flesh is hey're to? 'Tis a consummation  
Deuoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe,  
To sleepe : perchance to Dreame ; I , there's the rub,  
For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come,  
When we haue shuffle'd off this mortall coile.

## THE READER



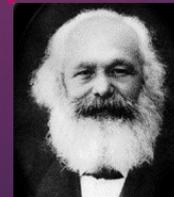
## Literary Theory

- Different constructs of reality
- “Lenses” through which we see the world



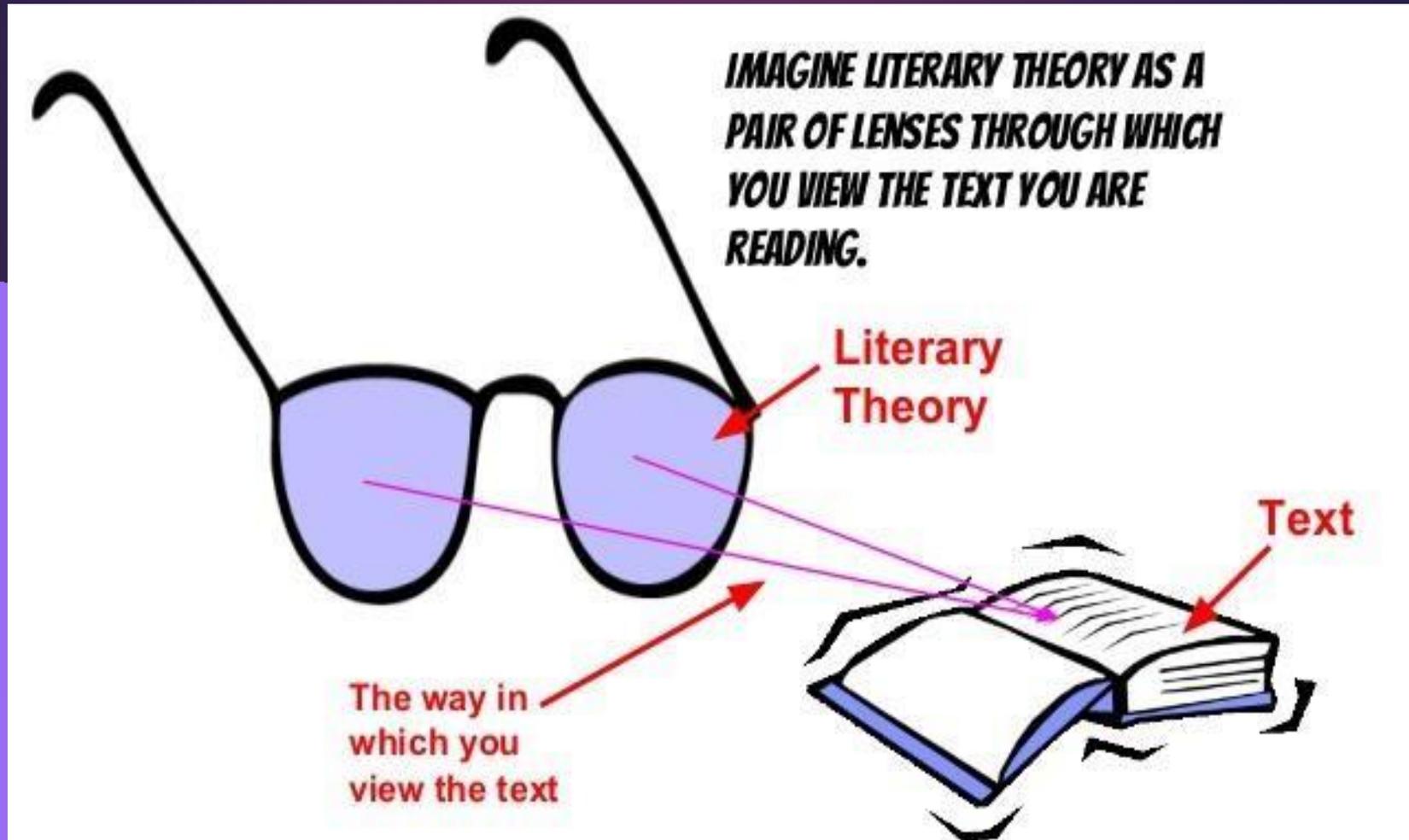
The Tragedie of  
**HAMLET, Prince of Denmarke.**  
*Actus Secundus. Scena Secunda.*

TO BE, or not to be, that is the Question :  
Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer  
The Slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune;  
Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them : to dye, to sleepe  
No more ; and by a sleepe to say we end  
The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shokes  
That Fleth is hey're to? 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe,  
To sleepe : perchance to Dreame ; I, there's the rub,  
For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortall coile.



?

# Literary Theory



# Literary Theory

NEHA  
JAIN



Post-modernism has cut off the present from all futures. The daily media add to this by cutting off the past. Which means that critical opinion is often orphaned in the present.

(John Berger)

Let's Begin...

# WHAT IS NEW CRITICISM?

- ❖ **New Criticism** was a formalist movement in literary theory that dominated American literary criticism in the middle decades of the 20th century. It emphasized **close reading**, particularly of poetry, to discover how a work of literature functioned as a self-contained, self-referential aesthetic object. The movement derived its name from **John Crowe Ransom's 1941 book The New Criticism**. The work of English scholar **I. A. Richards**, especially his **Practical Criticism and The Meaning of Meaning**, which offered what was claimed to be an empirical scientific approach, were important to the development of New Critical methodology. Also very influential were the critical essays of **T. S. Eliot**, such as **"Tradition and the Individual Talent"** and **"Hamlet and His Problems"**, in which Eliot developed his notion of the **"objective correlative"**. Eliot's evaluative judgments, such as his condemnation of Milton and Shelley, his liking for the so-called metaphysical poets and his insistence that poetry must be impersonal, greatly influenced the formation of the New Critical canon.

# First Critic

- ❖ **F. R. LEAVIS—Editor of SCRUTINY (1932-1953)**
  - ❖ English as the supreme civilizing pursuit
  - ❖ Rigorous critical analysis; “words on the page”
  - ❖ Practical criticism
  - ❖ Close reading
  - ❖ Continued Mathew Arnold’s social mission
  - ❖ Literature could cure all ills of society (crusaders)
  - ❖ Elitist

## New Criticism

- View literature as a valid form of knowledge and as a communicator of truths inaccessible via scientific and other discourse
- A work of literature has an organic structure
- Objective way of analyzing literature
- Author's intentions are irrelevant

# New Criticism

## ❖ I.A. RICHARDS (English)

- ❖ Principles of Literary Criticism
- ❖ The meaning of a poetic word is radically contextual, a function of the poem's internal verbal organization
- ❖ The Meaning of Meaning



# New Criticism

## ❖ T.S. ELIOT (1888-1965)



- ❖ New political reading of English literature
- ❖ Miltons and Romantics less important
- ❖ Metaphysicals upgraded
- ❖ French symbolists imported
- ❖ Eliot was an extreme right-wing traditionalist
- ❖ Assaulted middle-class ideologies of liberalism, romanticism, individualism
- ❖ Before Milton—poets could think but not feel
- ❖ After (Romantics)—feel but not think—and degenerated

## New Criticism

### ❖ T.S. ELIOT

- ❖ Symbolism in context of classical and Christian traditions
- ❖ Believed language of poetry should communicate by objective correlatives—deep symbols and images that bypass rational thought and seize readers by “the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, the digestive tracts.” Images should penetrate to the primitive levels at which all men and women experienced alike—through symbols, rhythms, archetypes, images of death and resurrection, the Fisher King.

# New Criticism

## ❖ AMERICAN NEW CRITICISM

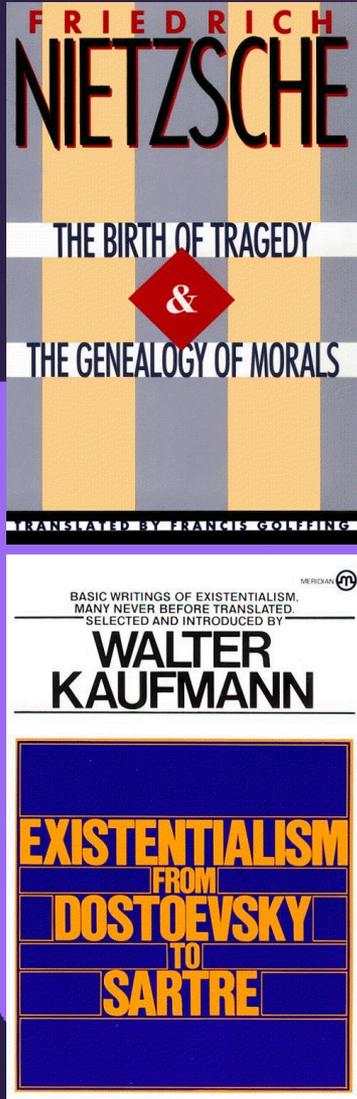
- ❖ John Crow Ransom *The New Criticism* (1941)
- ❖ Poetry as an aesthetic alternative to the scientific rationalism of the North
- ❖ Sensual integrity of poetry as a form of human knowledge
- ❖ Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks
- ❖ A poem is a “unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude”

# WHAT IS EXISTENTIALISM?



- Existentialism, any of various philosophies, most influential in continental Europe from about 1930 to the mid-20th century, that have in common an interpretation of human existence in the world that stresses its concreteness and its problematic character.

## Existentialism



- ❖ Existence precedes knowledge
- ❖ "I am, therefore I think, I feel, I suffer..."
- ❖ There is no meaning that man does not create
- ❖ Inherent sense of alienation, angst, anxiety
- ❖ Nietzsche: Man should rise from the ruins of the broken cathedrals and assume his rightful supremacy, without mourning
- ❖ Kierkegaard: Faith in God, in fear and trembling
- ❖ Nihilism, absurdity and despair
- ❖ Christian existentialism

Existentialism is about being a saint without God; being your own hero, without all the sanction and support of religion or society.

(Anita Brookner)

# WHAT IS RECEPTION THEORY?

- ❖ Reception theory is a version of **reader response literary theory** that emphasizes each particular reader's reception or interpretation in making meaning from a literary text. Reception theory is generally referred to **as audience reception in the analysis of communications models**. In literary studies, reception theory originated from the work of **Hans-Robert Jauss** in the late 1960s, and the most influential work was produced during the 1970s and early 1980s in Germany and the US (Fortier 132), with some notable work done in other Western European countries. A form of reception theory has also been applied to the study of historiography.

# WHAT IS RECEPTION THEORY?

- ❖ The cultural theorist **Stuart Hall** has been one of the main proponents of reception theory, first developed in his 1973 essay '**Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse**'. His approach, called the encoding/decoding model of communication, is a form of textual analysis that focuses on the scope of "negotiation" and "opposition" by the audience. This means that a "text"—be it a book, movie, or other creative work—is not simply passively accepted by the audience, but that the reader/viewer interprets the meanings of the text based on her or his individual cultural background and life experiences. In essence, the meaning of a text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader.

# Phenomenology / Reception Theory

## ❖ JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (1905-1980)

❖ *What is Literature?* (1948)

❖ A book's reception by the reader is part of the work itself

❖ Includes an image of who the book is written for

❖ An implied reader is encoded in the book itself

❖ The dilemma of the contemporary writer, who can address his work neither to the bourgeoisie, the working class or the mythical man in general.

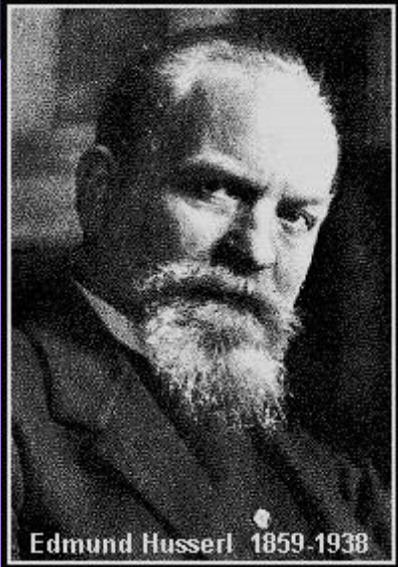


# Phenomenology

## ❖ EDMUND HUSSERL (1859-1938)

*Crisis of the European Sciences* (1935)—Wanted to launch a spiritual rebirth through an “absolutely self-sufficient science of the spirit”

- ❖ We can not be sure of the independent existence of objects
- ❖ Only absolute truth is what appears to us in our minds, things posited by our consciousness
- ❖ There are universal types or essences which we can grasp
- ❖ Knowledge of phenomena is intuitive



# Phenomenology

## □ EDMUND HUSSERL

- ❖ Being and meaning are bound together; there is no object without a subject, no subject without an object.
- ❖ Centrality of the human subject
- ❖ Literary text is the embodiment of the author's consciousness
- ❖ Deep structures and patterns within the work
- ❖ Limitation: ignores social Marxist view—a head without a world

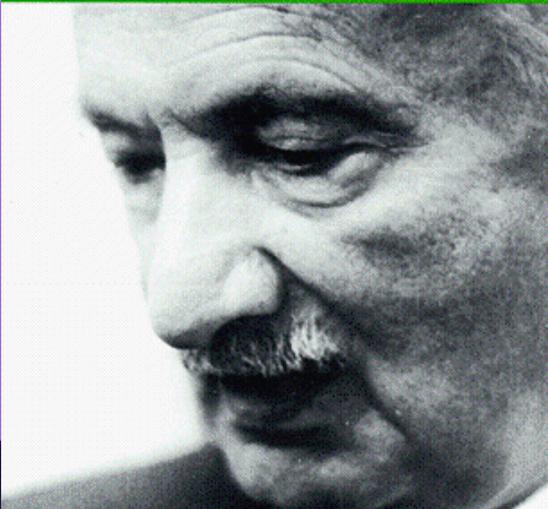
# Phenomenology

## □ MARTIN HEIDEGGER (1889-1976)

- ❖ Rejects Husserl's concept of a transcendental subject capable of knowing through intuition
- ❖ Heidegger begins with irreducible givenness of existence
- ❖ *Dasein*: Being-in-the-world
- ❖ We are beings in a world we cannot objectify
- ❖ Language is where reality unconceals itself (similar to structuralism)

Martin Heidegger  
THE BASIC  
PROBLEMS OF  
PHENOMENOLOGY

Translation, Introduction, and Lexicon by  
Albert Hofstadter  
REVISED EDITION



## Phenomenology

### □ MARTIN HEIDEGGER

- ❖ We must make way for Being via “humble listening,” open ourselves passively for truths to emerge
- ❖ Pre-Platonic “listening to the earth and stars”
- ❖ Understood that meaning of language is a social matter; language belongs to a society before it belongs to me
- ❖ CULTURE CONSTRUCTS US

# Phenomenology / Reception Theory

## ❖ RECEPTION THEORY

- ❖ Role of reader as co-partner
- ❖ Reader brings considerable knowledge and experience to the literary encounter
- ❖ Including literary conventions
- ❖ Will fill in the blanks, select and organize
- ❖ Must open ourselves to the deep essences of things
- ❖ Look for recurring themes and patterns of imagery

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

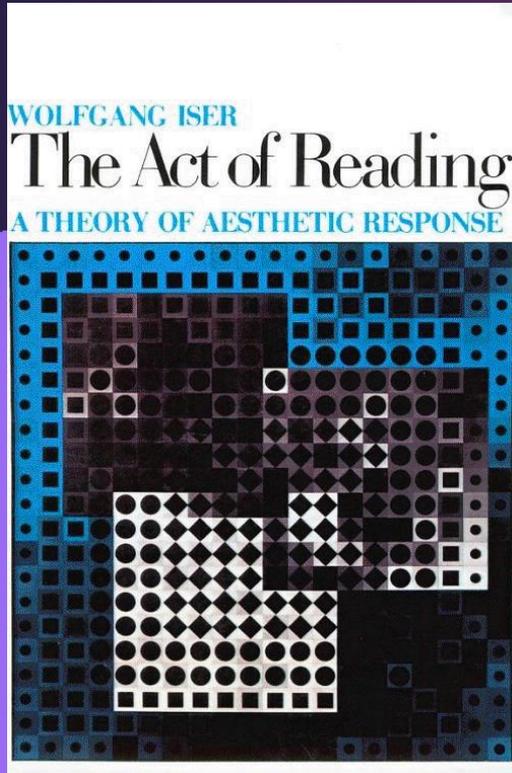
DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



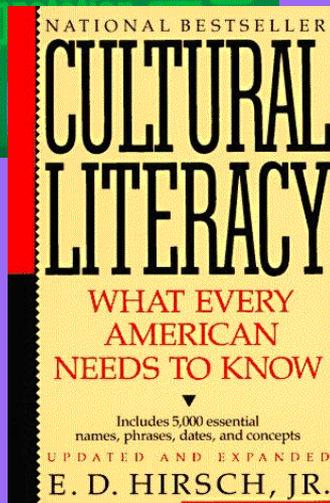
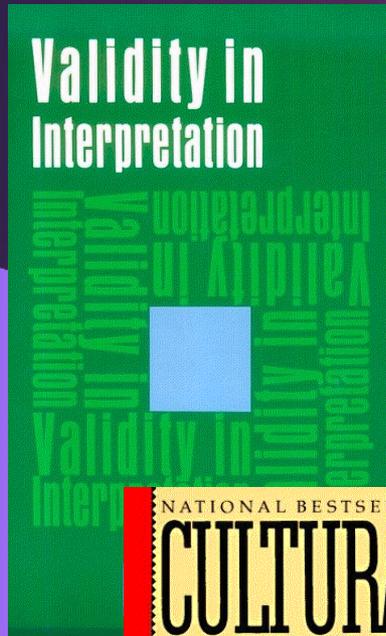
# Reception Theory



## □ WOLFGANG ISER(1926-)

- ❖ *The Act of Reading* (1978)
- ❖ We bring assumptions to each reading, based upon language codes and traditions
- ❖ Good literature forces reader into a new critical awareness of customary codes
- ❖ Often violates or transgresses our normative ways of seeing
- ❖ The whole point of reading is to bring us into deeper self-consciousness

# Phenomenology / Reception Theory



- ❖ **E.D. HIRSCH (1928- )**
- ❖ *Validity in Interpretation*
  - ❖ Literary meaning is absolute and immutable, resistant to historical change
  - ❖ Believes in author's intention
  - ❖ But significances vary throughout history (interpretations)
  - ❖ Critic must reconstruct ways of seeing that would have governed the author's meaning at the time of writing

# Hermeneutics

## ❖ HANS-GEORGE GADAMER (*Truth and Method*)

- ❖ All interpretations are situational and constrained by the historically relative criteria of a particular culture; impossible to know the text "as it is."
- ❖ All interpretations consist in a dialogue between the present and the past
- ❖ We "listen" with passive Heideggerian passivity for the answer
- ❖ Must reconstruct the question
- ❖ Interpretation is a matter of "coming home" to the past



# Hermeneutics

## □ HANS-GEORGE GADAMER (*Truth and Method*)

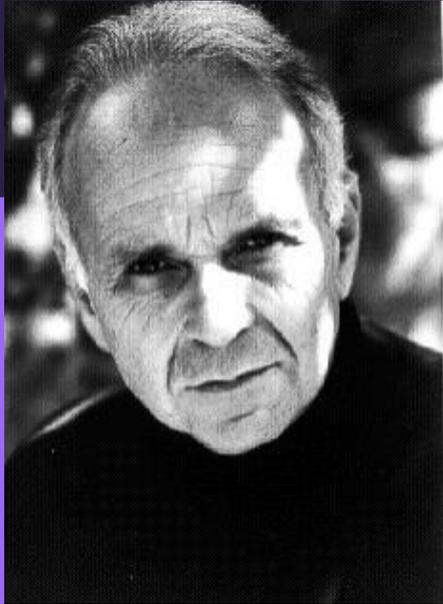
- ❖ Assumes there is a single mainstream tradition which all valid works participate in and that history is an unbroken continuum
- ❖ Tradition is home
- ❖ Rationale for high German tradition; its own classics and national pride
- ❖ FLAW: fails to recognize the problem of ideology; that history is not a dialogue but a monologue between the powerful and powerless
- ❖ A theory based upon tradition and classics; does not allow for a traditional literature

# Phenomenology / Reception Theory

## ❖ KEY POINTS:

- ❖ “Meaning” begins with the reader (not author or text)
- ❖ We must open ourselves up to the phenomena of the text
- ❖ Reading is a “spiritual” experience that can lead us to a deeper sense of consciousness and awareness
- ❖ Reading enables us to connect with “history, essences, and traditions”
- ❖ We are co-partners with the author
- ❖ We participate in the reading process through the social construction of language, which precedes us

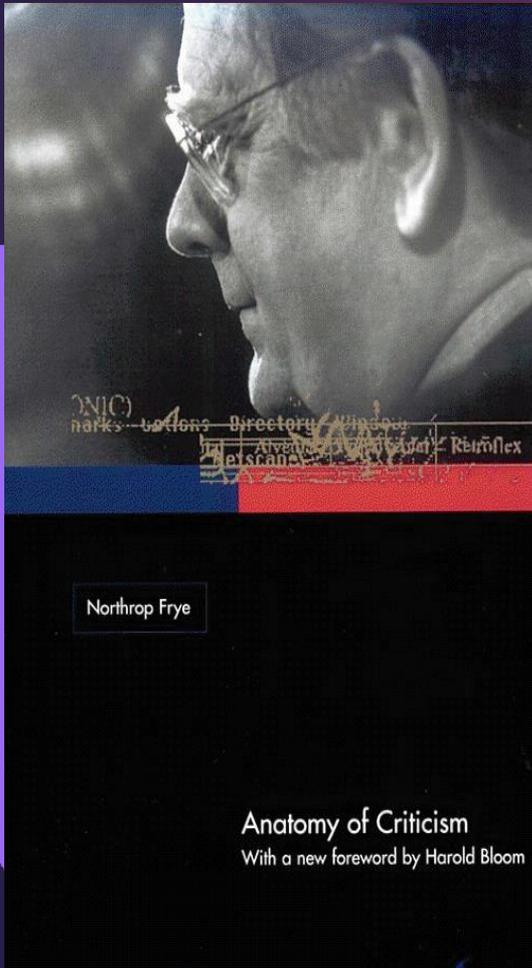
# Phenomenology / Reception Theory



## ❖ **STANLEY FISH (American)**

- ❖ A novel is all the assorted accounts of the novel that have been given or will be given by readers and reviewers
- ❖ Does not mean all interpretations are valid (relativism)
- ❖ Readers are members of interpretative communities that have communal and conventional beliefs

## Pre-Structuralism



### ❖ **NORTHROP FRYE, Anatomy of Criticism (1957)**

- ❖ Literature formed an objective system that could be analyzed “scientifically”
- ❖ Laws =archetypes, myths, genres are basic structures (universal patterns)
- ❖ Four narrative categories:
  - ❖ Comic           Spring
  - ❖ Romantic       Summer
  - ❖ Tragic           Autumn
  - ❖ Ironic            Winter

# Pre-Structuralism

## □ **NORTHROP FRYE, Anatomy of Criticism (1957)**

- All these patterns spring from the COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS to reveal universal archetypes

❖ Myth	Hero is superior
❖ Romance	Superior in degree
❖ Tragedy and epic	Superior in degree but not to others
❖ Comedy and realism	Equal to rest of us
❖ Satire and irony	Inferior

## Archetypal Criticism

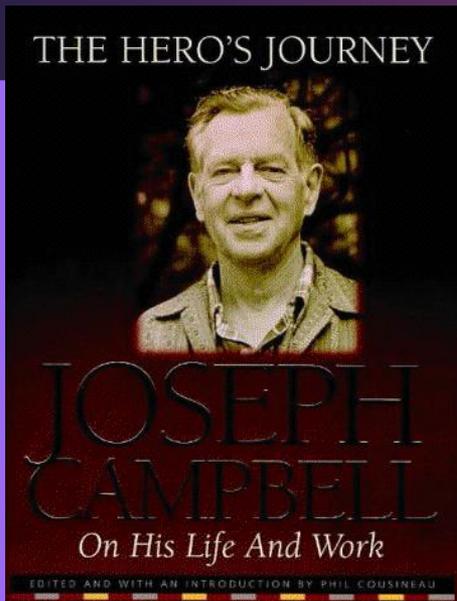
- ❖ NORTHROP FRYE, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)
  - ❖ Tragedy      About human isolation
  - ❖ Comedy      Human integration
- ❖ Three recurrent patterns of symbolism:
  - ❖ Apocalyptic
  - ❖ Demonic
  - ❖ Analogical

# Archetypal Criticism

## □ JOSEPH CAMPBELL (1904-87)

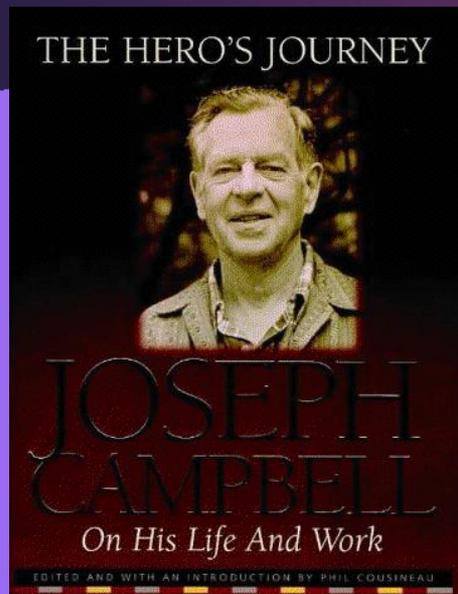
### Ten Commandments for Reading Mythology

- ❖ Read myths with the eyes of wonder: the myths transparent to their universal meaning, their meaning transparent to its mysterious source.
- ❖ Read myths in the present tense: Eternity is now.



# Archetypal Criticism

## □ JOSEPH CAMPBELL (1904-87)



- ❖ Read myths in the first person plural: the Gods and Goddesses of ancient mythology still live within you.
- ❖ Look for patterns; don't get lost in the details. What is needed is not more specialized scholarship, but more interdisciplinary vision. Make connections; break old patterns of parochial thought.

# Archetypal Criticism

## □ JOSEPH CAMPBELL (1904-87)

THE HERO'S JOURNEY



JOSEPH  
CAMPBELL

*On His Life And Work*

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PHIL COUSINEAU

- ❖ Know your tribe! Myths never arise in a vacuum; they are the connective tissue of the social body which enjoys synergistic relations with dreams (private myths) and rituals (the enactment of myth).
- ❖ Read between the lines! Literalism kills;
- ❖ Imagination quickens.

STRUCTURALISM

# Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)



- ❖ *Course in General Linguistics* (1916)
- ❖ General structures by which language, myths and literatures work
- ❖ Language is a system of signs
- ❖ Individual units of a linguistic structure only have meaning in relationship to other units
- ❖ Do not go outside the myth or poem
- ❖ Meaning is in the structure not the content
- ❖ Sees language as a complete system in itself now (ignores historical evolution)

# Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

- SIGNIFIER                      Sound or written word
  - SIGNIFIED                    Meaning
- ↑
- ARBITRARY RELATIONS—“Cat” could mean anything—what counts is that no other sets of signifiers mean cat
  - Structuralist concerned with objective structure of signs —*langue*— system of language
  - Not with any specific unit—*parole*

# Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

- ❖ VALUE—collective meaning assigned to signs within a community; relation between various signs
- ❖ SIGNIFICATION—meaning—relationship between signifier and signified
- ❖ DIFFERENCE—the relation that creates value
- ❖ THE IDEA OF DIFFERENCE IS BASED UPON THE CONCEPT OF BINARY OPPOSITES
- ❖ Night/day; sweet/sour; body/soul; lightness/weight

# Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

- ❖ LINEAR (SYNTAGMATIC) RELATIONS--words in time, in a sentence
  - ❖ Position in sentence governs meaning :
  - ❖ "The stoned man stoned the stone wall."
- ❖ ASSOCIATIVE—similar words in memory
  - ❖ Allow for metaphorical expression
- ❖ LANGUAGE SPEAKS US

## Claude Levi-Strauss



- ❖ French anthropologist
- ❖ Took Saussure's theories about language and applied them to the study of myth and culture
- ❖ Refused to see Western civilization as unique
- ❖ Savage mind = civilized mind
- ❖ 30 years studying North and South American Indians
- ❖ Man obeys laws that are inherent in the brain
- ❖ Myths are not made by an individual—but by the collective human consciousness

## Claude Levi-Strauss

- ❖ Every culture organizes knowledge into binary pairs
- ❖ Different myths are all variations on a number of very basic themes
- ❖ A kind of grammar for narratives inherent in the human mind
- ❖ Certain constant universal structures called mythemes
- ❖ Structuralism decentralizes the individual (the subject)
- ❖ Meaning is not a private experience or divinely ordained
- ❖ Product of certain shared systems of signification

## Claude Levi-Strauss

- ❖ LANGUAGE predates the individual
- ❖ REALITY is a product of language
- ❖ Jonah and Christ are the same story
- ❖ Thus all myths are timeless
- ❖ Hero needs to overcome an obstacle
  - ❖ A story about a guy who loves a girl who is inaccessible
  - ❖ Woman wants to make chicken soup has no chicken
- ❖ SAME STORY: incomplete/completeness

### MYTH AND MEANING

*Cracking the Code of Culture*



CLAUDE  
LÉVI-STRAUSS

WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY WENDY DONIGER

"A fascinating introduction to the thought of the anthropologist who changed the outlook of the humanities."  
— MARY DOUGLAS

# Claude Levi-Strauss

- ❖ **STORY/NARRATIVE**—exists on a diachronic axis (l to r) like music, irreversible time
- ❖ **STRUCTURE**—synchronic axis (up down) in reversible time, like staves of score
- ❖ He focuses on the harmony of relationships, which he calls bundles
- ❖ **BINARY OPPOSITIONS** — lend a certain order and logic to things in the universe, and can be used to help people believe in contradictions—(yin and yang, god made man)

## Claude Levi-Strauss

1

2

3

4

A

- Cadmos ravished by Zeus

- Cadmos kills dragon

- Labdacos lame

B

- Oedipus marries mother

- Oedipus kills father

- Oedipus kills the Sphynx

- Oedipus has swollen foot

C

- Antigone buries brother

# Structuralism

- ❑ Language and culture produce subjects (the “I” is decentered)
- ❑ Binary oppositions
- ❑ Literature reflects universal psyche of the human mind

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



## Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)



- ❖ The text represses its real content
- ❖ Patterns of language beneath the surface that betray repressions, obsessions, neuroses, etc.
- ❖ Dreams and imagery (especially sexual)
- ❖ Reader functions as psychiatrist, listening for verbal play in which the “patients” are saying more than they realize
- ❖ Author: Text reveals “secret life” and psychological struggles of the writer
- ❖ Characters: Look for psychological motives

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



# Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

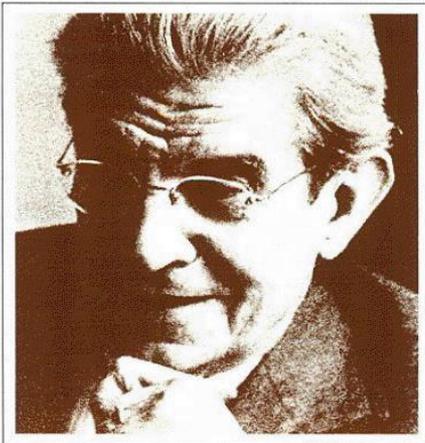


## KEY CONCEPTS:

- ❖ Id, Superego, Ego
- ❖ Resolution of Oedipus complex > the Self
- ❖ Repression
- ❖ Dreams: displacement and condensation (metaphor and metonymy)
- ❖ Neurosis and psychosis
- ❖ Transference

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

### ÉCRITS A Selection



Jacques Lacan

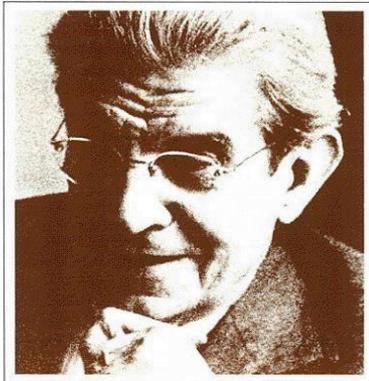
The first general selection in English from the work of Europe's major Freudian psychoanalyst

- ❖ Language (and thus culture) constructs our sense of self
- ❖ Our unconscious is just not inside us.
- ❖ It is formed by language which is outside us.
- ❖ Language, our parents, the unconscious, the symbolic order represent the OTHER.

# Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

## ÉCRITS

A Selection



Jacques Lacan

The first general selection in English from the work of Europe's major Freudian psychoanalyst

- ❖ **IMAGINARY PHASE:** One with mother (*Pre-Oedipal*)
  - ❖ **MIRROR STAGE:** We recognize a separate being in mirror, feel “lack” for mother; recognition of **OTHER** but not **SELF**
- ❖ **SYMBOLIC** (*Oedipal crisis*): Understand symbols; Father rules; we learn language; unconscious is formed; emergence of desire
- ❖ **REAL:** Understand our place in the physical world; conscious of our perennial “lack”; real lies beyond language; accept we can never know it

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

- ❖ Humans continue to look for an imaginary wholeness and unity
- ❖ Ego is a function of a subject that is always dispersed, never identical with itself, strung out along a chain of discourses
- ❖ I stands for the ever-elusive subject which will always slip through the nets of any particular language

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

Ego is a moment in time in the discourse of language

The unconscious is the discourse of the Other. It is Other. It is the linguistic structure of the unconscious. The Subject does not know that he desires what the Other desires. The Other is the Oedipal drama (the father of the real Other).

- The unconscious is outside us. It exists between us and others.

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

- ❖ There is no separation between self and society.
- ❖ Society inhabits the individual.
- ❖ There is no subject independent of language.
- ❖ We constantly negate our identities.
- ❖ I am the quest for myself.
- ❖ We have a perpetual lack of wholeness.

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

**NEED**

**Biological**

**Child in oral phase**

□ **DEMAND**

**Response from other**

**Recognition**

□ **DESIRE**

**For the ideal OTHER**

**Never fulfilled**

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

### APPLICATION TO LITERARY THEORY:

- Supports poststructural ideas of the fragmentation of self
- ❖ All texts are made up of meanings constituted by filiation and difference that are cultural in scope
- ❖ Must challenge the borders of the text
- ❖ Look for repetitions, gaps, what not said
- ❖ Writing is in response to lack and desire (creative act)
- ❖ Rich play of language (ambiguities)
- ❖ Readers and authors are “positions”

## Jacques Lacan (1901-81)

How does the language of the text signify something other than what it says?

What aspects of the text reflect the Imaginary, Symbolic or Real orders?

- Is there a voice of a mother or father present?
- Is the mother's voice (less structured, more associational, more fluid) suppressed by a phallogocentric symbolic order?
- Evidence of a splintered, constructed self?

## B. F. Skinner (1904-1990)

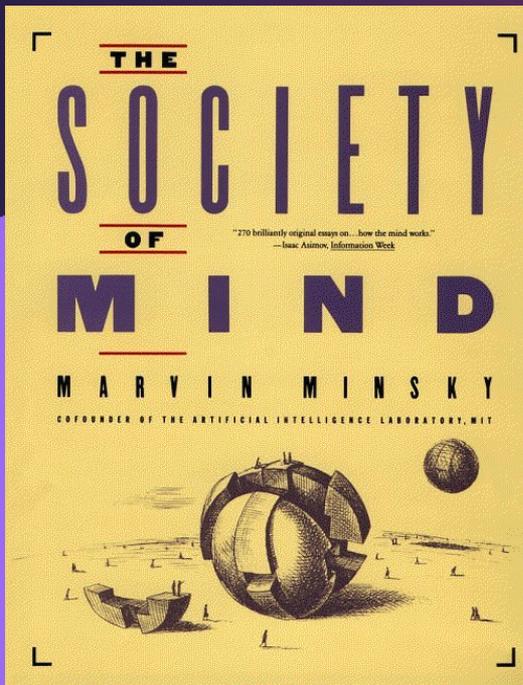
### The Psychology of B. F. Skinner



William O'Donohue  
Kyle E. Ferguson

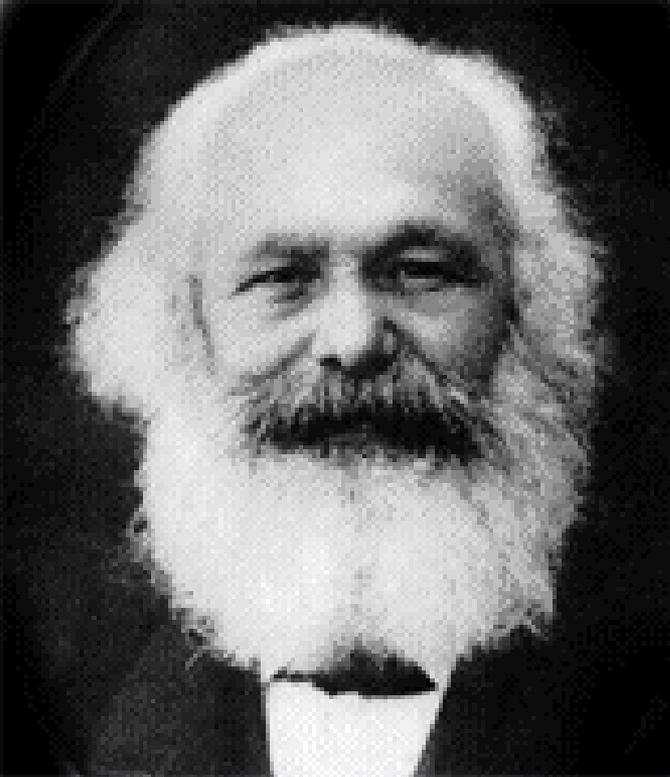
- We can't know the "mind"--so why worry about it?
- Focus on behavior & what is observable
- Perceptions, thoughts, images, feelings are subjective and immune to measurement
- Operant conditioning (aversive & reinforcing stimuli)
- Skinner Box-- "rat in a cage"
- *Walden II* (Utopian vision)

## Marvin Minsky (1927-)



- Founder of artificial intelligence (MIT)
- Cognitive scientist
- The brain is a number of organs, each within its own function (e.g., vision, story telling, math)
- The mind is a society of tiny components
- We all possess many “brains” or “selves” (both metaphors)
- We can have different beliefs, plans and dispositions at the same time

# Karl Marx (1818-1883)



- ❖ *Communist Manifesto*
- ❖ Saw capitalism as a driving force of history
- ❖ Predicted that it would conquer the world
- ❖ Lead to globalization of national economies and cultures
- ❖ Would divide world between "haves" and "have-nots"
- ❖ Class struggle
- ❖ Advocated abolition of private property, traditional marriage, concentration of political power in the hands of the proletariat

## Karl Marx (1818-1883)

### ❖ PREDICTED:

- ❖ Old-established national industries and cultures destroyed by large capitalistic entities
- ❖ Dominance of American and English lifestyles and products (Coca-Cola, Mickey Mouse)
- ❖ Depressions and economic crises (e.g., Asia)
- ❖ Loss of local cultures and identities
  - ❖ JAMESON: "Increasing standardization on an unparalleled scale...as human history becomes "a tortuous progression toward the American consumer as a climax."

# Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- ❖ FAILED TO SEE:
  - ❖ Capitalism's ability to buy proletarian support by gradually enfranchising them
  - ❖ Social contracts that overcome shortcomings
    - ❖ Welfare, Social Security
    - ❖ Growth of an economically "content" middle class
  - ❖ Socialism created oppressive, authoritarian states
    - ❖ Working class did not share in wealth
  - ❖ Class vs. class too simplistic
    - ❖ Multiple subclasses (women, environmentalists, etc.)



## Karl Marx (1818-1883)

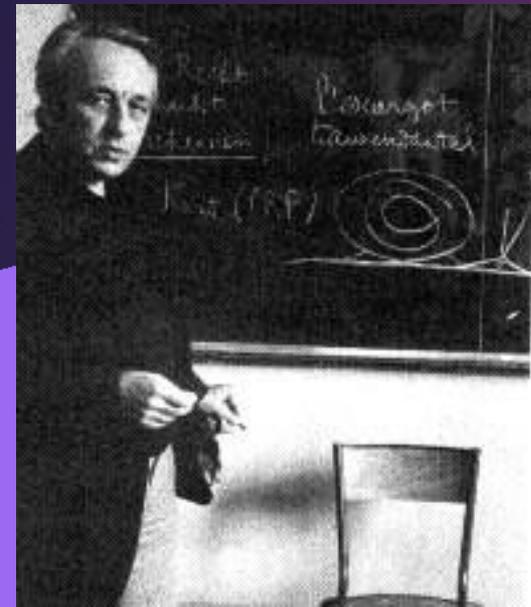
### ❖ APPLICATION TO LITERARY THEORY:

- ❖ "Hermeneutics of suspicion"
- ❖ Focus on what the text hides (ideology is silent)
- ❖ Hegemony: "A pervasive system of assumptions, meanings and values...that shapes the way things look, what they mean, and what reality is for the majority of people within a given culture" (*Antonio Gramsci*)
- ❖ How characters are shaped and controlled by economics

## Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- ❖ Questions a Marxist literary critic would ask:
  - ❖ Who was the text written for? Is it a “power play” on the part of one class to dominate another?
  - ❖ What is the underlying ideology?
  - ❖ Does the main character affirm or resist bourgeoisie values?
  - ❖ Whose story gets told? Who is left out?
  - ❖ In what way are characters or groups of people “commodified”?

# Louis Althusser (1918-1990)



- ❖ Ideologies constructs the subject
- ❖ Humans are the result of many different social determinants
- ❖ Why didn't the working classes rebel?
- ❖ Ideologies help us create a sense of identity
- ❖ Make us feel good about ourselves
- ❖ Lacan's idea of Other
- ❖ Ideologies give people a satisfying mirror image of themselves (identify with a cause)

# Poststructuralism

## POSTMODERN LITERARY THEORY

- ❖ Not a unified school: A group of theoretical positions
- ❖ Self-reflexive discourse that is “aware of the tentativeness, slipperiness, ambiguities and complex interrelations between texts and meanings.” (*Lye*)
- ❖ Rejects:
  - ❖ Totalizing view      All phenomenon under one concept
  - ❖ Essentialist concept      Reality independent of language
  - ❖ Foundationalism      Stable signifying systems rooted in human thought

# Poststructuralism

## STRUCTURALISM

- The individual is sacred
- The mind as the realm of meaning
- Universal laws and essences
- Inherent universal meanings that precede the text

## POSTSTRUCTURALISM

- The “subject” is a cultural construct
- Mind created from interactions as situated symbolic beings
- Truth is “local”; language creates reality
- Meaning is intertextual, determined by social discourse; changes with history

# Poststructuralism

Meanings are often hidden in the texts

Real meaning can be unlocked by deconstructing the text

- Must consider psychological, cultural, ideological, gender and other “power positions” of author, characters, intended readers
- Words are an endless chain of signifiers, pointing to nothing but themselves

# New Historicism & Cultural Materialism

- ❖ Recognize that history is written by the victors
- ❖ History as culturally produced--not objective narratives
- ❖ Paralleled evolution in cultural criticism
- ❖ Focus on power, culture and economics
- ❖ New Historicism: Top of social hierarchy
  - ❖ Government, church, upper classes
- ❖ Cultural Materialism: Bottom of society
  - ❖ Lower classes, women, gays, colonialized ethnic groups

## New Historicism

- ❖ What are the relations of power suggested by the text?
- ❖ How does the work reveal a historically specific model of truth or authority?
- ❖ What historical or cultural events might illuminate the text?
- ❖ How is power operating secretly within the text?
- ❖ How is the subversion to authority contained?

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



# Cultural Materialism

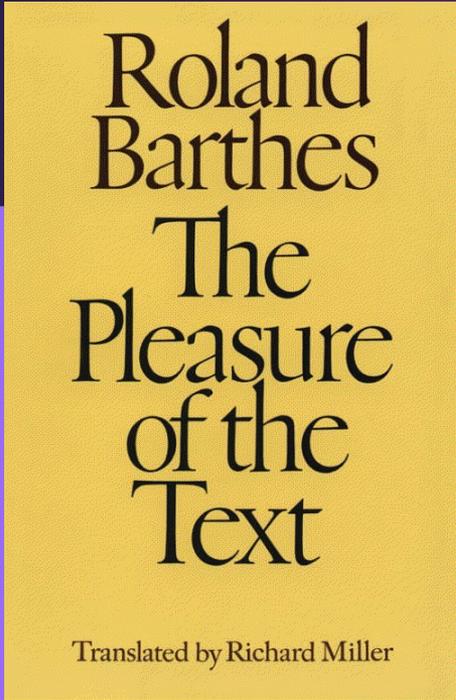
- ❖ What is the hidden ideology? Does the author reflect a power position? (E.g., male-centric, Christian, American, Islamic?)
- ❖ What is model of identity for oppressed groups?
- ❖ How does the work reflect the author's class, or the author's analysis of class relations?
- ❖ How do those with less power try to subvert those with more?
- ❖ What is the utopian vision?
- ❖ How are people commodified? What commodifies them?
- ❖ Role of media & consumerism?

# Roland Barthes (1915-80)



- ❖ Transition between structuralism and poststructuralism
- ❖ Semiologist
- ❖ One of first to analyze mass media and consumerism as manipulators of reality
- ❖ "The author is dead."
- ❖ The text is a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."

## Roland Barthes (1915-80)



Roland  
Barthes  
The  
Pleasure  
of the  
Text

Translated by Richard Miller

- ❖ The reader "produces" a text on his or her own terms, forging meanings from "what has already been read, seen, done, lived."
- ❖ OK to view literature from many perspectives: existential, psychoanalytical, Marxist, etc.
- ❖ Sees less distinction between literary and non-literary texts

# Jacques Derrida

Deconstruction is a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts.



- ❖ Skeptical postmodernist
- ❖ Attacks fundamental principles of Western philosophy
- ❖ Influenced by Nietzsche and Heidegger
- ❖ Attacks from a structuralist foundation
- ❖ Agrees that meaning is not inherent in signs
- ❖ Strongly disagrees with bifurcation of structuralism

# Jacques Derrida

STRUCTURALISM is inherently flawed:

- ❖ Argues that all STRUCTURES have an implied center
- ❖ All systems have binary oppositions
- ❖ One part more important than another (good/evil, male/female)
- ❖ Reinforces humanist idea that speaker/subject more important
- ❖ Reinforces real self as the origin of what is being said
- ❖ This is logocentrism—basic to all Western thought since Plato

# Jacques Derrida

## BASIC THEMES:

- ❖ By deconstructing, basic units of logic are shown how they contradict themselves.
- ❖ Sees all writing as a complex, historical cultural process rooted in the relations of texts to each other and in the institutions and conventions of writing.
- ❖ Language operates in subtle and often contradictory ways.
- ❖ Certainty will always elude us.

# Jacques Derrida (1930-)

## THE SELF AS FICTION

“Our self-presence is a fiction, we are in a constant state of differing and deference. As our center is not really a center, our self-presence is a fiction we create to disguise the play of opposition and displacement within which we live.”

## Jacques Derrida

- ❖ BASIS OF DECONSTRUCTION:
  - ❖ Focuses on difference (*from essay "differance"*)
  - ❖ All signs have difference
  - ❖ Open up a space from that which they represent
  - ❖ They defer—open up a temporal chain, or participate in temporality; meaning always delayed
  - ❖ Every sign repeats the creation of time and space
  - ❖ Difference is ultimate phenomenon in universe—which enables and results from being
- ❖ Difference is at the heart of existence, not essence

# Jacques Derrida

## LANGUAGE & MEANING:

- ❖ A meaning is always temporal and part of a network of meanings, part of a chain of meanings in a chain or system to which it belongs which is always changing
- ❖ What a sign differs from becomes an absent part of its presence (TRACE).
- ❖ Opposites already united. They depend upon each other for meaning. They are the alternating imprint of one another.

# Jacques Derrida

## INTERTEXTUALITY:

- ❖ All texts refer to other texts (just as signs refer to other signs).
- ❖ No interpretations are final.
- ❖ The authority of any text is provisional.

No Final Signified

NEHA  
JAIN

# Jacques Derrida

STRUCTURALISM

DECONSTRUCTION

Signified



Signifier

Signified

Signifier ↔ Signifier ↔ Signifier

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

# Jacques Derrida

Man can find ~~truth~~ in ~~nature~~.

# Jacques Derrida

## FREEDOM FROM TYRANNY

- ❖ Meaning circulates by difference, by being other.
- ❖ It is creative and inventive.
- ❖ Affirms multiplicity, paradoxes, richness of our life .
- ❖ Frees ourselves from tyrannies of univocal readings.
- ❖ Opposes humanism, which puts man at the center. One can talk about ideas and work with views that man is at the center only by placing them “under erasure.”
- ❖ Closer to reality, less artificial

## Jacques Derrida

- ❖ "If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another."
- ❖ "A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."

# Jacques Derrida

## DECONSTRUCTIVE INTERPRETATION:

- ❖ Find binary opposition and implied center
- ❖ Refute claims
- ❖ Find contradictions, self-imposed logic that is faulty
- ❖ Focus on what text is saying is other than what it appears to be saying
- ❖ Look for gaps, margins, figures, echoes, digressions, discontinuities

## Jacques Derrida

- ❖ Exclusions and repressions as important as what is said—in fact are more central: they point to the contingency of a central part
- ❖ What is not said provides clues to author's real views of power
- ❖ Male Western authorities have encoded within their work silence about women and others (rationalized exploitation of others without knowing it).

# Jacques Derrida

## ❖ BINARY OPPOSITIONS

- ❖ Nature / culture
- ❖ Health / disease
- ❖ Purity / contamination
- ❖ Simplicity / complexity
- ❖ Good / evil
- ❖ Speech / writing

## ▣ ASSUMED CENTER

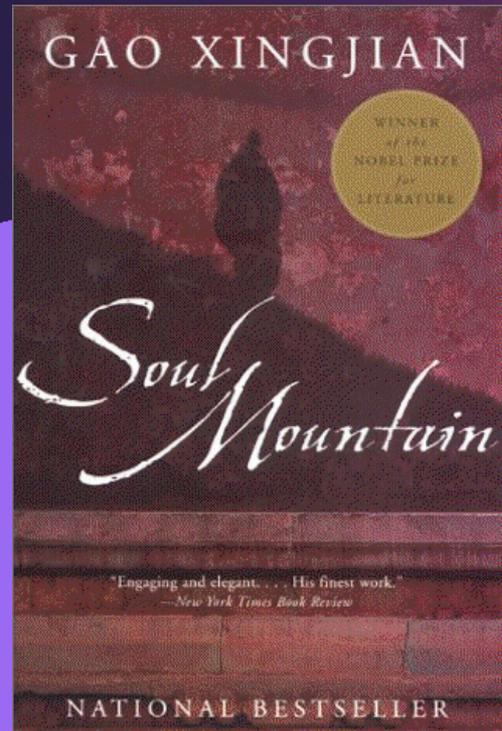
- ▣ Nature is good

## ▣ WHAT HE IS REALLY SAYING

- ▣ Theme of lost innocence
- ▣ Naïve romantic illusion
- ▣ Western guilt over colonization

## Jacques Derrida

- ❖ Some literature that recognizes the highly mediated nature of our experience, and are playful, ironic, explicitly intertextual and deconstruct themselves may be closer to reality.



# Jacques Derrida

- ❖ Nietzsche influence:
  - ❖ Language is radically metaphorical in nature
  - ❖ Every idea originates through an equating of the unequal
  - ❖ Metaphors are essentially groundless
  - ❖ All assumptions must be questioned
  - ❖ Must consider vast plurality of “wills to power”

## Jacques Derrida

- “What, therefore, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions...”

*-- Nietzsche*

# Jacques Derrida

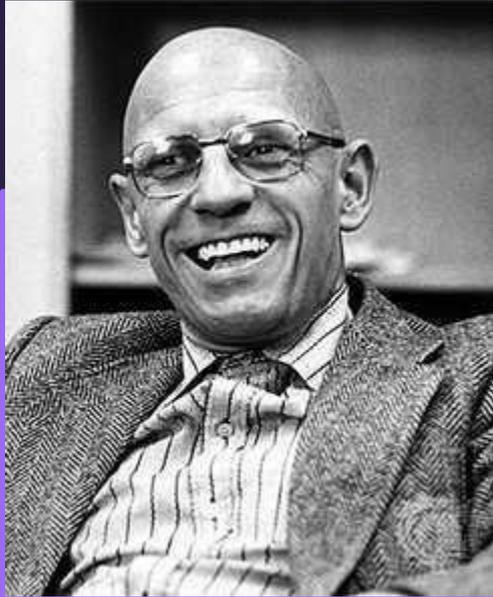
## TRADITIONAL THEORIES

- ❖ Mimetic
- ❖ Didactic
- ❖ Expressive of truths

## DECONSTRUCTION

- ❖ The author is dead
- ❖ History and literature become processes of intertextuality
- ❖ The careful reader is king

## Michel Foucault (1926-84)

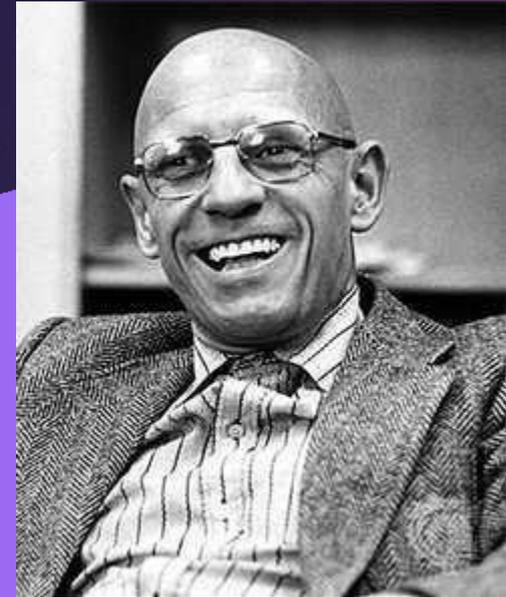


- ❖ Views language in the framework of power
- ❖ Denies Marxist concept of class oppression
- ❖ Denies all grand schemes
- ❖ Power is found only in discourse
- ❖ All social relations are relations of power
- ❖ Everyone oppresses others through discourse
- ❖ Everything we say, think, read is regulated by the world in which we live

## Michel Foucault (1926-84)

### NIETZSCHE INFLUENCE:

- ❖ Rejects Hegelian dialectic (past/present connection)
- ❖ *Geology of Morals*: local, discontinuous knowledges vs. unified orderly narrative
- ❖ How society deals with fringe elements (madness)
- ❖ From power in a sovereign king, to impersonal bureaucratic powers that silently oppress us
- ❖ Will to power vs. objective claims of truth



[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



## Michel Foucault (1926-84)

M I C H E L  
F O U C A U L T

DISCIPLINE  
&  
PUNISH  
The  
BIRTH  
of the  
PRISON

[FOUCAULT'S]  
GENIUS IS CALLED FORTH  
INTO THE ELOQUENT  
CLARITY OF HIS PASSIONS.  
HIS BEST BOOK -  
*Washington Post*  
*Book World*

- ❖ Metaphor: Panopticon (19th English prison design: people feel they are being watched at all time)
- ❖ Surveillance, regulation and discipline
  - ❖ All-knowing God
  - ❖ Freud's superego (monitor of desires)
  - ❖ Big Brother (files, computer monitoring)
- ❖ Power becomes system of surveillance which is interiorized
- ❖ Social engineering and psychological manipulation

## Michel Foucault (1926-84)

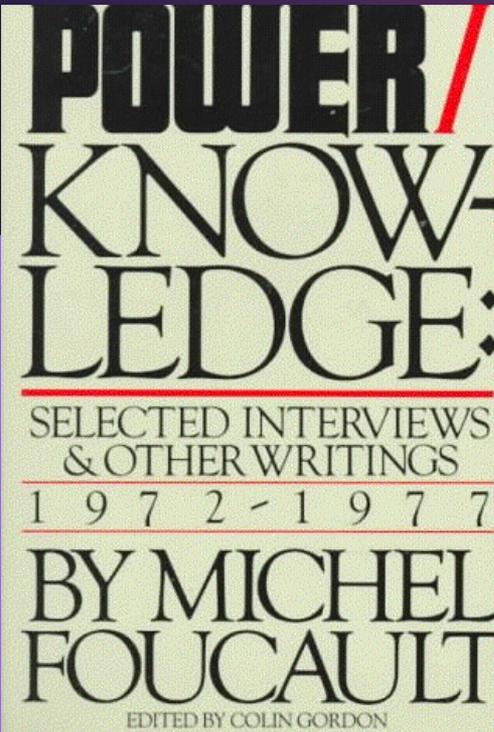
M I C H E L  
F O U C A U L T

DISCIPLINE  
&  
PUNISH  
The  
BIRTH  
of the  
PRISON

[FOUCAULT'S]  
GENIUS IS CALLED FORTH  
INTO THE ELOQUENT  
CLARITY OF HIS PASSIONS.  
HIS BEST BOOK.  
—*Washington Post*  
*Book World*

- ❖ Society disciplines populations by sanctioning the knowledge claims of various micro-ideologies--education, medicine, criminology
- ❖ Anti-Marxist:
  - ❖ Does not believe in any total single theory
  - ❖ State and class power overrated
  - ❖ The “subject” is the locus of multiple, dispersed and decentered discourses
- ❖ Anti-humanist

## Michel Foucault (1926-84)



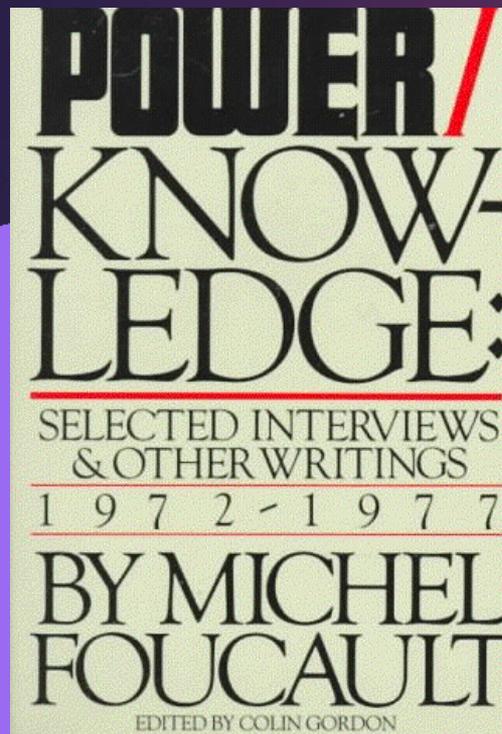
### TEXTUAL THEORY:

- ❖ Sees historic texts as a “series of fictions”
- ❖ Focus on discourses--all types of texts on a subject--not authors
- ❖ The author is decentered; merely a subject position within a text
- ❖ Discourse regulated by rules of exclusion, internal systems of control

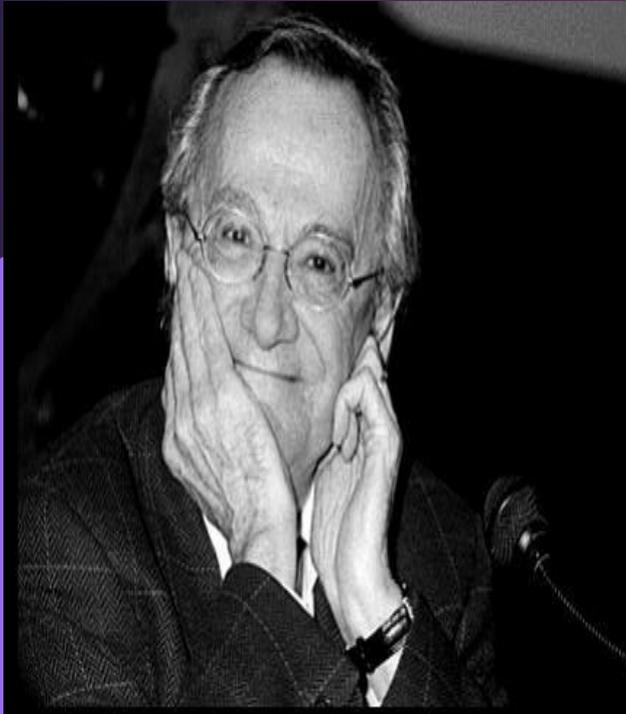
## Michel Foucault (1926-84)

### APPLICATION TO LITERATURE:

- ❖ We are never totally free to say anything we want:
  - ❖ Some have privileged right to speak (experts)
  - ❖ Rituals, doctrines and traditions
- ❖ What is the source of the discourse?
- ❖ What are the regulating institutions or ideologies?
- ❖ How are discourses controlled selected, organized and redistributed?



## Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)



- ❖ Collapse of grand narratives: "The supreme fictions we tell ourselves about ourselves."
- ❖ Classless society (Marxism)
- ❖ Freedom of humanity
- ❖ Total unity of knowledge
- ❖ Democracy through capitalism



Simplifying to the extreme, I define  
postmodern as incredulity toward  
metanarratives.

— *Jean-François Lyotard* —

# Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)



- The end of the Enlightenment project

## Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)

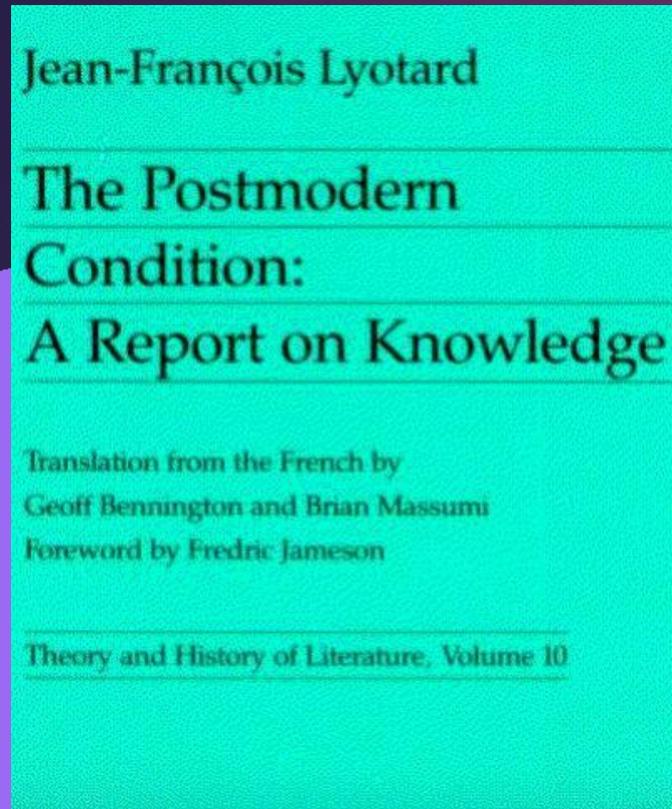
- ❖ Art removed from life (neither sacral or courtly)
- ❖ Individualistic fragmented society is here to stay
- ❖ No one can grasp all that is going on
- ❖ Capitalism created hedonism, narcissism, lack of social identity

## Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)

- ❖ Computerized knowledge has become the principle force of production
- ❖ From the “building of minds” to the acquiring of knowledge as a product that can be bought and sold
- ❖ Knowledge as a commodity that nations will fight over
- ❖ Multinational corporations breaking down sovereignty of nations



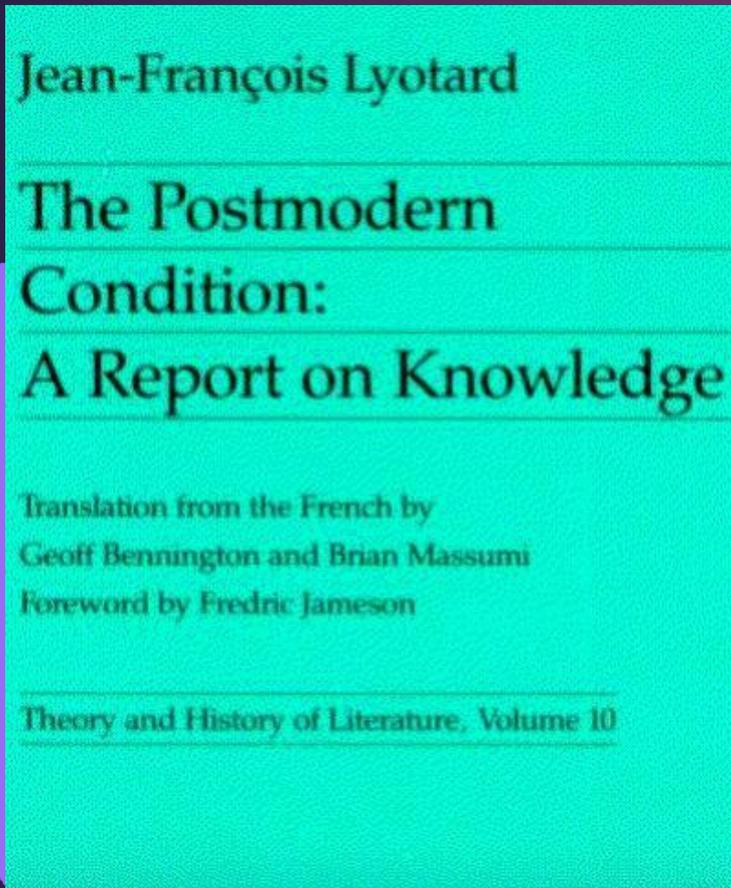
# Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)



- ❖ Language is a game based upon social contracts
- ❖ To speak is to fight
- ❖ Science and big business speaking louder
- ❖ Nations trying to pass science off as an epic
- ❖ Who will control knowledge?

# Jean-Francois Lyotard

(1924-1998)



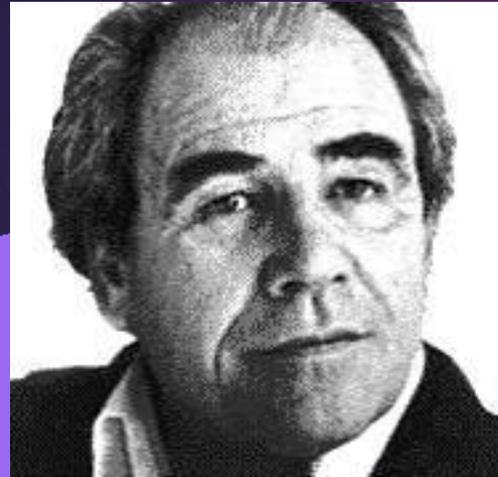
- Big stories are bad
- Little stories are good

## Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)

### APPLICATION TO LITERATURE:

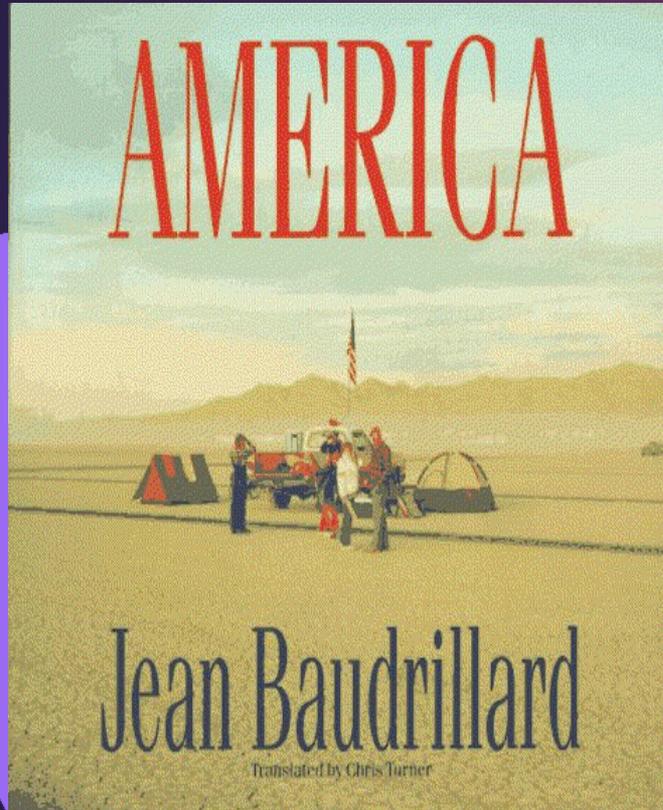
- ❖ Beware of grand narratives
- ❖ "Truth" is in fragmentation, montage, mini-narratives
- ❖ Avant-garde, non-organic art "the historic norm" (Adorno)
  - ❖ *"The only possible authentic expression of alienation in late capitalistic society."*
- ❖ View discourses as language games (none are privileged)
- ❖ People (characters) are "nodes" where pluralistic lines of discourse intersect

## Jean Baudrillard



- ❖ Cultural materialist
- ❖ Consumer objects = signs that differentiate the population
- ❖ Our postmodern is no longer real. It is a simulation of the real.
- ❖ Mass media & consumerism have created a new myth of reality that we accept as real
- ❖ We live in a state of hyperreality
- ❖ McLuhan: The medium is the message

## Jean Baudrillard (1929-)



- ❖ America is a spectacle
- ❖ An illusionary paradise
- ❖ TV is the world
- ❖ Advertising gives consumers illusion of freedom
- ❖ “All is well” is the party line
- ❖ Illusion perpetuated by media & culture
- ❖ “Kerouac with brains”

# Feminist Literary Theory

## SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR (1908-1986)

- ❖ *The Second Sex*

- ❖ Questioned the “othering” of women by Western philosophy
- ❖ Rediscovery of forgotten women’s literature
- ❖ Revolutionary advocacy of sexual politics
- ❖ Questioning of underlying phallogentric, Western, rational ideologies
- ❖ Pluralism: gender, sexual, cultural, ethnicity, postcolonial perspectives

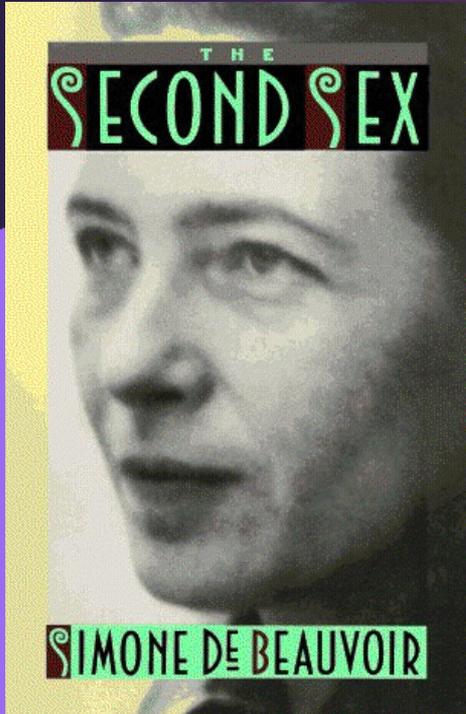


THE  
SECOND SEX



SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

## Feminist Literary Theory



- ❖ Exorcise the male mind
- ❖ Deconstructs logocentrism of male discourse
- ❖ Sees gender as a cultural construct
- ❖ So are stereotypes
- ❖ Focus on unique problems of feminism:
  - ❖ History and themes of women literature
  - ❖ Female language
  - ❖ Psycho-dynamics of female creativity

# Feminist Literary Theory

## JULIA KRISTEVA (1941-)

- ❖ Psychologist, linguist & novelist
- ❖ Influenced by Barthes, Freud & Lacan
- ❖ “Dismantles all ideologies,” including feminism
- ❖ Does not consider herself a feminist
- ❖ Disagrees with “patriarchal” views of Freud and Lacan
- ❖ Maternal body source of language and “laws” (not paternal anti-Oedipal drive)

### DESIRE IN LANGUAGE

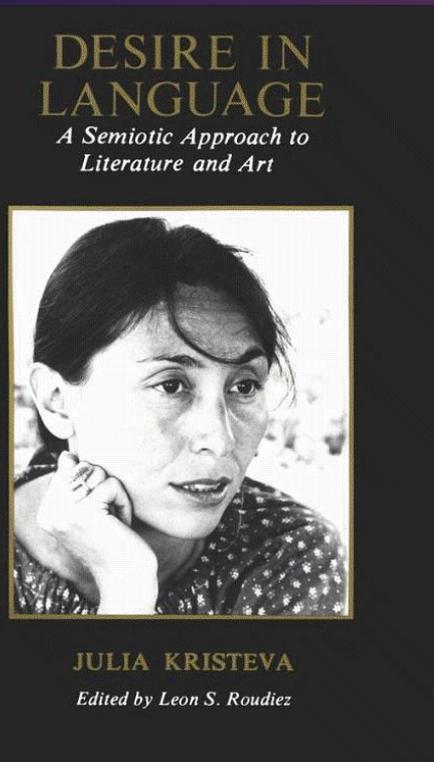
*A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*



JULIA KRISTEVA

*Edited by Leon S. Roudiez*

## Feminist Literary Theory



- ❖ Masculine symbolic order represses feminine semiotic order
- ❖ Semiotic open to men and women writers
- ❖ Semiotic is "creative"--marginal discourse of the avant garde
  - ❖ Raw material of signification from pre-Oedipal drives (*linked to mother*)
  - ❖ Realm of the subversive forces of madness, holiness and poetry
  - ❖ Creative, unrepressed energy

# Feminist Literary Theory

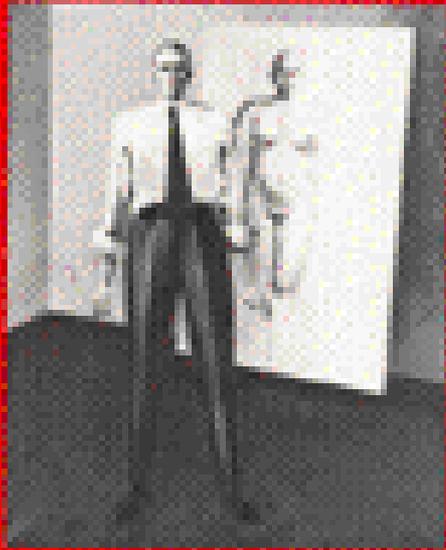


- ❖ Challenges Judeo-Christian icons of woman
- ❖ Balancing act: live within Lacan's symbolic order of patriarchal laws without losing uniqueness
- ❖ Women can produce own symbols and language
- ❖ Multiplicity of female expression
- ❖ "To break the code, to shatter language, to find specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnamable repressed by the social contract."

--Kristeva

# Feminist Literary Theory

- ❖ **ALICE JARDINE, *Gynesis* (1982)**
- ❖ Woman as a binary opposition
- ❖ Man/woman
  - ❖ Rational/irrational
  - ❖ Good/evil
- ❖ Implied male logocentrism
- ❖ The concept of *jouissance*



**GYNESIS**

COMPARISONS OF  
WOMAN AND SUBJECT

ALICE A. JARDINE

## Helene Cixous



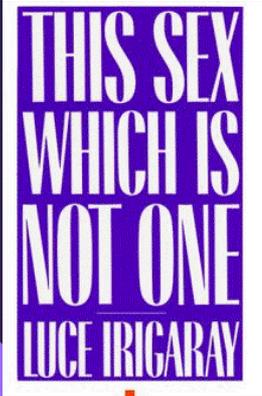
- ❖ Critic, novelist, playwright
- ❖ Picks up where Lacan leaves off
- ❖ Denounces patriarchal binary oppositions
- ❖ Women enter into the Symbolic Order differently
- ❖ Deconstructs patriarchal Greek myths
- ❖ Femininity (*jouissance*) unrepresentable in phallogocentric scheme of things
- ❖ Favors a “bisexual” view

## Helene Cixous

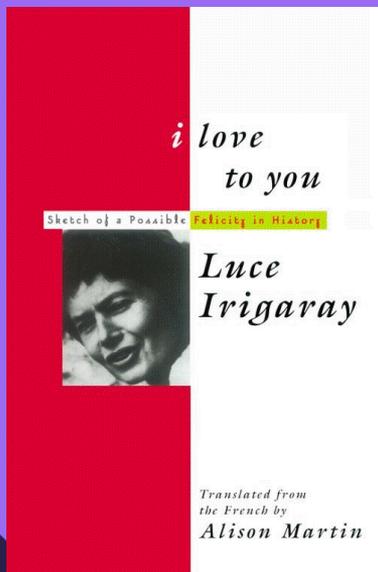


- ❖ Women are closer to the Imaginary
- ❖ Women more fluid, less fixed
- ❖ The individual woman must write herself
- ❖ Feminine literature: not objective; erase differences between order and chaos, text and speech; inherently deconstructive
- ❖ Admires Joyce and Poe
- ❖ Men can produce feminist literature

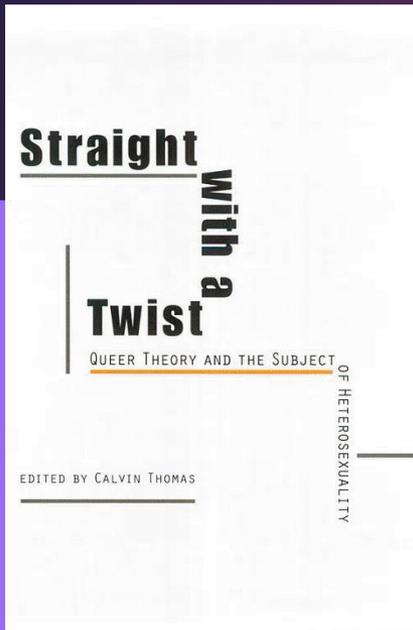
## Luce Irigaray



- ❖ Expose patriarchal foundations of Western philosophy & psychology
- ❖ Women are more than defective men
- ❖ Western culture, identity, logic and rationality are all symbolically male
- ❖ Mother-daughter relationship has been unsymbolized
- ❖ Language as elusive, shifting, undogmatic



## Queer Theory



- ❖ Gender and sexuality not “essential” to identity
- ❖ Socially constructed
- ❖ Mutable and changeable
- ❖ Self shaped by language, signs and signifiers.
- ❖ Self becomes a subject in language, with more multiplicity of meaning.
- ❖ Sex as (1) animal instinct and (2) socially constructed behavior shaped by ethics/morals
- ❖ Western ideas of sexual identity come from science, religion, economics and politics and were constructed as binary oppositions

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

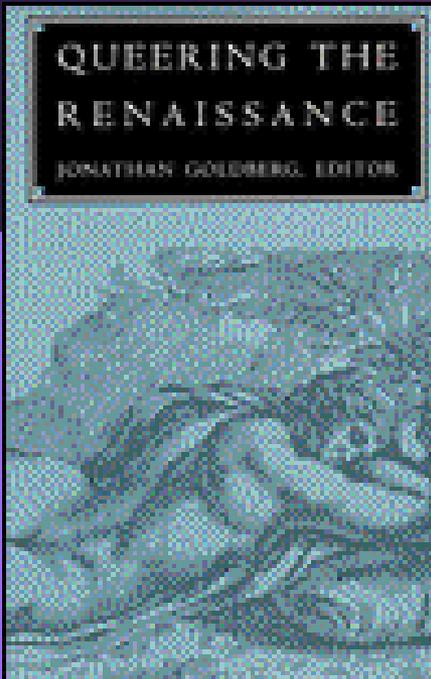
Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)

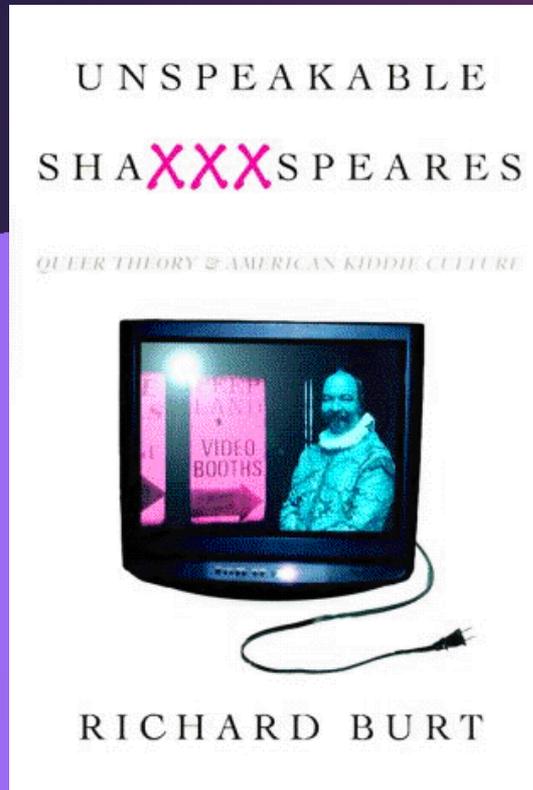


# Queer Theory

- ❑ Queer theory deconstructs all binary oppositions about human sexuality.
- ❑ Encourages the examination of the world from an alternative view.
- ❑ Allows for the inclusion of gender, sexuality, race and other areas of identity by noticing the distinctions between identities, communities, and cultures.
- ❑ Challenges heterosexism and homophobia, in addition to racism, misogyny and other oppressive discourses while celebrating diversity.

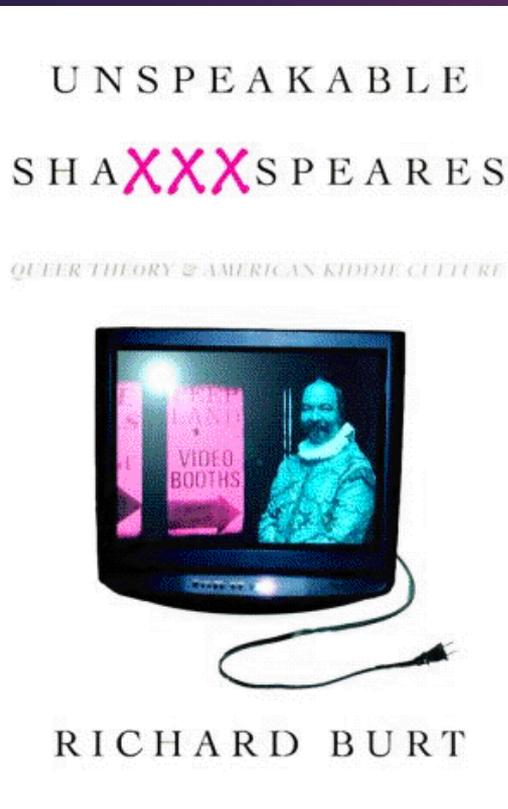


# Queer Literature



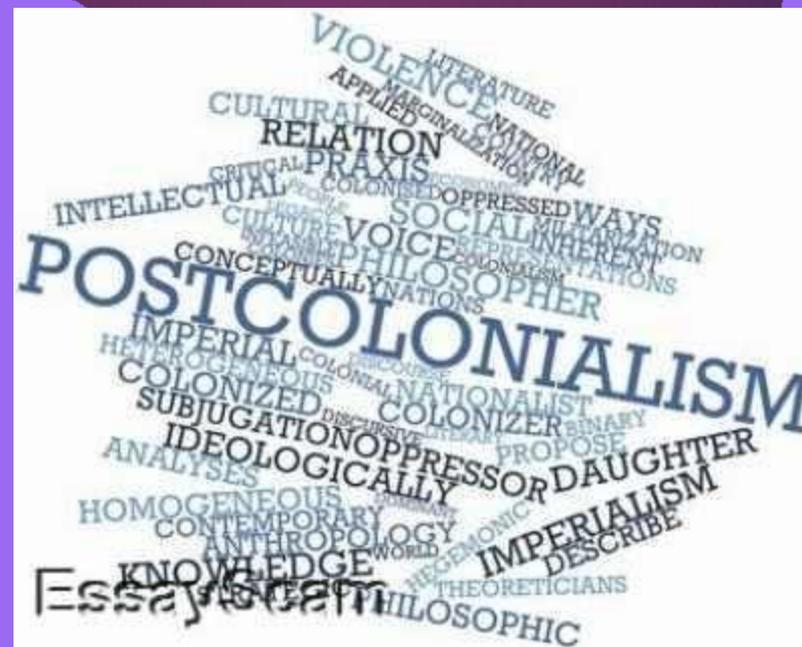
- ❖ Queer activism seeks to break down traditional ideas of normal and deviant, by showing the queer is what is thought of as normal, and the normal is queer.
- ❖ Queer theory reconstructs knowing and understanding by challenging tradition.

# Queer Literature

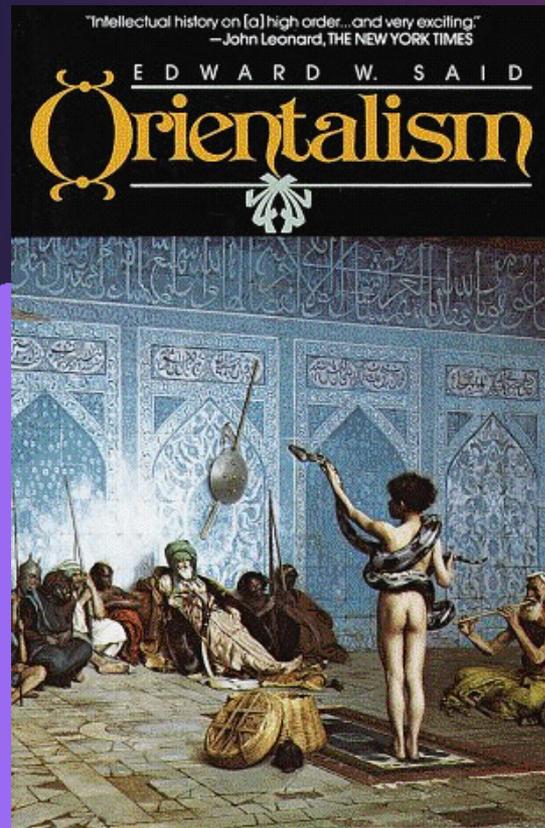


- ❖ Unmasks signs of homosexuality in “old” literature
- ❖ Reveals how cultures construct negative identities of homosexuals
- ❖ A political form of academics (change views)
- ❖ Views sexuality as a complex array of social codes and forces, individual activity and institutional power

A SEPARATE PRESENTATION ON  
POSTCOLONIALISM IS ALREADY UPLOADED



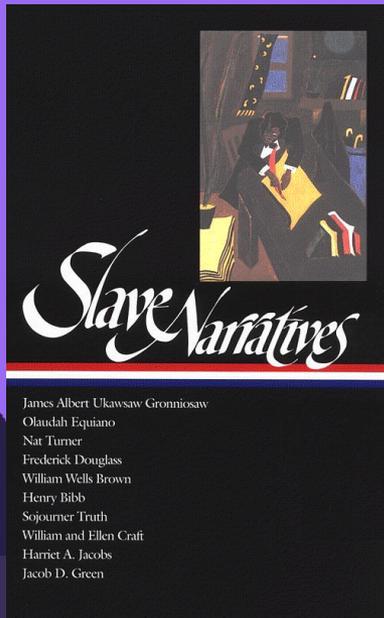
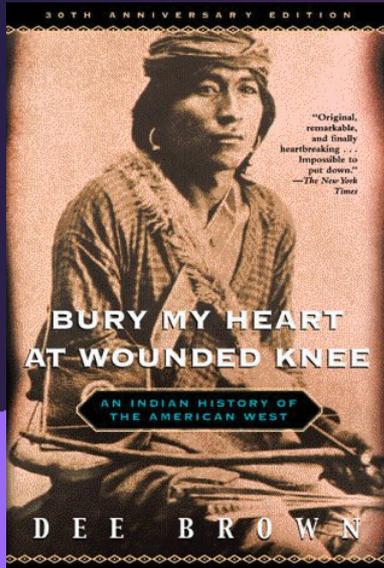
## Postcolonialism



- ❖ Attempts to resurrect colonized cultures
- ❖ Deconstruct Western view of third-world nations as "otherness"
- ❖ Edward Said: "Orientalism" was an artificial word constructed by the West to talk about and the East (*Typical binary opposition*)
- ❖ Empire-building nations used literature as power
- ❖ Ingrained Western myths & phallic logocentrism in colonized people

## Postcolonialism

- ❖ Denied richness of diversity within cultures
- ❖ “Totalizations” or stereotypes are based upon nostalgic experiences of colonizers
- ❖ Attempt to “rebuild a present” (since past is lost)--and come to grips with lack of identity
- ❖ A weapon of resistance and subversion
- ❖ Written in hybrid language



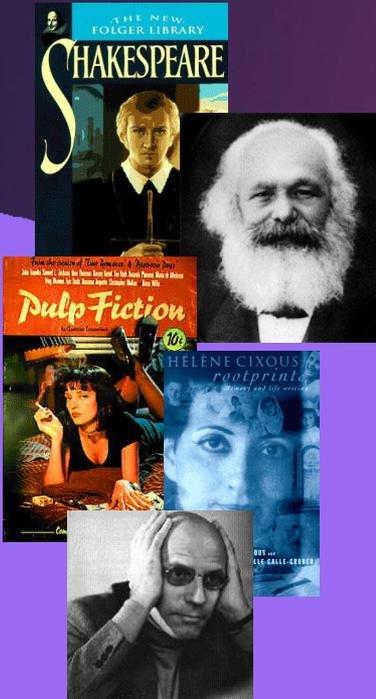
# Theory Speak

NEHA  
JAIN

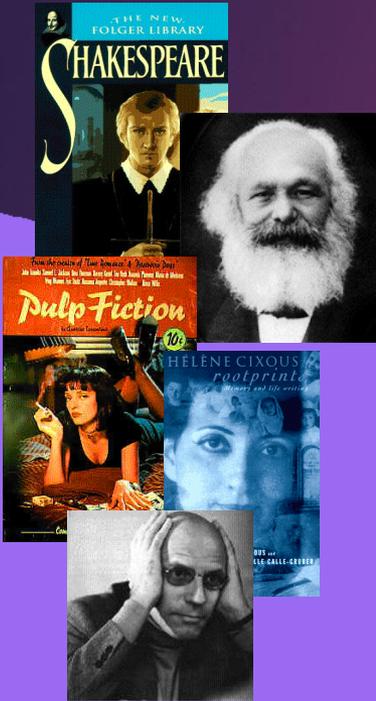
"If such a sublime cyborg would insinuate the future as post-Fordist subject, his palpably masochistic locations as ecstatic agent of the sublime superstate the need to be decoded as the 'now-all-but-unreadable DNA' of a fast deindustrializing Detroit, just as his Robocop-like strategy of carceral negotiation and street control remains the tirelessly American one of inflicting regeneration through the violence upon the racially heteroglossic wilds and others of the inner-city."

## So?

- The white-Western-male view of the world is dead
- New Criticism, Marxism & Structuralism are passed
- We now have a new set of “lenses” to view the world
- We understand the importance of being suspicious (*literature is not necessarily sincere*)
- We recognize that truth, identity, gender, etc. are social constructs, contingent and local
- We recognize the power of discourse
- PM “explains” the global world in which we live

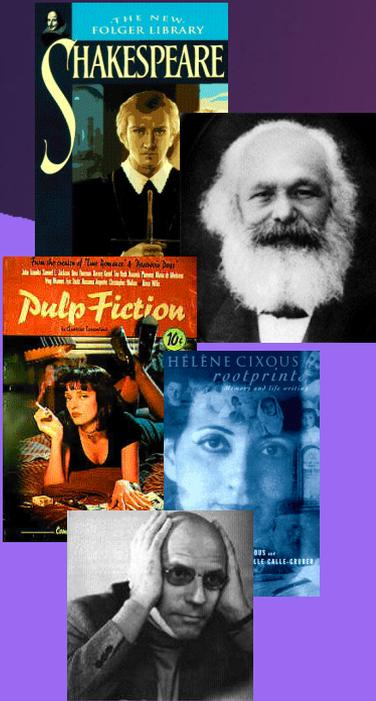


# The Dangers of Postmodernism



- ❖ Can lead to intellectual nihilism & cynicism
  - ❖ From the comfortable foundation of humanism to absolute relativism and pluralism
- ❖ Whose lens is “correct”? Who says so?
- ❖ Is humanism really all that bad?
- ❖ It’s all theory
- ❖ How do we use theory? Apply all to all texts?
- ❖ Glib, hip intellectualism

# Where Do We Go from Here?



- ❖ Has the progress of history come to a dead-end? (as Foucault and Lyotard suggest)
- ❖ Have we reached the point of self-defeating moral relativism?
- ❖ Jameson:
  - ❖ We need narratives, and some sort of history
  - ❖ We need to re-endow the individual
  - ❖ History, literature have important functions
- ❖ Sarup:
  - ❖ We need to keep the Enlightenment project alive

WHAT NEXT...?

MANY MORE...

LIKE...

# Eco-criticism

- **Ecocritics** investigate such things as the underlying ecological values, what, precisely, is meant by the word nature, and whether the examination of "place" should be a distinctive category, much like class, gender or race. Ecocritics examine human perception of **wilderness**, and how it has changed throughout history and whether or not current environmental issues are accurately represented or even mentioned in popular culture and modern literature. Scholars in ecocriticism engage in questions regarding anthropocentrism, and the **"mainstream assumption that the natural world be seen primarily as a resource for human beings"** as well as critical approaches to changing ideas in **"the material and cultural bases of modern society"**. Other disciplines, such as history, economics, philosophy, ethics, and psychology, are also considered by ecocritics to be possible contributors to ecocriticism.

# Eco-criticism



- **William Rueckert** may have been the first person to use the term ecocriticism in his 1978 essay entitled **Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism**, ecocriticism as a movement owes much to Rachel Carson's 1962 environmental exposé *Silent Spring*. Drawing from this critical moment, Rueckert's intent was to focus on "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature".

# Ecofeminism

- **Ecofeminism is a term that links feminism with ecology.** Its advocates say that paternalistic/capitalistic society has led to a harmful split between nature and culture. Early ecofeminists propagated that the split can only be healed by the **feminine instinct** for nurture and holistic knowledge of nature's processes. Modern ecofeminism, or feminist eco-criticism, eschews such essentialism and instead focuses more on intersectional questions, such as how the nature-culture split enables the oppression of female and nonhuman bodies. It is also an activist and academic movement that sees critical connections between the exploitation of nature and the domination over women both caused by men.

# CONTACT ZONE THEORY

- In a 1991 keynote address to the Modern Language Association titled "Arts of the Contact Zone," **Mary Louise Pratt** introduced the concept of "the contact zone." She articulated, "I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today"

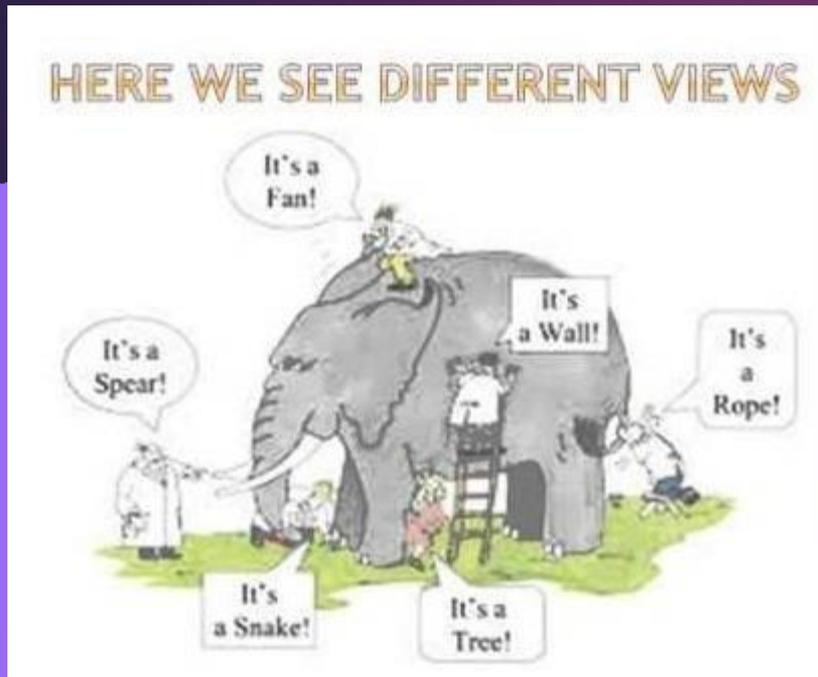


# STRANGER KING THEORY

NEHA  
JAIN

- The Stranger King theory offers a framework to understand global colonialism. It seeks to explain the apparent ease whereby many indigenous peoples subjugated themselves to an alien colonial power and places state formation by colonial powers within the continuum of earlier, similar but indigenous processes.

# STANDPOINT THEORY



- Standpoint theory is a postmodern theory for analyzing inter-subjective discourses. This body of work concerns the ways that authority is rooted in individuals' knowledge (their perspectives), and the power that such authority exerts.

# STANDPOINT THEORY

NEHA  
JAIN

- Standpoint theory's most important concept is that an individual's own perspectives are shaped by his or her social and political experiences. Standpoints are multifaceted rather than essentializing: while Hispanic women may generally share some perspectives, particularly with regard to ethnicity or sex, they are not defined solely by their participation in these categories. The amalgamation of a person's many experienced dimensions form a standpoint—a point of view—through which that individual sees and understands the world.

# MUTED GROUP THEORY

NEHA  
JAIN



- Muted group theory (MGT), created **by Edwin and Shirley Ardener** in 1975, is a communication theory that focuses on how marginalized groups are muted and excluded via the use of language. The main idea of MGT is that "Language serves its creators better than those in other groups who have to learn to use the language as best they can." The term "mutedness" refers to a group's inability to express themselves due to this inequity

# MUTED GROUP THEORY

- ❖ The theory describes the relationship between a dominant group and its subordinate group(s) as being as follows:
- ❖ 1) the dominant group contributes mostly to the formulation of the language system, including the norms and vocabulary, and
- ❖ 2) members from the subordinate group have to learn and use the dominant language to express themselves. However, this translation process may result in the loss and distortion of information as the people from subordinate groups cannot articulate their ideas clearly.
- ❖ The dominant group may also ignore the voice of the marginalized group. All these may eventually lead to the mutedness of the subordinate group. Although this theory was initially developed to study the different situations faced by women and men, it can also be applied to any marginalized group that is muted by the inadequacies of their languages.

# CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- ❖ Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power. It began as a theoretical movement within American law schools in the mid-to late 1980s as an offshoot of critical legal studies and is loosely unified by two common themes:
- ❖ First, CRT proposes that white supremacy and racial power are maintained over time, and in particular, that the law may play a role in this process.
- ❖ Second, CRT work has investigated the possibility of transforming the relationship between law and racial power, and more broadly, pursues a project of achieving racial emancipation and anti-subordination. Scholars important to the theory include **Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Mari Matsuda.**

# CULTURAL STUDIES

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ The field of cultural studies encompasses a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives and practices. Although distinct from the disciplines of cultural anthropology and ethnic studies, cultural studies draws upon and has contributed to each of these disciplines.

# X REALITY THEORY

NEHA  
JAIN

- X Reality (XR or Cross Reality) consists of technology-mediated experiences that combine digital and biological realities. It encompasses a wide spectrum of hardware and software, including sensory interfaces, applications, and infrastructures, that enable content creation for virtual reality (VR), mixed reality (MR), augmented reality (AR), cinematic reality (CR), and more. With these tools, users generate new forms of reality by bringing digital objects into the physical world and bringing physical world objects into the digital world.

# X REALITY THEORY

NEHA  
JAIN

- "XR" is a far-reaching, inclusive, and flexible term. The "X" represents a variable that is not fully known or specified, intentionally suggesting an open ecosystem that will continue to expand.
- XR technologies have applications in almost every industry, such as: architecture, automotive industry, sports training, real estate, mental health, medicine, health care, retail, space travel, design, engineering, interior design, television and film, media, advertising, marketing, libraries, education, news, music, and travel.

[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)



# POST POSTMODERNISM DEVELOPMENT

- In 1995, the landscape architect and urban planner **Tom Turner** issued a book-length call for a post-postmodern turn in urban planning.
- In his 1999 book on Russian postmodernism the Russian-American **Slavist Mikhail** Epstein suggested that postmodernism “is [...] part of a much larger historical formation,” which he calls “postmodernity.”
- The term post-millennialism was introduced in 2000 by the American cultural theorist **Eric Gans**.

# POST POSTMODERNISM DEVELOPMENT

- In his 2006 paper **The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond**, the British scholar **Alan Kirby** formulated a socio-cultural assessment of post-postmodernism that he calls **"pseudo-modernism."** Kirby associates pseudo-modernism with the triteness and shallowness resulting from the instantaneous, direct, and superficial participation in culture made possible by the internet, mobile phones, interactive television and similar means: "In pseudo-modernism one phones, clicks, presses, surfs, chooses, moves, downloads."

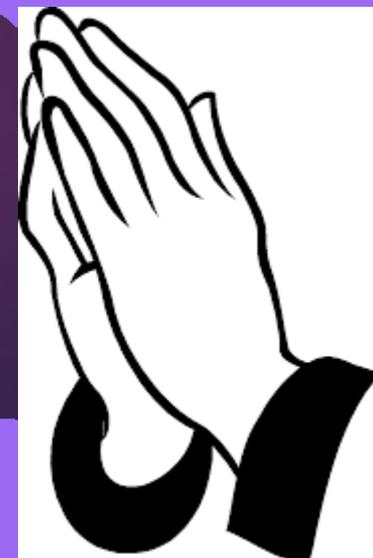
# POST POSTMODERNISM DEVELOPMENT

- In 2010 the cultural theorists **Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker** introduced the term metamodernism as an intervention in the post-postmodernism debate. In their article **'Notes on metamodernism'** they assert that the 2000s are characterized by the emergence of a sensibility that oscillates between, and must be situated beyond, modern positions and postmodern strategies. As examples of the metamodern sensibility Vermeulen and van den Akker cite the **'informed naivety'**, **'pragmatic idealism'** and **'moderate fanaticism'** of the various cultural responses to, among others, climate change, the financial crisis, and (geo)political instability.

THERE ARE MANY MORE TO DISCUSS

**BUT I STOP HERE..**

THANKS



[www.nehajain.net.in](http://www.nehajain.net.in)

NEHA  
JAIN

NEHA JAIN  
NEHA JAIN

## ENGLISH NET/SET CONSULTANT

DA-2,3rd Floor, Near Metro Pillar No.  
52, Vikas Marg, Block Da, Shakarpur,  
Delhi, 110092

Mobile : +1 9599460562

[art.ugc.english@gmail.com](mailto:art.ugc.english@gmail.com)

