LITERARY CRITICISM AND THEORIES

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SYLLABUS

Literary Criticism and Theories II

Sr. No.	Content
1	**Aristotle's Poetics**
2	Stanley Fish .
3	**Jaques Derrida**
4	Lionel Trilling
5	**Jaques Lacan**

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Notes

Unit 1: Mikhail Bakhtin and his 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse-Dialogics in Novels: Introduction

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know Early Life of Bakhtin.
- Discuss Career, Works and Ideas of Bakhtin.
- Explain Speech Genre and Other Late Essays.

Introduction

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. His writings, on a variety of subjects, inspired scholars working in a number of different traditions (Marxism, semiotics, structuralism, religious criticism) and in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, anthropology and psychology. Although Bakhtin was active in the debates on aesthetics and literature that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, his distinctive position did not become well known until he was rediscovered by Russian scholars in the 1960s.

Bakhtin had a difficult life and career, and few of his works were published in an authoritative form during his lifetime. As a result, there is substantial disagreement over matters that are normally taken for granted: in which discipline he worked (was he a philosopher or literary critic?), how to periodize his work, and even which texts he wrote. He is known for a series of concepts that have been used and adapted in a number of disciplines: dialogism, the carnivalesque, the chronotope, heteroglossia and "outsidedness" (the English translation of a Russian term vnenakhodimost, sometimes rendered into English-from French rather than from Russian-as "exotopy"). Together these concepts outline a distinctive philosophy of language and culture that has at its center the claims that all discourse is in essence a dialogical exchange and that this endows all language with a particular ethical or ethico-political force.

As a literary theorist, Bakhtin is associated with the Russian Formalists, and his work is compared with that of Yuri Lotman; in 1963 Roman Jakobson mentioned him as one of the few intelligent critics of Formalism. During the 1920s, Bakhtin's work tended to focus on ethics and aesthetics in general. Early pieces such as Towards a Philosophy of the Act and Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity are indebted to the philosophical trends of the time-particularly the Marburg School Neo-Kantianism of Hermann Cohen, including Earnest Cassirer, Max Scheler and, to a lesser extent,

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Nicolai Hartmann. Bakhtin began to be discovered by scholars in 1963, but it was only after his death in 1975 that authors such as Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov brought Bakhtin to the attention of the Francophone world, and from there his popularity in the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries continued to grow. In the late 1980s, Bakhtin's work experienced a surge of popularity in the West.

Bakhtin's primary works include Toward a Philosophy of the Act, an unfinished portion of a philosophical essay; Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art, to which Bakhtin later added a chapter on the concept of carnival and published with the title Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics; Rabelais and His World, which explores the openness of the Rabelaisian novel; The Dialogic Imagination, whereby the four essays that comprise the work introduce the concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, and chronotope; and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, a collection of essays in which Bakhtin concerns himself with method and culture.

In the 1920s there was a "Bakhtin school" in Russia, in line with the discourse analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson.

1.1 Early Life of Mikhail Bakhtin

Bakhtin was born in Oryol, Russia, to an old family of the nobility. His father was the manager of a bank and worked in several cities. For this reason Bakhtin spent his early childhood years in Orel, Vilnius, and then Odessa, where in 1913 he joined the historical and philological faculty at the local university. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist write: "Odessa..., like Vilnius, was an appropriate setting for a chapter in the life of a man who was to become the philosopher of heteroglossia and carnival. The same sense of fun and irreverence that gave birth to Babel's Rabelaisian gangster or to the tricks and deceptions of Ostap Bender, the picaro created by Ilf and Petrov, left its mark on Bakhtin." He later transferred toPetersburg University to join his brother Nikolai. It is here that Bakhtin was greatly influenced by the classicist F. F. Zelinsky, whose works contain the beginnings of concepts elaborated by Bakhtin.

1.2 Career

Bakhtin completed his studies in 1918 and moved to a small city in western Russia, Nevel (Pskov Oblast), where he worked as a schoolteacher for two years. It was at this time that the first "Bakhtin Circle" formed. The group consisted of intellectuals with varying interests, but all shared a love for the discussion of literary, religious, and political topics. Included in this group were Valentin Voloshinov and, eventually, P. N. Medvedev, who joined the group later in Vitebsk. German philosophy was the topic talked about most frequently and, from this point forward, Bakhtin considered himself more a philosopher than a literary scholar. It was in Nevel, also, that Bakhtin worked tirelessly on a large work concerning moral philosophy that was never published in its entirety. However, in 1919, a short section of this work was published and given the title "Art and Responsibility". This piece constitutes Bakhtin's first published work. Bakhtin relocated to Vitebsk in 1920. It was here, in 1921, that Bakhtin married Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich. Later, in 1923, Bakhtin was diagnosed with osteomyelitis, a bone disease that ultimately led to the amputation of his leg in 1938. This illness hampered his productivity and rendered him an invalid.

In 1924, Bakhtin moved to Leningrad, where he assumed a position at the Historical Institute and provided consulting services for the State Publishing House. It is at this time that Bakhtin decided to share his work with the public, but just before "On the Question of the Methodology of Aesthetics in Written Works" was to be published, the journal in which it was to appear stopped publication. This work was eventually published 51 years later. The repression and misplacement of his manuscripts was something that would plague Bakhtin throughout his career. In 1929, "Problems of Dostoevsky's Art", Bakhtin's first major work, was published. It is here that Bakhtin introduces the concept of dialogism. However, just as this revolutionary book was introduced, Bakhtin was accused of participating in the Russian Orthodox Church's underground movement. The truthfulness of this charge is not known, even today. Consequently, during one of the many purges of artists and intellectuals that Joseph Stalin conducted during the early years of his rule,

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Bakhtin was sentenced to exile in Siberia but appealed on the grounds that, in his weakened state, it would kill him. Instead, he was sentenced to six years of internal exile in Kazakhstan.

Bakhtin spent these six years working as a book-keeper in the town of Kustanai, during which time he wrote several important essays, including "Discourse in the Novel". In 1936 he taught courses at the Mordovian Pedagogical Institute in Saransk. An obscure figure in a provincial college, he dropped out of view and taught only occasionally. In 1937, Bakhtin moved to Kimry, a town located a couple of hundred kilometers from Moscow. Here, Bakhtin completed work on a book concerning the 18th-century German novel which was subsequently accepted by the Sovetskii Pisatel' Publishing House. However, the only copy of the manuscript disappeared during the upheaval caused by the German invasion.

After the amputation of his leg in 1938, Bakhtin's health improved and he became more prolific. In 1946 and 1949, the defense of this dissertation divided the scholars of Moscow into two groups: those official opponents guiding the defense, who accepted the original and unorthodox manuscript, and those other professors who were against the manuscript's acceptance. The book's earthy, anarchic topic was the cause of many arguments that ceased only when the government intervened. Ultimately, Bakhtin was denied a doctorate and granted a lesser degree by the State Accrediting Bureau. Later, Bakhtin was invited back to Saransk, where he took on the position of chair of the General Literature Department at the Mordovian Pedagogical Institute. When, in 1957, the Institute changed from a teachers' college to a university, Bakhtin became head of the Department of Russian and World Literature. In 1961, Bakhtin's deteriorating health forced him to retire, and in 1969, in search of medical attention, Bakhtin moved back to Moscow, where he lived until his death in 1975.

Bakhtin's works and ideas gained popularity after his death, and he endured difficult conditions for much of his professional life, a time in which information was often seen as dangerous and therefore often hidden. As a result, the details provided now are often of uncertain accuracy. Also contributing to the imprecision of these details is the limited access to Russian archival information during Bakhtin's life. It is only after the archives became public that scholars realized that much of what they thought they knew about the details of Bakhtin's life was false or skewed largely by Bakhtin himself.

Did u know? In 1940, and until the end of World War II, Bakhtin lived in Moscow, where he submitted a dissertation on François Rabelais to the Gorky Institute of World Literature to obtain a postgraduate title, a dissertation that could not be defended until the war ended.

1.3 Works and Ideas

Toward a Philosophy of the Act

Toward a Philosophy of the Act was first published in the USSR in 1986 with the title K filosofii postupka. The manuscript, written between 1919-1921, was found in bad condition with pages missing and sections of text that were illegible. Consequently, this philosophical essay appears today as a fragment of an unfinished work. Toward a Philosophy of the Act comprises only an introduction, of which the first few pages are missing, and part one of the full text. However, Bakhtin's intentions for the work were not altogether lost, for he provided an outline in the introduction in which he stated that the essay was to contain four parts. The first part of the essay deals with the analysis of the performed acts or deeds that comprise the actual world; "the world actually experienced, and not the merely thinkable world." For the three subsequent and unfinished parts of Toward a Philosophy of the Act Bakhtin states the topics he intends to discuss. He outlines that the second part will deal with aesthetic activity and the ethics of artistic creation; the third with the ethics of politics; and the fourth with religion.

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Toward a Philosophy of the Act reveals a young Bakhtin who is in the process of developing his moral philosophy by decentralizing the work of Kant. This text is one of Bakhtin's early works concerning ethics and aesthetics and it is here that Bakhtin lays out three claims regarding the acknowledgment of the uniqueness of one's participation in Being:

1. I both actively and passively participate in Being.
2. My uniqueness is given but it simultaneously exists only to the degree to which I actualize this uniqueness (in other words, it is in the performed act and deed that has yet to be achieved).
3. Because I am actual and irreplaceable I must actualize my uniqueness.

Bakhtin further states: "It is in relation to the whole actual unity that my unique thought arises from my unique place in Being." Bakhtin deals with the concept of morality whereby he attributes the predominating legalistic notion of morality to human moral action. According to Bakhtin, the I cannot maintain neutrality toward moral and ethical demands which manifest themselves as one's voice of consciousness.

It is here also that Bakhtin introduces an "architectonic" or schematic model of the human psyche which consists of three components: "I-for-myself", "I-for-the-other", and "other-for-me". The I-for-myself is an unreliable source of identity, and Bakhtin argues that it is the I-for-the-other through which human beings develop a sense of identity because it serves as an amalgamation of the way in which others view me. Conversely, other-for-me describes the way in which others incorporate my perceptions of them into their own identities. Identity, as Bakhtin describes it here, does not belong merely to the individual, rather it is shared by all.

Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics: Polyphony and Unfinalizability

During his time in Leningrad, Bakhtin shifted his focus away from the philosophy characteristic of his early works and towards the notion of dialogue. It is at this time that he began his engagement with the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art is considered to be Bakhtin's seminal work, and it is here that Bakhtin introduces three important concepts.

First, is the concept of the unfinalizable self: individual people cannot be finalized, completely understood, known, or labeled. Though it is possible to understand people and to treat them as if they are completely known, Bakhtin's conception of unfinalizability respects the possibility that a person can change, and that a person is never fully revealed or fully known in the world. Readers may find that this conception reflects the idea of the "soul"; Bakhtin had strong roots in Christianity and in the Neo-Kantian school led by Hermann Cohen, both of which emphasized the importance of an individual's potentially infinite capability, worth, and the hidden soul.

Second, is the idea of the relationship between the self and others, or other groups. According to Bakhtin, every person is influenced by others in an inescapably intertwined way, and consequently no voice can be said to be isolated. In an interview, Bakhtin once explained that,

In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding-in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are others.

As such, Bakhtin's philosophy greatly respected the influences of others on the self, not merely in terms of how a person comes to be, but also in how a person thinks and how a person sees him- or herself truthfully.

Third, Bakhtin found in Dostoevsky's work a true representation of "polyphony", that is, many voices. Each character in Dostoevsky's work represents a voice that speaks for an individual self, distinct from others. This idea of polyphony is related to the concepts of unfinalizability and self-and-others, since it is the unfinalizability of individuals that creates true polyphony.

Bakhtin briefly outlined the polyphonic concept of truth. He criticized the assumption that, if two people disagree, at least one of them must be in error. He challenged philosophers for whom plurality of minds is accidental and superfluous. For Bakhtin, truth is not a statement, a sentence

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or a phrase. Instead, truth is a number of mutually addressed, albeit contradictory and logically inconsistent, statements. Truth needs a multitude of carrying voices. It cannot be held within a single mind, it also cannot be expressed by "a single mouth". The polyphonic truth requires many simultaneous voices. Bakhtin does not mean to say that many voices carry partial truths that complement each other. A number of different voices do not make the truth if simply "averaged" or "synthesized". It is the fact of mutual addressivity, of engagement, and of commitment to the context of a real-life event, that distinguishes truth from untruth.

When, in subsequent years, Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art was translated into English and published in the West, Bakhtin added a chapter on the concept of "carnival" and the book was published with the slightly different title, Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics. According to Bakhtin, carnival is the context in which distinct individual voices are heard, flourish and interact together. The carnival creates the "threshold" situations where regular conventions are broken or reversed and genuine dialogue becomes possible. The notion of a carnival was Bakhtin's way of describing Dostoevsky's polyphonic style: each individual character is strongly defined, and at the same time the reader witnesses the critical influence of each character upon the other. That is to say, the voices of others are heard by each individual, and each inescapably shapes the character of the other.

Rabelais and His World: Carnival and Grotesque

During World War II Bakhtin submitted a dissertation on the French Renaissance writer François Rabelais which was not defended until some years later. The controversial ideas discussed within the work caused much disagreement, and it was consequently decided that Bakhtin be denied his doctorate. Thus, due to its content, Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance was not published until 1965, at which time it was given the title, Rabelais and His World.

A classic of Renaissance studies, in Rabelais and His World Bakhtin explores Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel. Bakhtin declares that, for centuries, Rabelais's book had been misunderstood, and claimed that Rabelais and His World clarified Rabelais's intentions. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin concerns himself with the openness of Gargantua and Pantagruel; however, the book itself also serves as an example of such openness. Throughout the text, Bakhtin attempts two things: he seeks to recover sections of Gargantua and Pantagruel that, in the past, were either ignored or suppressed, and conducts an analysis of the Renaissance social system in order to discover the balance between language that was permitted and language that was not. It is by means of this analysis that Bakhtin pinpoints two important subtexts: the first is carnival (carnivalesque) which Bakhtin describes as a social institution, and the second is grotesque realism which is defined as a literary mode. Thus, in Rabelais and His World Bakhtin studies the interaction between the social and the literary, as well as the meaning of the body and the material bodily lower stratum.

In his chapter on the history of laughter, Bakhtin advances the notion of its therapeutic and liberating force, arguing that in resisting hypocrisy "laughing truth... degraded power".

The Dialogic Imagination: Chronotope, Heteroglossia

The Dialogic Imagination (first published as a whole in 1975) is a compilation of four essays concerning language and the novel: "Epic and Novel" (1941), "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse", "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", and "Discourse in the Novel". It is through the essays contained within The Dialogic Imagination that Bakhtin introduces the concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism and chronotope, making a significant contribution to the realm of literary scholarship. Bakhtin explains the generation of meaning through the "primacy of context over text" (heteroglossia), the hybrid nature of language (polyglossia) and the relation between utterances (intertextuality). Heteroglossia is "the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance." To make an utterance means to "appropriate the words of others

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and populate them with one's own intention." Bakhtin's deep insights on dialogicality represent a substantive shift from views on the nature of language and knowledge by major thinkers as Ferdinand de Saussure and Immanuel Kant.

In "Epic and Novel", Bakhtin demonstrates the novel's distinct nature by contrasting it with the epic. By doing so, Bakhtin shows that the novel is well-suited to the post-industrial civilization in which we live because it flourishes on diversity. It is this same diversity that the epic attempts to eliminate from the world. According to Bakhtin, the novel as a genre is unique in that it is able to embrace, ingest, and devour other genres while still maintaining its status as a novel. Other genres, however, cannot emulate the novel without damaging their own distinct identity.

"From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is a less traditional essay in which Bakhtin reveals how various different texts from the past have ultimately come together to form the modern novel.

"Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" introduces Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. This essay applies the concept in order to further demonstrate the distinctive quality of the novel. The word chronotope literally means "time space" and is defined by Bakhtin as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." For the purpose of his writing, an author must create entire worlds and, in doing so, is forced to make use of the organizing categories of the real world in which he lives. For this reason chronotope is a concept that engages reality.

The final essay, "Discourse in the Novel", is one of Bakhtin's most complete statements concerning his philosophy of language. It is here that Bakhtin provides a model for a history of discourse and introduces the concept of heteroglossia. The term heteroglossia refers to the qualities of a language that are extralinguistic, but common to all languages. These include qualities such as perspective, evaluation, and ideological positioning. In this way most languages are incapable of neutrality, for every word is inextricably bound to the context in which it exists.

1.4 Speech Genres and Other Late Essays

In Speech Genres and Other Late Essays Bakhtin moves away from the novel and concerns himself with the problems of method and the nature of culture. There are six essays that comprise this compilation: "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff", "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism", "The Problem of Speech Genres", "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis", "From Notes Made in 1970-71," and "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences."

"Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff" is a transcript of comments made by Bakhtin to a reporter from a monthly journal called Novy Mir that was widely read by Soviet intellectuals. The transcript expresses Bakhtin's opinion of literary scholarship whereby he highlights some of its shortcomings and makes suggestions for improvement.

"The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" is a fragment from one of Bakhtin's lost books. The publishing house to which Bakhtin had submitted the full manuscript was blown up during the German invasion and Bakhtin was in possession of only the prospectus. However, due to a shortage of paper, Bakhtin began using this remaining section to roll cigarettes. So only a portion of the opening section remains. This remaining section deals primarily with Goethe.

"The Problem of Speech Genres" deals with the difference between Saussurean linguistics and language as a living dialogue (translinguistics). In a relatively short space, this essay takes up a topic about which Bakhtin had planned to write a book, making the essay a rather dense and complex read. It is here that Bakhtin distinguishes between literary and everyday language. According to Bakhtin, genres exist not merely in language, but rather in communication. In dealing with genres, Bakhtin indicates that they have been studied only within the realm of rhetoric andliterature, but each discipline draws largely on genres that exist outside both rhetoric and

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literature. These extraliterary genres have remained largely unexplored. Bakhtin makes the distinction between primary genres and secondary genres, whereby primary genres legislate those words, phrases, and expressions that are acceptable in everyday life, and secondary genres are characterized by various types of text such as legal, scientific, etc.

"The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis" is a compilation of the thoughts Bakhtin recorded in his notebooks. These notes focus mostly on the problems of the text, but various other sections of the paper discuss topics he has taken up elsewhere, such as speech genres, the status of the author, and the distinct nature of the human sciences. However, "The Problem of the Text" deals primarily with dialogue and the way in which a text relates to its context. Speakers, Bakhtin claims, shape an utterance according to three variables: the object of discourse, the immediate addressee, and a superaddressee. This is what Bakhtin describes as the tertiary nature of dialogue.

"From Notes Made in 1970-71" appears also as a collection of fragments extracted from notebooks Bakhtin kept during the years of 1970 and 1971. It is here that Bakhtin discusses interpretation and its endless possibilities. According to Bakhtin, humans have a habit of making narrow interpretations, but such limited interpretations only serve to weaken the richness of the past.

The final essay, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences", originates from notes Bakhtin wrote during the mid-seventies and is the last piece of writing Bakhtin produced before he died. In this essay he makes a distinction between dialectic and dialogics and comments on the difference between the text and the aesthetic object. It is here also, that Bakhtin differentiates himself from the Formalists, who, he felt, underestimated the importance of content while oversimplifying change, and the Structuralists, who too rigidly adhered to the concept of "code."

Disputed Texts

Some of the works which bear the names of Bakhtin's close friends V. N. Vološinov and P. N. Medvedev have been attributed to Bakhtin - particularly The Formal Method in Literary Scholarshipand Marxism and Philosophy of Language. These claims originated in the early 1970s and received their earliest full articulation in English in Clark and Holquist's 1984 biography of Bakhtin. In the years since then, however, most scholars have come to agree that Vološinov and Medvedev ought to be considered the true authors of these works. Although Bakhtin undoubtedly influenced these scholars and may even have had a hand in composing the works attributed to them, it now seems clear that if it was necessary to attribute authorship of these works to one person, Vološinov and Medvedev respectively should receive credit.

Influence

He is known today for his interest in a wide variety of subjects, ideas, vocabularies, and periods, as well as his use of authorial disguises, and for his influence (alongside György Lukács) on the growth of Western scholarship on the novel as a premiere literary genre. As a result of the breadth of topics with which he dealt, Bakhtin has influenced such Western schools of theory as Neo-Marxism, Structuralism, and Semiotics. However, his influence on such groups has, somewhat paradoxically, resulted in narrowing the scope of Bakhtin's work. According to Clark and Holquist, rarely do those who incorporate Bakhtin's ideas into theories of their own appreciate his work in its entirety.

While Bakhtin is traditionally seen as a literary critic, there can be no denying his impact on the realm of rhetorical theory. Among his many theories and ideas Bakhtin indicates that style is a developmental process, occurring both within the user of language and language itself. His work instills in the reader an awareness of tone and expression that arises from the careful formation of verbal phrasing. By means of his writing, Bakhtin has enriched the experience of verbal and written expression which ultimately aids the formal teaching of writing. Some even suggest that Bakhtin introduces a new meaning to rhetoric because of his tendency to reject the separation of language and ideology.

Self-Assessment

Notes

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Bakhtin began to be discovered by scholars in ..... .

(*a*) 1963 (*b*) 1965

(*c*) 1980 (*d*) 1971

(*ii*) Bakhtin completed his studies in ..... .

(*a*) 1915 (*b*) 1910

(*c*) 1918 (*d*) None of these

(*iii*) Bhaktin's K. Filosofii Postupka was published in ..... .

(*a*) 1985 (*b*) 1986

(*c*) 1990 (*d*) 2000

(*iv*) The Dialogic Imagination was published in ..... .

(*a*) 1975 (*b*) 1965

(*c*) 1970 (*d*) 1985

1.5 Summary

- Although Bakhtin was active in the debates on aesthetics and literature that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, his distinctive position did not become well known until he was rediscovered by Russian scholars in the 1960s.
- Bakhtin had a difficult life and career, and few of his works were published in an authoritative form during his lifetime. As a result, there is substantial disagreement over matters that are normally taken for granted: in which discipline he worked (was he a philosopher or literary critic?), how to periodize his work, and even which texts he wrote (see below). He is known for a series of concepts that have been used and adapted in a number of disciplines: dialogism, the carnivalesque, the chronotope, heteroglossia and "outsidedness" (the English translation of a Russian term vnenakhodimost, sometimes rendered into English-from French rather than from Russian-as "exotopy").
- Bakhtin's primary works include Toward a Philosophy of the Act, an unfinished portion of a philosophical essay; Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art, to which Bakhtin later added a chapter on the concept of carnival and published with the title Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics; Rabelais and His World, which explores the openness of the Rabelaisian novel; The Dialogic Imagination, whereby the four essays that comprise the work introduce the concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, and chronotope; and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, a collection of essays in which Bakhtin concerns himself with method and culture.
- Bakhtin completed his studies in 1918 and moved to a small city in western Russia, Nevel (Pskov Oblast), where he worked as a school teacher for two years. It was at this time that the first "Bakhtin Circle" formed. The group consisted of intellectuals with varying interests, but all shared a love for the discussion of literary, religious, and political topics. Included in this group were Valentin Voloshinov and, eventually, P. N. Medvedev, who joined the group later in Vitebsk. German philosophy was the topic talked about most frequently and, from this point forward, Bakhtin considered himself more a philosopher than a literary scholar. It was in Nevel, also, that Bakhtin worked tirelessly on a large work concerning moral philosophy that was never published in its entirety.
- In 1924, Bakhtin moved to Leningrad, where he assumed a position at the Historical Institute and provided consulting services for the State Publishing House. It is at this time that Bakhtin decided to share his work with the public, but just before "On the Question of the Methodology of Aesthetics in Written Works" was to be published, the journal in which it was to appear stopped publication. This work was eventually published 51 years later.

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- Bakhtin's works and ideas gained popularity after his death, and he endured difficult conditions for much of his professional life, a time in which information was often seen as dangerous and therefore often hidden. As a result, the details provided now are often of uncertain accuracy. Also contributing to the imprecision of these details is the limited access to Russian archival information during Bakhtin's life. It is only after the archives became public that scholars realized that much of what they thought they knew about the details of Bakhtin's life was false or skewed largely by Bakhtin himself.
- He is known today for his interest in a wide variety of subjects, ideas, vocabularies, and periods, as well as his use of authorial disguises, and for his influence (alongside György Lukács) on the growth of Western scholarship on the novel as a premiere literary genre. As a result of the breadth of topics with which he dealt, Bakhtin has influenced such Western schools of theory as Neo-Marxism, Structuralism, and Semiotics.
- While Bakhtin is traditionally seen as a literary critic, there can be no denying his impact on the realm of rhetorical theory. Among his many theories and ideas Bakhtin indicates that style is a developmental process, occurring both within the user of language and language itself. His work instills in the reader an awareness of tone and expression that arises from the careful formation of verbal phrasing.

1.6 Key-Words

1. Genre : A kind; a literary type or style. Poetry, drama, novel may be subdivided into lyric (including elegy, ode, song, sonnet, etc.) epic, tragedy, comedy, short story, biography, etc.

1.7 Review Questions

1. Discuss early life of Mikhail.
2. Explain works and ideas of Bakhtin.
3. What is the genre of Bakhtin? Explain.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*c*) (*iii*) (*b*) (*iv*) (*a*)

1.8 Further Readings

Books

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5. Sethuraman, V.S. and Ramaswamy (eds.) The English Critical Tradition, Volume II, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1977.
6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 2: Mikhail Bakhtin and his "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse"-Dialogics in Novels: Detailed Study

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Bakhtin's essay From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse.
- Explain the origin and nature of the novel.

Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is a study on the history and construction of modern language in novels. Bakhtin's essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is composed of three parts, each offering a different component to his study of novelistic discourse. The first part is an introduction to novelistic discourse; Bakhtin introduces the five stylistic approaches to novelistic discourse and differentiates the novel from other forms of writing. The penultimate section of the essay focuses ancient Greek literature and stories, specifically parody sonnets, and acknowledges its impact on the current discourse in novels. In addition, the second portion of the essay incorporates the idea of polyglossia-the coexistence of multiple languages in the same area-to illustrate the challenges of construction a common vernacular within literature. The final part of the essay references the Middle Ages, medieval texts, and works from the Bible to show the growth of novelistic discourse through time (in comparison to the Greek texts).

Bakhtin's incorporation of the history of the Bible in relation to the term "polyglossia" offered a careful approach to one of the most unifying texts in the world. Bakhtin calls the Bible "authoritative and sanctified", it is also widely read and interpreted by many across the world. However, the history of language and verbal discourse has the power to change meaning. While polyglossia complicated the novelistic discourse and how texts were read, the Bible remains the one text read and interpreted by many. Bakhtin also says that polyglossia contributed to debunking the myth of "straightforward genres", that it offers change and variety. Interestingly, when the Bible it is interpreted, it is for moral meaning; the conversion of language over time and the various meanings it implies doesn't hold precedence.

The word hybrid is used repetitively in the essay to describe a crossbreeding of ideas. In part three of the essay, both parody and satire are referenced as "intentional hybrids" in linguistic discourse. However, "satire" is said to be complex. While both imply irony and imitation, parody is a composition of satire. The marriage of languages to produce a comical style and influential discourse should be problematic. Crossing languages would cause confusion and misinterpretation, but instead it enhanced the history of novelistic discourse.

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2.1 Mikhail Bakhtin's, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse"

In Mikhail Bakhtin's essay, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin discusses the origin and nature of the novel arguing that "mere literary styles" are not enough to analyze and define the novel, and instead we should focus on the relationships between the distinct elements that distinguish the novel from other genres.

Bakhtin begins by briefly charting the course of the attempt to analysis and define the novel, and the resulting failure, because of the failure to explore the "stylistic specificum, of the novel as a genre." Bakhtin then provides a few examples of the use of imagery and metaphor within a novel, and how these elements different from their use in poetics. Bakhtin points out a distinctive characteristic of the novel "the image of the another's language and outlook on the world…, simultaneously represented and representing, is extremely typical of the novel." Bakhtin then discusses the relationship between the styalistic elements an author uses in a novel as "connected to one another and with the author via their own characteristic dialogical relationships." Bakhtin posits that it is these relationships that define the sense of style of a novel, and of the genre as a whole. Another distinguishing characteristic of the language in the novel, as mentioned above, is that language not only represents something in the world, but also "serves as the object of representation."

In the next section of "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin discusses the idea of parody. Bakhtin spends a great deal of time going over the origin of parody and its varying roles, all to conclude that the novel allowed the author to examine language from "the point of view of a potentially different language and style." It is this "creating consciousness" that sets apart the novel from other genres. Parody within the novel is a parody about an object (like the use of parody in other genres) but this parody itself becomes an object. The final section of "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," is an exploration of the use of the quotation. Like the other elements that distinguish the novel, Bakhtin spends some time going over the origin and use of the quotation, ending in its use today in the novel. Through his discourse on quotation, Bakhtin determines that the quotation was one of the first elements responsible for parody. "Latin parody, is therefore, a bilingual phenomenon," concludes Bakhtin. Bakhtin ends by reminding the reader that we cannot examine the prehistory of the novelistic word with "mere literary styles."

Bakhtin's essay was tough to comprehend. The beginning of the essay had a much easier pace and clearer direction to read to, so that it was much more understandable. What I got lost in was the myriad examples Bakhtin employed to illustrate his point. More so than any other author we have read, Bakhtin relied upon the use of multiple and detailed examples to make his point. However, I did identify with Bakhtin's first discussion on the language of the novel. Here, Bakhtin was able to isolate what it is that distinguishes the novel from other genre's, that is, its unique ability to represent an external object, but also be itself an object; the language of the novel both represents and is representing simultaneously. Bakhtin said, "Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself," which strongly resonated for me with Paul de Man's theory on the resistance to theory. De Man concludes, that theory is resistance to itself in the same way that Bakhtin concludes that the language of the novel criticizes itself.

One of the weak points I found in Bakhtin's essay was during the beginning, when he made some very hasty premises to his argument, such as, the "Five different stylisitic approaches to the novelistic discourse…" Another concept, which I couldn't fully grasp in Bakhtin's essay, was his concept of parody. Bakhtin spent page after page talking directly and indirectly about the nature and use of parody, even going into its early use in the Middle Age carnival. Even if I didn't understand, necessarily, Bakhtin's concept of parody, it did find it a fascinating subject to focus on. Rarely do these theoreticians focus on the notion of the comedy, specifically, and it was an interesting notion as to attribute it to the inception of the early novel. Bakhtin's last paragraph was an interesting shift from the rest of the novel. Separated by a space, the last paragraph concisely summed up Bakhtin's discourse on the prehistory of the novel, underscoring the importance of the history of the formation of the novel, beyond the interestes of "mere literary styles." Staying true to his form, Bakhtin's last words included a number of examples.

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Five different stylistic approaches to novelistic discourse may be observed:

1. the author's portions alone in the novel are analyzed, that is, only direct words of the author more or less correctly isolated - an analysis constructed in terms of the usual, direct poetic methods of representation and expression (metaphors, comparisons, lexical register, etc.);
2. instead of a stylistic analysis of the novel as an artistic whole, there is a neutral linguistic description of the novelist's language;
3. in a given novelist's language, elements characteristic of his particular literary tendency are isolated (be it Romanticism, Naturalism, Impressionism, etc.);
4. what is sought in the language of the novel is examined as an expression of the individual personality, that is, language is analyzed as the individual style of the given novelist;
5. the novel is viewed as a rhetorical genre, and its devices are analyzed from the point of view of their effectiveness as rhetoric.

All these types of stylistic analysis to a greater or lesser degree are remote from those peculiarities that define the novel as a genre, and they are also remote from the specific conditions under which the word lives in the novel. They all take a novelist's language and style not as the language and style of a novel but merely as the expression of a specific individual artistic personality, or as the style of a particular literary school or finally as a phenomenon common to poetic language in general. The individual artistic personality of the author, the literary school, the general characteristics of poetic language or of the literary language of a particular era all serve to conceal from us the genre itself, with the specific demands it makes upon language and the specific possibilities it opens up for it. As a result, in the majority of these works on the novel, relatively minor stylistic variations - whether individual or characteristic of a particular school - have the effect of completely covering up the major stylistic lines determined by the development of the novel as a unique genre. And all the while discourse in the novel has been living a life that is distinctly its own, a life that is impossible to understand from the point of view of stylistic categories formed on the basis of poetic genres in the narrow sense of that term. The differences between the novel (and certain forms close to it) and all other genres-poetic genres in the narrow sense—are so fundamental, so categorical, that all attempts to impose on the novel the concepts and norms of poetic imagery are doomed to fail. Although the novel does contain poetic imagery in the narrow sense (primarily in the author's direct discourse), it is of secondary importance for the novel. What is more, this direct imagery often acquires in the novel quite special functions that are not direct. Here, for example, is how Pushkin characterizes Lensky's poetry.

He sang love, he was obedient to love, And his song was as clear As the thoughts of a simple maid, As an infant's dream, as the moon[...]. (a development of the final comparison follows). The poetic images (specifically the metaphoric comparisons) representing Lensky's' song' do not here have any direct poetic significance at all. They cannot be understood as the direct poetic images of Pushkin himself (although formally, of course, the characterization is that of the author). Here Lensky's 'song' is characterizing itself, in its own language, in its own poetic manner. Pushkin's direct characterization of Lensky's 'song' - which we find as well in the novel - sounds completely different: Thus he wrote gloomily and languidly[...]. In the four lines cited by us above it is Lensky's song itself, his voice, his poetic style that sounds, but it is permeated with the parodic and ironic accents of the author; that is the reason why it need not be distinguished from authorial speech by compositional or grammatical means. What we have before us is in fact an image of Lensky's song, but not an image in the narrow sense; it is rather a novelistic image: the image of another's language, in the given instance the image of another's poetic style (sentimental and romantic). The poetic metaphors in these lines ('as an infant's dream', 'as the moon' and others) no way function here as the primary means of representation (as they would function in a direct, 'serious' song written by Lensky himself); rather they themselves have here become the object of representation, or more precisely of a representation that is parodied and stylized. This novelistic image of another's style (with the direct metaphors that it incorporates) must be taken in intonational quotation marks within the system of direct authorial speech (postulated by us here), that is, taken as if the image were parodic and ironic. Were we to discard intonational question marks and take

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the use of metaphors here as the direct means by which the author represents himself, we would in so doing destroy the novelistic image [obraz] of another's style, that is, destroy precisely that image that Pushkin, as novelist, constructs here. Lensky's represented poetic speech is very distant from the direct word of the author himself as we have postulated it: Lensky's language functions merely as an object of representation (almost as a material thing); the author himself is almost completely outside Lensky's language (it is only his parodic and ironic accents that penetrate this 'language of another').[...] The image of another's language and outlook on the world, simultaneously represented and representing, is extremely typical of the novel; the greatest novelistic images (for example, the figure of Don Quixote) belong precisely to this type. These descriptive and expressive means that are direct and poetic (in the narrow sense) retain their direct significance when they are incorporated into such a figure, but at the same time they are 'qualified' and 'externalized', shown as something historically. These lines and the following citations from Eugene Onegin are taken from Walter Arndt's translation (New York: Dutton, 1963), slightly modified in places to correspond withBakhtin's remarks about particular words used. (Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, first published in Russia in 1831, is 'a novel in verse'. The fact that it is written in verse does not, however, make it a poem rather than a novel in Bakhtin's terms.) relative, delimited and incomplete - in the novel they, so to speak, criticize themselves.[...] The author represents this language, carries on a conversation with it, and the conversation penetrates into the interior of this language-image and dialogizes it from within. And all essential novelistic images share this quality: they are internally dialogized images - of the languages, styles, world views of another (all of which are in separable from their concrete linguistic and stylistic embodiment). The reigning theories of poetic imagery are completely powerless to analyze these complex internally dialogized images of whole languages. [...] The stylistic structure of Evgenij Onegin is typical of all authentic novels. To a greater or lesser extent, every novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of 'languages', styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation. Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself. In this consists the categorical distinction between the novel and all straight-forward genres - the epic poem, the lyric and the drama (strictly conceived). All directly descriptive and expressive means at the disposal of these genres, as well as the genres themselves, become upon entering the novel an object of representation within it. Under conditions of the novel every direct word - epic, lyric, strictly dramatic - is to a greater or lesser degree made into an object, the word itself becomes a bounded [ogranicennij] image, one that quite often appears ridiculous in this framed condition. The basic tasks for a stylistics in the novel are, therefore: the study of specific images of languages and styles; the organization of these images; their typology (for they are extremely diverse); the combination of images of languages within then ovelistic whole; the transfers and switchings of languages and voices; their dialogical interrelationships. The stylistics of direct genres, of the direct poetic word, offer us almost no help inresolving these problems. We speak of a special novelistic discourse because it is only in the novel that discourse can reveal all its specific potential and achieve its true depth. But the novelis comparatively recent genre. Indirect discourse, however, the representation of another's word, another's language in intonational quotation marks, was known in the most ancient times; we encounter it in the earliest stages of verbal culture. What is more, long before the appearance of the novel we find a rich world of diverse forms that transmit, mimic and represent from various vantage points another's word, another's speech and language, including also the languages of the direct genres. These diverse forms prepared the ground for the novel long before its actual appearance. Novelistic discourse has a lengthy prehistory, going back centuries, even thousands of years. It was formed and matured in the genres of familiar speech found in conversational folk language (genres that are as yet little studied) and also in certain folkloric and low literary genres. During its germination and early development, the novelistic word reflected a primordial struggle between tribes, peoples, cultures and languages - it is still full of echoes of this ancient struggle. In essence this discourse always developed on the boundary line between cultures and languages. The prehistory of novelistic discourse is of great interest and not without its own special drama. In the prehistory of novelistic discourse one may observe many extremely heterogeneous facts at work. From our point of view, however, two of these factors prove to be of decisive importance: on of these is laughter, the other

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polyglossia. The most ancient forms for representing language were organized by laughter - these were originally nothing more than the ridiculing of another's language and another's direct discourse. Polyglossia and the inter animation of languages associated with it elevated these forms to a new artistic and ideological level, which made possible the genre of the novel. These two factors in the prehistory of novelistic discourse are the subject of the present article.

II

One of the most ancient and widespread forms for representing the direct word of another is parody. What is distinctive about parody as a form? Take, for example, the parodic sonnets with which Don Quixote begins. Although they are impeccably structured as sonnets, we could never possibly assign them to the sonnet genre. In Don Quixote they appear as part of a novel - but even the isolated parodic sonnet (outside the novel) could not be classified generically as a sonnet. In aparodied sonnet, the sonnet form is not a genre at all; that is, it is not the form of a whole but is rather the object of representation: the sonnet here is the hero of the parody. In a parody on the sonnet, we must first of all recognize a sonnet, recognize its form, its specific style, its manner of seeing, its manner of selecting from and evaluating the world - the world view of the sonnet, as it were. A parody may represent and ridicule these distinctive features of the sonnet well or badly, profoundly or superficially. But in any case, what results is not a sonnet, but rather the image of a sonnet.

For the same reasons one could not under any circumstances assign to the genres of 'epic poem' the parodic epic 'War between the Mice and the Frogs' This is an image of the Homeric style. It is precisely style that is the true hero of the work. We would have to say the same of Scarron's Virgil travesti. One could likewise not include the fifteenth-century sermons joyeux, in the genre of the sermon, or parodic' Pater nosters' or 'Ave Marias' in the genre of the prayer and so forth. All these parodies on genres and generic styles ('languages') enter the great and diverse world of verbal forms that ridicule the straightforward, serious word in all its generic guises. This world is very rich, considerably richer than we are accustomed to believe. The nature and methods available for ridiculing something are highly varied, and not exhausted by parodying and travestying in a strict sense. These methods for making fun of the straightforward word have as yet received little scholarly attention. Our general conceptions of parody and travesty in literature were formed as ascholarly discipline solely by studying very late forms of literary parody, forms of the type represented by Scarron's Enéide travestie, or Platen's 'Verhängnisvolle Gabel' that is, the impoverished and limited conceptions of the nature of the parodying and travestying word were then retroactively applied to the supremely rich and varied world of parody and travesty in previous ages. The importance of parodic-travestying forms in world literature is enormous. Several examples follow that bear witness to their wealth and special significance. Let us first take up the ancient period. The 'literature of erudition' of late antiquity -Aulus Gellius, Plutarch (in his Moralia), Macrobius and, in particular, Athenaeus- provide sufficiently rich data for judging the scope and special character of the parodying and travestying literature of ancient times. The commentaries, citations, references and allusions made by these 'erudites' add substantially to the fragmented and random material on the ancient world's literature of laughter that has survived. The works of such literary scholars as Dietrich, Reich, Cornford and others have prepared us for more correct assessment of the role and significance of parodic-travestying forms in the verbal culture of ancient times. It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse - artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday - that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own comic-ironic contre-partie. What is more, these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition andjust as canonized as their elevated models. I will deal only very briefly with the problem of the so-called 'fourth drama', that is, the satyr play. In most instances this drama, which follows upon the tragic trilogy, developed the same narrative and mythological motifs as had the trilogy that preceded it. It was, therefore, a peculiar type of parodic-travestying contre-partie to the myt that had just received a tragic treatment on the stage; it showed the myth in a different aspect. These parodic-travestying counter-presentations of lofty national myths were just assanctioned and canonical as their straight forward tragic manifestations. All the tragedians-

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Phrynicous, Sophocles, Euripides - were writers of satyr plays as well, and Aeschylus, the most serious and pious of them all, an initiate into the highest Eleusinian Mysteries, was considered by the Greeks to be the greatest master of the satyr play. From fragments of Aeschylus' satyr play.

The Bone-Gatherers' we see that this drama gave a parodic, travestying picture of the events and heroes of the Trojan War, and particularly the episode involving Odysseus' quarrel with Achillesand Diomedes, where a stinking chamber pot is thrown at Odysseus' head. It should be added that the figure of 'comic Odysseus', a parodic travesty of his high epic and tragic image, was one of the most popular figures of satyr plays, of ancient Doric farce and pre-Aristophanic comedy, as well as of a whole series of minor comice pics, parodic speeches and disputes in which the comedy of ancient times was so rich (especially in southern Italy and Sicily). Characteristic here is that special role that the motif of madness played in the figure of 'comic Odysseus': Odysseus, as is well known, donned a clown's fool's cap (pileus) and harnessed his horse and ox to aplow, pretending to be mad in order to avoid participation in the war. It was the motif of madness that switched the figure of Odysseus from the high and straight forward plane to the comic plane of parody and travesty.

But the most popular figure of the satyr play and other forms of the parodic travestying word was the figure of the 'comic Hercules'. Hercules, the powerful and simple servant to the cowardly, weak and false king Euristheus; Hercules, who had conquered death in battle and had descended into the nether world; Hercules the monstrous glutton, the playboy, the drunk and scrapper, but especially Hercules the madman - such were the motifs that lent a comic aspect to his image. In this comic aspect, heroism and strength are retained, but they are combined with laughter and with images from the material life of the body. The figure of the comic Hercules was extremely popular, not only in Greece but alsoin Rome, and later in Byzantium (where it became one of the central figures in the marionette theatre). Until quite recently this figure lived on in the Turkish game of 'shadow puppets'. The comic Hercules is one of the most profound folk images for acheerful and simple heroism, and had an enormous influence on all of world literature. When taken together with such figures as the 'comic Odysseus' and the 'comic Hercules', the 'fourth drama', which was an indispensable conclusion to the tragic trilogy, indicates that the literary consciousness of the Greeks did not view the parodic-travestying reworkings of national myth as any particular profanation or blasphemy. It is characteristic that the Greeks were not at all embarrassed to attribute the authorship of the parodic work 'War between the Mice and the Frogs' to Homer himself. Homer is also credited with a comic work (a long poem) about the fool Margit. For any and every straight forward genre, any and every direct discourse - epic, tragic, lyric, philosophical - may and indeed must itself become the object of representation, the object of a parodic travestying 'mimicry'. It is as if such mimicryrips the word away from its object, disunifies the two, shows that a given straight forward generic word - epic or tragic - is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object; the process of parodying forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre or a given style. Parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word, the corrective of reality that is always richer, more fundamental and most importantly too contradictory and heteroglot to be fitted into a high and straight forward genre. The high genres are monotonic, while the 'fourth drama' and genres akin to it retain the ancient binary tone of the word. Ancient parody was free of any nihilistic denial. It was not, after all, the heroes who were parodied, nor the Trojan War and its participants; what was parodied was only its epic heroization; not Hercules and its exploits but their tragic heroization. The genre itself, the style, the language are all put in cheerfully irreverent quotation marks, and they are perceived against a backdrop of a contradictory reality that cannot be confined within their narrow frames. The direct and serious word was revealed, in all its limitations and insufficiency, only after it had become the laughing image of that word - but it was by no means discredited in the process. Thus it did not bother the Greeks to think that Homer himself wrote a parody of Homeric style. [...] These parodic-travestying forms prepared the ground for the novel in one very important, in fact decisive, respect. They liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language; they

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freed consciousness from the power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse, within its own language. A distance arose between language and reality that was to prove and indispensable condition for authentically realistic forms of discourse. Linguistic consciousness - parodying the direct word, direct style, exploring its limits, its absurd sides, the face specific to an era - constituted itself outside this direct word and outside all its graphic and expressive means of representation. A new mode developed for working creatively with language: the creating artist began to look at language from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of apotentially different language and style. It is, after all, precisely in the light of another potential language or style that a given straight forward style is parodied, travestied, ridiculed. The creating consciousness stands, as it were, on the boundary line between languages and styles. This is, for the creating consciousness, a highly peculiar position to find itself in with regard to language. The aedile or rhapsode experienced himself in his own language, in his own discourse, in an utterly different way from the creator of 'War between the Mice and the Frogs', or the creators of Margites.

One who creates a direct word - whether epic, tragic or lyric - deals only with the subject whose praises he sings, or represents, or expresses, and he does so in his own language that is perceived as the sole and fully adequate tool for realizing the word's direct, objectivized meaning. [...] In his book on Plato, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff writes: 'Only knowledge of a language that possesses another mode of conceiving the world can lead to the appropriate knowledge of one's own language[...].'

I do not continue the quotation, for it primarily concerns the problem of understanding one's own language in purely cognitive linguistic terms, an understanding that is realized only in the light of a ifferent language, one not one's own; but this situation is no less pervasive where the literary imagination is conceiving language in actual artistic practice. Moreover, in the process of literary creation, languages interanimate each other and objectify precisely that side of one's own (and of the other' s) language that pertains to its world view, its inner form, the axiologically accentuated system inherent in it. For the creating literary consciousness, existing in a field illuminated by another's language, it is not the phonetic system of its own language that stands out, nor is it the distinctive features of its own morphology nor its own abstract lexicon - what stands out is precisely that which makes language concrete and which makes its world view ultimately untranslatable, that is, precisely the style of the languages as a totality. [...] Closely connected with the problem of polyglossia and inseparable from it is the problem of heteroglossia within a language, that is, the problem of internal differentiation, the stratification characteristic of any national language. This problem is of primary importance for understanding the style and historical destinies of the modern European novel, that is, the novel since the seventeenth century. This latecomer reflects, in its stylistic structure, the struggle between two tendencies in the languages of European peoples: one a centralizing (unifying) tendency, the other adecentralizing tendency (that is, one that stratifies languages). The novel senses itself on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extra literary languages that know heteroglossia; the novel either serves to further the centralizing tendencies of a new literary language in the process of taking shape (with its grammatical, stylistic and ideological norms), or - on the contrary - the novel fights for the renovation of an antiquated literary language, in the interests of those strata of the national language that have remained (to a greater or lesser degree) outside the centralizing and unifying influence of the artistic and ideological norm established by the dominant literary language. The literary-artistic consciousness of the modern novel, sensing itself on the border between two languages, one literary, the other extra literary, each of which now knows heteroglossia, also senses itself on the border of time: it is extraordinarily sensitive to time in language, it senses time's shifts, the aging and renewing of language, the past and the future - and all in language. [...In the later period of the mainstream Russian formalists' activity, another school of criticism, led by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), shared some of their concerns, at the same time attempting to reconcile formalism with a socio-historical approach. Bakhtin's writings aroused less interest in his active years than they were to receive later on when the time of formalism was long overdue. His stature has risen highest in critical milieus especially in the last 3-4 decades, that is since his

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studies were published (some of them for the first time) in Soviet Russia and were translated in the main Western languages. It is hard to assess whether his spectacular late career is due in the first place to the innovatory nature of his concepts and critical analyses or to his sensational biography that came to be known to the public as late as the 1960s. Indeed, there were quite a few spicy detective story ingredients attached to it: a bone disease in his youth which led to the amputation of one leg, his internment in a Soviet death camp in the 1930s - a sentence that was then commuted to internal exile, his de facto disappearance from public life for several decades (which may have saved his life during the Stalin years), the discovery by the literary students in the late fifties that the author of the reputable book on Dostoevsky was not dead and lived somewhere in the provinces, his low profile to the very end despite the growing popularity his studies were enjoying.

Bakhtin did not belong to either of the formalist circles in Soviet Russia, but was claimed by some of their members, including Jakobson, to be in their ranks. In actual fact what his studies do share with formalism is the attempt to define the specific devices which articulate a literary genre as different from others. Also he was interested in the literary structure per se, analyzing its dynamic function within the historical traditions, particularly its subversive roles. Yet, his field of inquiry extends well beyond the formalist concerns, as he researched not only the literary language, but also other socio-ideological forms of expression, such as the carnivalesque one. The sweeping cultural preoccupations of this literary theorist and philosopher of language explain why he was described in turns as a formalist, Marxist, phenomenologist, proto-deconstructionist, or even as an orthodox Christian militant by some Slavists.

Did u know? Bakhtin was the first and foremost theorist of one genre, the novel, which he contrasted with poetry (as in music polyphonic compositions differ from monophonic ones).

Bakhtin could not have been a Marxist proper, although here and there he criticized the formalists for neglecting the sociological factors. His main principles and concepts surpass by far the reductionist determinism of classical Marxist tenets. However, he associated himself with two avowed Marxists, Valentin Voloshinov and Pavel Medvedev, and the paternity of several orthodox Marxist articles is hotly disputed even today by commentators between the three authors: one of these studies is a sharp attack against the Formalist School (the 1928 book The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship, written either by Medvedev or by Bakhtin), which may have contributed to the definitive banning of the movement.

Out of Bakhtin's plentiful and seminal contributions to the philosophy of language and of culture as well as to literary theory we will focus our attention, within the framework of our study, on his insights which are more closely connected with the formalist issues, such as the dialogic mode and the uses of language in prose writings, particularly in the novel .

In the first phase of his career Bakhtin's interests were mainly retained by the complex relationships between ethics and aesthetics, between self and other: he propounded a "philosophy of the act" which relied on Kantian categories. His studies written in the second phase of his activity (about 1924-1930) are hallmarked by the discovery of the dialogic potential of the word and the "polyphonic" mode of writing. His cornerst one study, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, came out in 1929.

In the following two decades, despite the obstacles which life in an entirely ideologized country set before an independent intellectual like Bakhtin, he produced the most substantial concepts for a "prosaic" description of the novel, such as novelistic consciousness and the chronotope. "Discourse in the Novel", "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse", and "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" were written in that period. The Chronotope is Bakhtin's term for the specific sense of space and time (in other words the social and the historical components) which characterizes every genre, according to its specific ideology. If in the ancient works the social

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element played a background role, in the novel it has a direct, molding impact upon the characters: they and the society influence and change each other as it happens in actual history, and this accounts for Bakhtin's interest in the dialogic consciousness of the novel.

Another direction of investigation which he pursued in the 1930s belongs to the sociology of culture: in Rabelais and His World, a book which could be published only in 1965, Bakhtin celebrated the "joyously ambivalent carnivalesque" mood in Rabelais's writings, indirectly referring to the life conditions and the constraints in an authoritarian state: this form of social manifestation, having its own norms and rituals, subverts the official ideology, overturns the established hierarchies, mixes up the opposites and provides an escape valve for discontent. Upon literary genres, such as the novel, the carnivalesque mood, with its insistence on body and bodily functions, has a molding effect, resulting in a parodic or grotesque style. Owing to his emphasis on the socially liberating role of laughter and the carnivalesque forms of manifestation, typical of low culture, Bakhtin is claimed today by the advocates of "cultural studies" as one of their predecessors.

In the last two decades of his life, the Russian scholar revised and added some earlier studies, and returned to the broader philosophical themes of his early writings, extending his concerns to the humanities and the interpretation theory in general.

Critics have identified three overall concepts which subsume Bakhtin's theoretical findings. The first one is Prosaics, as opposed to poetics: the term, coined by his commentators, describes his mistrust of "theoretism" (i.e. the belief that everything can be explained through wide-ranging systems, such as Saussureanism, Freudianism, Marxism, formalism), the importance he attaches to small, "prosaic" facts of life instead of the dramatic, catastrophic events, and as concerns the novelistic genre, the emphasis he lays on its complexities: the novel cannot be analyzed with reference to tropes, like poetry, but insisting on its dialogic nature. Dialogue, the second global term, refers to the fact that authentic consciousness can be revealed only by presenting the interaction of at least two voices: truth resides in conversation rather than in a set of sentences. The third basic concept in Bakhtin's thought is Unfinalizability. In dialogic prose the world appropriately appears as an unfinalizable, open, creative space; in his Dostoevsky study Bakhtin states that /n/othing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future.

With Bakhtin, not only is the literary work open (Umberto Eco's opera aperta), or writerly, but the world it creates is never to be finished.

The most seminal finding of Bakhtin's research as concerns the novel is its polyphonic (or dialogic) nature. In order to understand the meaning in which the Russian scholar used these terms, it is yet necessary to dwell first on the related concept of Heteroglossia (Reznorechie). The term "heteroglossia" belongs to linguistic theory, just as "polyphony" does to fictional studies. It is meant to reveal the way in which meaning is produced by discourse through the use of a "social diversity of speech types", as Bakhtin observes in his renowned 1935 essay "Discourse in the Novel". There are numberless discursive strata in every language, such as social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, ... languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour, for, says Bakhtin, each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphasis.

It is even possible to speak of a family jargon, with its special vocabulary and its unique accentual system, as in the case of the Irtnevs, in Tolstoy. At any moment in history, language is heteroglot from top to bottom. Bakhtin's dynamic perspective on language can be described as in vivo, a Romanian scholar has observed, in contradistinction to the in vitro view of the formalists.

In "Discourse..." Bakhtin claims that some of the best instances of heteroglossia at work can be found in the English comic novel, where there is a "re-processing of almost all the levels of literary

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language, both conversational and written, that were current at the time", from parliamentary eloquence, to the language of the speculators' dealings. For instance, in one of the excerpts he supplies from Dickens's Little Dorrit, "the speech of another" (in a highly ceremonious tone) is inserted for the sake of parody into the author's discourse, in a concealed form, that is without any formal markers such as quotation marks. Bakhtin observes that this is not a mere case of another's speech in the same language, but "another's utterance in a language that is itself 'other' to the author".

He commends mostly those writers and literary forms which exemplify heteroglossia, that is a "Galilean" language consciousness: Dostoevsky as compared with Tolstoy, the novel versus poetry. After a long tradition of prose writings of a monologic type (revealing a "Ptolemaic" consciousness), such as the Greek and chivalric romance, the pastoral, the sentimental novel, heteroglossia, with its subversive and liberating potential, began to be foregrounded in prose with Rabelais and Cervantes, reaching a climax in Dostoevsky's novels.

Although the Russian theorist did comment on the place of heteroglossia in the novelistic genre, the proper term that describes the dialogic nature of the novel is Polyphony (a concept derived from music) or Dialogism as such. Actually heteroglossia is a linguistic reality, whereas polyphony is just a possible (and desirable) fictional mode, to be contrasted with the monologic one. The first detailed references to novelistic polyphony appeared in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics; yet Bakhtin reformulated the concept several times in his studies.

Polyphonic novels, such as Dostoevsky's, make up a new novelistic genre, according to the Russian theorist's initial views. In this kind of fiction the reader hears several contesting voices, which are not subject to an attempt at unification on the author's part: these voices are engaged in a dialogue in which no point of view is privileged, no final word is heard. The author stands on the same level as his heroes, relinquishing his "surplus of vision". He knows nothing more than they do and may be surprised by their words at any point:

Dostoevsky brings into being not voiceless slaves ... but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him, states Bakhtin. Conversely, in monologic novels, such as Tolstoy's, the general perspective is solely the author's one, and the characters' points of view are orchestrated in accordance with his positions. (We can notice that there is a slight resemblance between Tomashevsky's concept of skaz in the narrative, and Bakhtin's polyphony.)

In the polyphonic, non-Aristotelian plot, despite the plurality of independent and unmerged consciousnesses, the unity of "the given event" is preserved, but this is a dialogic unity, based on the coexistence of spiritual diversity. The dialogic process is basically unfinalizable, unlike the closed product of the monologic whole: each thought of Dostoevsky's heroes looks like a rejoinder in a never-ending tense debate.

One particular aspect of polyphony is Double - Voicing - a case when in a single utterance two voices are meant to be heard as interacting: the words should be understood as if they were spoken with quotation marks. This mode of speaking reflects the fact that, according to Bakhtin, the language of communication is never free from the intentions of the other people socially involved in an event. Single-voiced verbal constructions can be found only in professional discourse, not in rhetorical or fictional language. In the cases of passive double-voicing the two voices may seem to be in agreement or in disagreement (as in parodic speech); when resistance or tension between them appear, the double-voicing is active: such is the status of the "word with a loophole", in which there is included a statement, its rebuttal, the response to the rebuttal, and so on, possibly ad infinitum.

Embedding is a specific type of double-voicing form, in which the hero's perspective on himself is infiltrated by "someone else's words about him". Bakhtin illustrates this with a scene from Dostoevsky's novel, Poor People, in which the protagonist is writing a letter to a woman, confessing

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he lives in a kitchen; his "sideward glance" and his recoiling as he thinks about her negative reaction to this embarrassing news are easy to imagine: his discourse is penetrated by the words of another and therefore it becomes distorted.

If in Problems... Bakhtin claimed that Dostoevsky was the creator of the polyphonic novel, later on he slightly altered his views, stating that dialogism is more or less present in all novels, especially in those imbued with a carnivalesque mood. Thus in "Discourse...", he defined the novel as "a diversity of social speech types, sometimes even diversity of languages and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized". There is polyphony even in some non-fictional prose, such as the early Platonic dialogues where Socrates appears not so much as the teacher, the owner of truth, but rather as a kind of grotesque midwife, one who incites to dialogue in order to search for truth. Or in satires such as the Menippean ones, Apuleius's The Golden Ass, and so forth.

In its general sense, then, polyphony is not only a technical characteristic of the novel (related, yet not restricted to, the notion of dramaticism), but also a principle of the creative process and of moral philosophy, owing to its implications of unfinalizability.

The Bakhtinian concept has made a significant career in the last decades. Contemporary critics have used the term mainly to refer to the modernist and postmodern fiction (Julia Kristeva, for instance), but others (such as David Lodge) have rightfully argued that polyphonic elements can also be found in realistic prose. Some feminists have appropriated it in reference to l'écriture féminine, and connections between the notion of dialogic speech and psychoanalytical or deconstructive approaches have also been established. Some even claim to discern a particular critical approach of late, Dialogical Criticism, inspired by such concerns of Bakhtin's as the polyphonic heterogeneity of the discourse, and the function of subversive, carnivalesque elements in prose narratives. Tzvetan Todorov, for instance, has made use of these concepts in La conquête de l'Amérique (1982), a study of the dialogue between the European, colonizing voices and the Indians' colonized ones.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) The final part of the essay references the ..... .

(*a*) ancient ages (*b*) middle ages

(*c*) modern ages (*d*) none of these

(*ii*) Parody is a composition of ..... .

(*a*) irony (*b*) metaphor

(*c*) satire (*d*) none of these

(*iii*) "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" Bakthin discusses the idea of ..... .

(*a*) satire (*b*) metaphor

(*c*) parody (*d*) none of these

(*iv*) The Greeks were not at all embarrassed to attribute the authorship of the parodic work war between the ..... .

(*a*) mice and the frogs (*b*) mice and the dogs

(*c*) cats and the rats (*d*) none of these.

2.2 Summary

- Bakhtin's essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is composed of three parts, each offering a different component to his study of novelistic discourse. The first part is an introduction to novelistic discourse; Bakhtin introduces the five stylistic approaches to novelistic discourse and differentiates the novel from other forms of writing.

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- Bakhtin discusses the origin and nature of the novel arguing that "mere literary styles" are not enough to analyze and define the novel, and instead we should focus on the relationships between the distinct elements that distinguish the novel from other genres.
- Bakhtin begins by briefly charting the course of the attempt to analysis and define the novel, and the resulting failure, because of the failure to explore the "stylistic specificum, of the novel as a genre." Bakhtin then provides a few examples of the use of imagery and metaphor within a novel, and how these elements different from their use in poetics. Bakhtin points out a distinctive characteristic of the novel "the image of the another's language and outlook on the world…, simultaneously represented and representing, is extremely typical of the novel."
- In the next section of "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin discusses the idea of parody. Bakhtin spends a great deal of time going over the origin of parody and its varying roles, all to conclude that the novel allowed the author to examine language from "the point of view of a potentially different language and style."
- Bakhtin's essay was tough to comprehend. The beginning of the essay had a much easier pace and clearer direction to read to, so that it was much more understandable. What I got lost in was the myriad examples Bakhtin employed to illustrate his point. More so than any other author we have read, Bakhtin relied upon the use of multiple and detailed examples to make his point. However, I did identify with Bakhtin's first discussion on the language of the novel. Here, Bakhtin was able to isolate what it is that distinguishes the novel from other genre's, that is, its unique ability to represent an external object, but also be itself an object; the language of the novel both represents and is representing simultaneously.
- Bakhtin did not belong to either of the formalist circles in Soviet Russia, but was claimed by some of their members, including Jakobson, to be in their ranks. In actual fact what his studies do share with formalism is the attempt to define the specific devices which articulate a literary genre as different from others. Also he was interested in the literary structure per se, analyzing its dynamic function within the historical traditions, particularly its subversive roles.
- Bakhtin could not have been a Marxist proper, although here and there he criticized the formalists for neglecting the sociological factors. His main principles and concepts surpass by far the reductionist determinism of classical Marxist tenets.
- In "Discourse..." Bakhtin claims that some of the best instances of heteroglossia at work can be found in the English comic novel, where there is a "re-processing of almost all the levels of literary language, both conversational and written, that were current at the time", from parliamentary eloquence, to the language of the speculators' dealings. For instance, in one of the excerpts he supplies from Dickens's Little Dorrit, "the speech of another".
- The Bakhtinian concept has made a significant career in the last decades. Contemporary critics have used the term mainly to refer to the modernist and postmodern fiction (Julia Kristeva, for instance), but others (such as David Lodge) have rightfully argued that polyphonic elements can also be found in realistic prose. Some feminists have appropriated it in reference to l'écriture féminine, and connections between the notion of dialogic speech and psychoanalytical or deconstructive approaches have also been established.

2.3 Key-Words

1. Heteroglossia : (Gk. 'other/different gongues') term used by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe the variety of voices or languages within a novel, but can be used of any text to give the sense that language use does not come from one origin but is multiple and diverse, a mixing of heterogeneous discourses, sociolects, etc.

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2. Implied reader : Wolfgang Iser uses this term to denote a hypothetical reader towards whom the text is directed. The implied reader is to be distinguished from the so-called 'real reader'.

2.4 Review Questions

1. What were Bakhtin's main concerns regarding Language? How does he treat language?
2. Discuss the origin and nature of the Bhaktin Essay.
3. What are the five different stylist approaches to Novelistic Discourse? Discuss.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*b*) (*ii*) (*c*) (*iii*) (*c*) (*iv*) (*a*)

2.5 Further Readings

Books

1. Hutcheon, Linda A poetics of postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1988.
2. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory, 1st edition, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.
3. Lodge, David (ed.) Twentieth Century Literary Criticism, London: Longman, 1972.
4. Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh (eds.) A Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 3rd edition, London: Arnold, 1999.
5. Sethuraman, V.S. and Ramaswamy (eds.) The English Critical Tradition, Volume II, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1977.
6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 3: Mikhail Bakhtin and his 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse (Textual Analysis with Chronotopes and Perennial Narativity)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Bakhtin's 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse'.
- Understand the Concept of Chronotopes.

Introduction

Mikhail (pronounced Mikahil) Bakhtin was a Russian genre critic whose theories were not just influential but also threctly related to literature. His genre, of course, was the novel and he looked at the novel in, well, novel ways.

Bakhtin was concerned with language or discourse as a social activity. The Bakhtin School comprising Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Volosphinov believed 'words' to be active, dynamic, that had several connotations and would mean something different to a different person or social hierarchy or whose meaning would differ according to time and place. Earlier linguist patronised the view that language was 'isolated ... divorced from its verbal and actual contest'. The Bakhtin School used the Russian word 'solvo' which can and is translated into English as 'word', but the Russian connotation extends a social flavour that would more readily imply utterance 'or even' discourse.

Bakhtin looked upon language as an instrument and an area of class struggle. Hitherto revolutions (for example, the French Revolution of 1789), could not be visualized without bloodshed. With Bakhtin came a new theory, verbal signal or words as instruments of revolution. Where does this become apparent? It becomes apparent when various class interests come into conflict with each other on language grounds.

Bakhtin considered the novel to be such a dynamic genere that would eventually take over, many other genres. For instance, Epic, which was characterized (according to Bakhtin) by an uncrossable gulf separating the characters and events from the audience was eventually subsumed by the novel, in such a way that a separation would be unthinkable. Such an understanding would explain ancient writers like Euripides (480–406 BC), who wrote about Epic characters in a novelized

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maner. It could also be used to explain newer genres, such as Magic Realism, which seems to demonstrate a blending of the novel with the fairy tale. Accordingly, while we might object to Bakhtin's theories by pointing out poets such as Walt Whitman (1819–1921) who are very clearly using heteroglossia, Bakhtin would answer that *Songs of Myself* is simply a novelized poem, or even a novel in verse form.

3.1 Bakhtin's Concept of Chronotopes

Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope concept offers for the study of the intrinsically hybrid genre of the historical novel. By applying the concept to the analysis of the early 19th century Flemish historical novel, I illustrate how the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal, which structures a significant number of the historical novels published in Belgium between 1830 and 1850, and which can be traced back to the ancient Greek romance, can undergo drastic revisions under the influence of the particular poetics of the Belgian historical novel. During the first two decades of Belgian independence the poetics of the genre was strongly determined by the nationalist and didactic function the historical novel was called upon to perform. I will illustrate how the first Flemish novelists harked back to traditional chronotopes (and their corresponding plots and motives) with which the largely uneducated Flemish public was familiar from a mostly oral folk tradition, and tried to remould these to accord with their own purposes and with the demands and regulations of the genre. In what is generally referred to as Bakhtin's third period (the period of his forced exile in Kazakhstan in the 1930s), Mikhail Bakhtin became interested in the question of genre, which he regarded as 'a key organ of memory and an important vehicle of historicity'. More specifically, it was the genre of the novel that awakened this interest.

Notes During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Bakhtin wrote six essays that deal with the theory of the novel: 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', 'The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism', 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', 'Epic and Novel', 'Discourse in the Novel' and The Novel of Education and Its Significance in the History of Realism.

In their own way, these essays all trace and describe 'the establishment and growth of a generic skeleton of literature'.

The chronotope essays 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics' (henceforth referred to as FTC) and 'The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historic Typology of the Novel)' (henceforth referred to as BSHR) constitute the basis for the theoretical framework that is developed in my dissertation on 19th century Belgian historical novels. One of the case-studies from this dissertation is presented here, albeit in a considerably abridged form.

The main reason for choosing Bakhtin's chronotope theory for the textual analysis of Belgian historical novels written in the 1830s and 1840s is the hopeful prospect that Bakhtin's concept might help to shed some light on the essential hybridity of the genre. The chronotope essays chiefly trace the literary descent of what Bakhtin considers to be the various 'genres of the novel' (the adventure novel of ordeal, the adventure novel of everyday life, the chivalric romance, the (auto-)biographical novel, the idyllic romance, the folkloric romance, the Bildungsroman, etc.). Many of these 'sub genres' can be recognized in the multifarious set of novels that are lumped together in the first half of the 19th century under the common denominator 'historical novel'. This tracing of the literary descent leads Bakhtin to consider the literary works of the ancient Greeks and Romans as the 'authentic predecessors of the novel […] containing in embryo and sometimes in developed form the basic elements characteristic of the most important later prototypes of the European novel'.

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In this light, the chronotope comes to function precisely as the primary principle that 'both defines genre and generic distinction and establishes the boundaries between the various intrageneric subcategories of the major literary types'.

The preface to the very first Flemish (historical) novel In it Wonderjaer (1837) testifies to the fact that the genre of the novel was still largely unknown in Flanders in the 1830s: the author, Hendrik Conscience, forewarns his public not to be frightened by the fact that he is presenting them with a novel.

3.2 Bakhtin's Concept of Polyphony

As such, Bakhtin's philosophy greatly respected the influences of others on the self, not merely in terms of how a person comes to be, but also in how a person thinks and how a person sees him- or herself truthfully.

Third, Bakhtin found in Dostoevsky's work a true representation of "polyphony", that is, many voices. Each character in Dostoevsky's work represents a voice that speaks for an individual self, distinct from others. This idea of polyphony is related to the concepts of unfinalizability and self-and-others, since it is the unfinalizability of individuals that creates true polyphony.

Bakhtin briefly outlined the polyphonic concept of truth. He criticized the assumption that, if two people disagree, at least one of them must be in error. He challenged philosophers for whom plurality of minds is accidental and superfluous. For Bakhtin, truth is not a statement, a sentence or a phrase. Instead, truth is a number of mutually addressed, albeit contradictory and logically inconsistent, statements. Truth needs a multitude of carrying voices. It cannot be held within a single mind, it also cannot be expressed by "a single mouth". The polyphonic truth requires many simultaneous voices. Bakhtin does not mean to say that many voices carry partial truths that complement each other. A number of different voices do not make the truth if simply "averaged" or "synthesized". It is the fact of mutual addressivity, of engagement, and of commitment to the context of a real-life event, that distinguishes truth from untruth.

When, in subsequent years, Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art was translated into English and published in the West, Bakhtin added a chapter on the concept of "carnival" and the book was published with the slightly different title, Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics. According to Bakhtin, carnival is the context in which distinct individual voices are heard, flourish and interact together. The carnival creates the "threshold" situations where regular conventions are broken or reversed and genuine dialogue becomes possible. The notion of a carnival was Bakhtin's way of describing Dostoevsky's polyphonic style: each individual character is strongly defined, and at the same time the reader witnesses the critical influence of each character upon the other. That is to say, the voices of others are heard by each individual, and each inescapably shapes the character of the other.

3.3 From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse— Critical Appreciation

Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is a study on the history and construction of modern language in novels.

Bakhtin's essay "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is composed of three parts, each offering a different component to his study of novelistic discourse. The first part is an introduction to novelistic discourse; Bakhtin introduces the five stylistic approaches to novelistic discourse and differentiates the novel from other forms of writing. The penultimate section of the essay focuses ancient Greek literature and stories, specifically parody sonnets, and acknowledges its impact on the current discourse in novels. In addition, the second portion of the essay incorporates the idea of polyglossia-the coexistence of multiple languages in the same area-to illustrate the challenges of construction a common vernacular within literature. The final part of the essay references the Middle Ages, medieval texts, and works from the Bible to show the growth of novelistic discourse through time (in comparison to the Greek texts).

Bakhtin's incorporation of the history of the Bible in relation to the term "polyglossia" offered a careful approach to one of the most unifying texts in the world. Bakhtin calls the Bible "authoritative

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and sanctified", it is also widely read and interpreted by many across the world. However, the history of language and verbal discourse has the power to change meaning. While polyglossia complicated the novelistic discourse and how texts were read, the Bible remains the one text read and interpreted by many. Bakhtin also says that polyglossia contributed to debunking the myth of "straightforward genres", that it offers change and variety. Interestingly, when the Bible it is interpreted, it is for moral meaning; the conversion of language over time and the various meanings it implies doesn't hold precedence.

The word hybrid is used repetitively in the essay to describe a crossbreeding of ideas. In part three of the essay, both parody and satire are referenced as "intentional hybrids" in linguistic discourse. However, "satire" is said to be complex. While both imply irony and imitation, parody is a composition of satire. The marriage of languages to produce a comical style and influential discourse should be problematic. Crossing languages would cause confusion and misinterpretation, but instead it enhanced the history of novelistic discourse.

Bakhtin discusses the origin and nature of the novel arguing that "mere literary styles" are not enough to analyze and define the novel, and instead we should focus on the relationships between the distinct elements that distinguish the novel from other genres.

Bakhtin begins by briefly charting the course of the attempt to analysis and define the novel, and the resulting failure, because of the failure to explore the "stylistic specificum, of the novel as a genre." Bakhtin then provides a few examples of the use of imagery and metaphor within a novel, and how these elements different from their use in poetics. Bakhtin points out a distinctive characteristic of the novel "the image of the another's language and outlook on the world…, simultaneously represented and representing, is extremely typical of the novel." Bakhtin then discusses the relationship between the styalistic elements an author uses in a novel as "connected to one another and with the author via their own characteristic dialogical relationships." Bakhtin posits that it is these relationships that define the sense of style of a novel, and of the genre as a whole. Another distinguishing characteristic of the language in the novel, as mentioned above, is that language not only represents something in the world, but also "serves as the object of representation." In the next section of "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," Bakhtin discusses the idea of parody. Bakhtin spends a great deal of time going over the origin of parody and its varying roles, all to conclude that the novel allowed the author to examine language from "the point of view of a potentially different language and style." It is this "creating consciousness" that sets apart the novel from other genres. Parody within the novel is a parody about an object (like the use of parody in other genres) but this parody itself becomes an object. The final section of "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," is an exploration of the use of the quotation. Like the other elements that distinguish the novel, Bakhtin spends some time going over the origin and use of the quotation, ending in its use today in the novel. Through his discourse on quotation, Bakhtin determines that the quotation was one of the first elements responsible for parody. "Latin parody, is therefore, a bilingual phenomenon," concludes Bakhtin. Bakhtin ends by reminding the reader that we cannot examine the prehistory of the novelistic word with "mere literary styles."

Bakhtin's essay was tough to comprehend. The beginning of the essay had a much easier pace and clearer direction to read to, so that it was much more understandable. What I got lost in was the myriad examples Bakhtin employed to illustrate his point. More so than any other author we have read, Bakhtin relied upon the use of multiple and detailed examples to make his point. However, I did identify with Bakhtin's first discussion on the language of the novel. Here, Bakhtin was able to isolate what it is that distinguishes the novel from other genre's, that is, its unique ability to represent an external object, but also be itself an object; the language of the novel both represents and is representing simultaneously. Bakhtin said, "Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself," which strongly resonated for me with Paul de Man's theory on the resistance to theory. De Man concludes, that theory is resistance to itself in the same way that Bakhtin concludes that the language of the novel criticizes itself. One of the weak points I found in Bakhtin's essay was during the beginning, when he made some very hasty premises to his argument, such as, the "Five different stylisitic approaches to the novelistic discourse…" Another concept, which I couldn't fully grasp in Bakhtin's essay, was his concept of parody. Bakhtin spent page after page talking

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directly and indirectly about the nature and use of parody, even going into its early use in the Middle Age carnival. Even if I didn't understand, necessarily, Bakhtin's concept of parody, it did find it a fascinating subject to focus on. Rarely do these theoreticians focus on the notion of the comedy, specifically, and it was an interesting notion as to attribute it to the inception of the early novel. Bakhtin's last paragraph was an interesting shift from the rest of the novel. Separated by a space, the last paragraph concisely summed up Bakhtin's discourse on the prehistory of the novel, underscoring the importance of the history of the formation of the novel, beyond the interestes of "mere literary styles." Staying true to his form, Bakhtin's last words included a number of examples.

3.4 The Dialogic Imagination: Chronotope, Heteroglossia

The Dialogic Imagination (first published as a whole in 1975) is a compilation of four essays concerning language and the novel: "Epic and Novel" (1941), "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" (1940), "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938), and "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-1935). It is through the essays contained within The Dialogic Imagination that Bakhtin introduces the concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism and chronotope, making a significant contribution to the realm of literary scholarship. Bakhtin explains the generation of meaning through the "primacy of context over text" (heteroglossia), the hybrid nature of language (polyglossia) and the relation between utterances (intertextuality). Heteroglossia is "the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance." To make an utterance means to "appropriate the words of others and populate them with one's own intention. Bakhtin's deep insights on dialogicality represent a substantive shift from views on the nature of language and knowledge by major thinkers as Ferdinand de Saussure and Immanuel Kant.

In "Epic and Novel", Bakhtin demonstrates the novel's distinct nature by contrasting it with the epic. By doing so, Bakhtin shows that the novel is well-suited to the post-industrial civilization in which we live because it flourishes on diversity. It is this same diversity that the epic attempts to eliminate from the world. According to Bakhtin, the novel as a genre is unique in that it is able to embrace, ingest, and devour other genres while still maintaining its status as a novel. Other genres, however, cannot emulate the novel without damaging their own distinct identity.

"From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is a less traditional essay in which Bakhtin reveals how various different texts from the past have ultimately come together to form the modern novel.

"Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" introduces Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. This essay applies the concept in order to further demonstrate the distinctive quality of the novel. The word chronotope literally means "time space" and is defined by Bakhtin as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." For the purpose of his writing, an author must create entire worlds and, in doing so, is forced to make use of the organizing categories of the real world in which he lives. For this reason chronotope is a concept that engages reality.

The final essay, "Discourse in the Novel", is one of Bakhtin's most complete statements concerning his philosophy of language. It is here that Bakhtin provides a model for a history of discourse and introduces the concept of heteroglossia. The term heteroglossia refers to the qualities of a language that are extralinguistic, but common to all languages. These include qualities such as perspective, evaluation, and ideological positioning. In this way most languages are incapable of neutrality, for every word is inextricably bound to the context in which it exists.

In the philosophy of language and philology, chronotope is a term coined by M.M. Bakhtin to describe the way time and space are described by language, and, in particular, how literature represents them. The term itself (Russian: хроното́п), from Greek: Χρόνος ("time") and τόπος ("space"), can be literally translated as "time-space." Bakhtin developed the term in his 1937 essay "Russian: Формы времени и хронотопа в романе", published in English as "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel.

Bakhtin scholars Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist state that the chronotope is "a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristics of the temporal and spatial categories represented in that language". Specific chronotopes are said to correspond to

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particular genres, or relatively stable ways of speaking, which themselves represent particular world views or ideologies. To this extent, a chronotope is both a cognitive concept and a narrative feature of language.

In the Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin defines the Chronotope:

We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature; we will not deal with the chronotope in other areas of culture.' In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.

Analysis

The distinctiveness of chronotopic analysis, in comparison to most other uses of time and space in language analysis, stems from the fact that neither time nor space is privileged by Bakhtin, they are utterly interdependent and they should be studied in this manner.

Linguistic anthropologist Keith Basso invoked "chronotopes" in discussing Western [Apache] stories linked with places. At least in the 1980s when Basso was writing about the stories, geographic features reminded the Western Apache of "the moral teachings of their history" by recalling to mind events that occurred there in important moral narratives. By merely mentioning "it happened at [the place called] 'men stand above here and there,'" storyteller Nick Thompson could remind locals of the dangers of joining "with outsiders against members of their own community." Geographic features in the Western Apache landscape are chronotopes, Basso says, in precisely the way Bakhtin defines the term when he says they are "points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people. ...Chronotopes thus stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves".

Speech Genres and Other Late Essays

In Speech Genres and Other Late Essays Bakhtin moves away from the novel and concerns himself with the problems of method and the nature of culture. There are six essays that comprise this compilation: "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff", "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism", "The Problem of Speech Genres", "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis", "From Notes Made in 1970-71," and "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences."

"Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff" is a transcript of comments made by Bakhtin to a reporter from a monthly journal called Novy Mir that was widely read by Soviet intellectuals. The transcript expresses Bakhtin's opinion of literary scholarship whereby he highlights some of its shortcomings and makes suggestions for improvement.

"The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" is a fragment from one of Bakhtin's lost books. The publishing house to which Bakhtin had submitted the full manuscript was blown up during the German invasion and Bakhtin was in possession of only the prospectus.

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However, due to a shortage of paper, Bakhtin began using this remaining section to roll cigarettes. So only a portion of the opening section remains. This remaining section deals primarily with Goethe.

"The Problem of Speech Genres" deals with the difference between Saussurean linguistics and language as a living dialogue (translinguistics). In a relatively short space, this essay takes up a topic about which Bakhtin had planned to write a book, making the essay a rather dense and complex read. It is here that Bakhtin distinguishes between literary and everyday language. According to Bakhtin, genres exist not merely in language, but rather in communication. In dealing with genres, Bakhtin indicates that they have been studied only within the realm of rhetoric and literature, but each discipline draws largely on genres that exist outside both rhetoric and literature. These extraliterary genres have remained largely unexplored. Bakhtin makes the distinction between primary genres and secondary genres, whereby primary genres legislate those words, phrases, and expressions that are acceptable in everyday life, and secondary genres are characterized by various types of text such as legal, scientific, etc.

"The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis" is a compilation of the thoughts Bakhtin recorded in his notebooks. These notes focus mostly on the problems of the text, but various other sections of the paper discuss topics he has taken up elsewhere, such as speech genres, the status of the author, and the distinct nature of the human sciences. However, "The Problem of the Text" deals primarily with dialogue and the way in which a text relates to its context. Speakers, Bakhtin claims, shape an utterance according to three variables: the object of discourse, the immediate addressee, and a superaddressee. This is what Bakhtin describes as the tertiary nature of dialogue.

"From Notes Made in 1970-71" appears also as a collection of fragments extracted from notebooks Bakhtin kept during the years of 1970 and 1971. It is here that Bakhtin discusses interpretation and its endless possibilities. According to Bakhtin, humans have a habit of making narrow interpretations, but such limited interpretations only serve to weaken the richness of the past.

The final essay, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences", originates from notes Bakhtin wrote during the mid-seventies and is the last piece of writing Bakhtin produced before he died. In this essay he makes a distinction between dialectic and dialogics and comments on the difference between the text and the aesthetic object. It is here also, that Bakhtin differentiates himself from the Formalists, who, he felt, underestimated the importance of content while oversimplifying change, and the Structuralists, who too rigidly adhered to the concept of "code.

Influence

He is known today for his interest in a wide variety of subjects, ideas, vocabularies, and periods, as well as his use of authorial disguises, and for his influence (alongside György Lukács) on the growth of Western scholarship on the novel as a premiere literary genre. As a result of the breadth of topics with which he dealt, Bakhtin has influenced such Western schools of theory as Neo-Marxism, Structuralism, and Semiotics. However, his influence on such groups has, somewhat paradoxically, resulted in narrowing the scope of Bakhtin's work. According to Clark and Holquist, rarely do those who incorporate Bakhtin's ideas into theories of their own appreciate his work in its entirety.

While Bakhtin is traditionally seen as a literary critic, there can be no denying his impact on the realm of rhetorical theory. Among his many theories and ideas Bakhtin indicates that style is a developmental process, occurring both within the user of language and language itself. His work instills in the reader an awareness of tone and expression that arises from the careful formation of verbal phrasing. By means of his writing, Bakhtin has enriched the experience of verbal and written expression which ultimately aids the formal teaching of writing. Some even suggest that Bakhtin introduces a new meaning to rhetoric because of his tendency to reject the separation of language and ideology.

This essay mainly focuses on a single Flemish 'adaptation' of one of the oldest chronotopes Bakhtin has distinguished, the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal. The particular case of Joseph

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Ronsse's historical novel Arnold van Schoorisse (1845) can, however, be seen as symptomatic for a great number of Belgian historical novels. First Bakhtin's characterization of this chronotope. In FTC, Bakhtin analyses the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal predominantly in the cases of the very earliest examples of this type of novel, the so called Greek or Sophistic romances. As Carlos García Gual has demonstrated, some of these Greek romances (especially Chariton's Chareas and Callirhoë and Heliodorus' Aethiopica) may be regarded as historical novels, and were indeed received as such in ancient times. The action in these romances is projected towards a - albeit only feebly characterized - past, historical characters figure in a minor role (often as parents of the heroes), and certain characters and scenes echo the works of historians like Herodotus and Thucydides.

As for space, in these novels it 'figures in solely as a naked, abstract expanse of space', 'measured primarily by distance on the one hand and by proximity on the other'. Thus, '[t]he adventure chronotope is […] characterized by a technical, abstract connection [not an organic one, nb] between space and time, by the reversibility of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their interchangeability in space'.

As I would like to illustrate, the traditional chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal as Bakhtin described it has undergone particular - and in some novels quite significant - changes under the influence of the specific poetics of the Belgian historical novel, as it is expressed mainly in prefaces and works of literary criticism. In previous articles, I have argued that the case of the early 19th century Belgian historical novel shows how prefaces—which in the 18th century had proved to be the privileged loci for expressing the literary novelistic consciousness - also offered an ideal discursive climate for addressing issues of nation building and collective memory. Detailed analyses of the nationalist discourse in the prefaces to the historical novels written in Belgium in the first two decades after independence, focussing on the discourses about memory and national identity, have revealed that both the concept of the native soil (space) and the genealogical link between the glorious ancestors and their descendants (time) have played a major role in the construction of this nationalist discourse.

The historical chronotope in this type of historic adventure novels of ordeal, as we can now call them, can be encountered predominantly, and sometimes only, in the footnotes and endnotes. The nationalist discourse that can be found in the prefaces thus cannot be said to have greatly increased the amount of concretization of time and space. However, it is certainly explicitly and abundantly present in the discourse of certain characters (in their speeches, dialogues, monologues). I will here mention only one example, other examples can be found in the endnotes to this paper. On the eve of the decisive battle at Westrozebeke, Philip van Artevelde reminds his fellow citizens of the glorious deeds of their forefathers in Groeninge in the way the 19th century historical novelists remind their contemporaries of the ancestral heroism: 'Herinnert u allen de heldendaden uwer vaderen'. That Ronsse made the 19th century nationalist discourse serve as a model for Artevelde's discourse in Arnold van Schoorisse can be seen for instance in Artevelde's confident exclamation that 'nieuwe Breydels en de Coninks zyn weêr opgerezen om hunne stadgenooten tot de overwinning te geleiden' ('new Breydel's and de Coninck's have risen again to lead their fellow citizens to victory'): the main characters from Conscience's De Leeuw van Vlaenderen only became legendary in the 19th century A perfect example of the little influence the nationalist discourse has exerted on the categories of time and space in the novel is provided by the ensuing description of the battle at Westrozebeke. By reminding the citizens of Ghent and Bruges of the fact that 'de vermolmde gebeenderen uwer vrye vaderen [nog] rusten […] in den heiligen grond van Groeninge' ('the mouldered bones of your free fathers still rest in the holy soil of Groeninge') Philip van Artevelde succeeds in arousing their nationalist feelings. In his speech the imaginary space of 'Vlaenderen' is charged with historicity through the mentioning of such places as Groeninge, through the stressing of the need to free the native soil of 'uitheemsch[…] gebroedsel' ('foreign scum') and through the call to let the blood of the last oppressor spill under Flemish axes. The

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native soil is saturated with the past (literally, through the image of the corpses buried in the ground) and even acquires a holy character. Likewise, time becomes charged with historicity as well: the battle that is to take place the next day, '[zal] de onafhankelykheid der Vlamingen vereeuwigen, of hen op nieuw met boeijen overladen' ('will perpetuate the independence of the Flemings, or put them back in chains'). However, Ronsse importantly does not succeed in introducing this historicity into the descriptions of the actual novelistic space. The historical chronotope in Arnold van Schoorisse is only created in the imagination of the characters, it is not realised in the novel's 'reality' (in its chronotope): in the description of the battle the next day, the space of the native country once more completely disappears into the background, and actions such as 'rushing forward', 'fleeing', 'hastening to help', 'gaining ground', 'recoiling', 'pursuing', 'surrounding' and 'cutting short' all take place against a completely abstract background. This abstract quality of time and space is a necessity in any adventure novel of ordeal. As Bakhtin explains, it is a prerequisite for the ruling principle of 'chance' to be able to operate to its fullest: Every concretization, of even the most simple and everyday variety, would introduce its own rule-generating force, its own order, its inevitable ties to human life and to the time specific to that life. Events would end up being interwoven with these rules, and to a greater or lesser extent would find themselves participating in this order, subject to its ties. This would critically limit the power of chance; the movement of the adventures would be organically localized and tied down in time and space.

Plot

The amorous plot-line is however still introduced in the first chapter, in the story of Arnold's and Isabella's marriage and Isabella's subsequent abduction, and at the end the motif is even doubled by the introduction of another couple (Oda van Schoorisse and Frans Ackerman) about to get married. The deep indebtedness of Arnold van Schoorisse to the Greek romance reveals itself in the fact that Ackerman is first introduced as Oda's lover (and thus as a hero in the amorous plot-line), and is to figure as a historical character only in the next chapter. Further in the novel, however, it will become clear that Arnold's unremitting (and uncritical) loyalty to the Count of Mâle largely stems from a curse that 'de zwarte ridder' ('the black knight'), a long-time persecutor of Arnold's family who had abducted Arnold's wife Isabella seventeen years before, has laid upon Arnold's daughter Oda. The black knight had added a stipulation to this curse, promising that if Arnold should ever succeed in being knighted by the Count as a reward for his faithful service, he himself would honour the precepts of knighthood, and would respect and even protect Oda, because from then on she would be 'het erfdeel eens ridders' ('the inheritance of a knight') (I, 38). The reason for Arnold's loyalty is therefore primarily to be situated on the 'individual' (and predominantly amorous) plane of events, not on the political plane. As in the traditional adventure novel of ordeal, the faith of the main characters is for the most part never under debate in Arnold van Schoorisse: the whole novel is conceived as a proof of this faith, rather than as a test in which the heroes might fail.

Central Motif

The central motif of faith also informs the many oaths sworn in this novel - the crucifixes in the bedrooms of the 'persecuted maidens' Isabella and Oda seem to be present for this purpose only. Characters in the novel are, moreover, often evaluated on the basis of their trustworthiness and sincerity: they are characterized as honest and sincere, or as 'lasteraer' ('slanderer'), 'schynheilig' ('hypocritical') or 'valschaert' ('imposter'). This opposition receives its clearest expression in Oda's characterization of her respective suitors Frans Ackerman and Walter van Herzeele (Arnold's best friend, who will later turn out to be none other than the black knight). The words of Ackerman are 'waer als het H. Evangelie' ('as true as the gospel'); in Walter's words on the contrary 'schuilt iets listigs' ('they contain something cunning and deceitful'), and Oda remains on her guard against the 'listen en lagen' ('cunning schemes') of the 'valschaert'.

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Walter van Herzeele not only plays the role of false friend in the 'individual' plot-sequence, where he uses his position as Arnold's best friend and confidant for his own scheming to get Oda to renounce Ackerman and marry him instead, he also (and successfully) plays this role on the historical plane, where he stands in the grace of both opposed political parties and knows their secrets: Walter was […] in de gunsten des Graven, even als in die der opstandelingen gedrongen: de geheimen der beide gezindheden doorgrondde hy: de belangen van den Prins, even als die der Gentenaers, werden door hem in schyn verdedigd; en nauw was de eene of andere maetregel genomen, of hy werd aen de vyandlyke benden overgebriefd.

had come into the Count's favour, as well as in that of the rebels: he fathomed the secrets of both parties: both the interests of the Prince and of the citizens of Ghent were defended by him, but only in name; and hardly had one or the other measure been taken, before it was passed on to the enemy[.]

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Bakhtin's Chronotope theory was written is ..... .

(*a*) 1830s (*b*) 1850s

(*c*) 1820s (*d*) none of these

(*ii*) Bakhtin found in Dostoevsky's work a true representation of ..... .

(*a*) menotymy (*b*) metaphor

(*c*) polyphony (*d*) none of these

(*iii*) The hybrid nature of language in ..... .

(*a*) heteroglossia (*b*) dialogism

(*c*) polyglossia (*d*) none of these

(*iv*) Chronotope is a term coined to ..... .

(*a*) M.M. Bakhtin (*b*) Michael Holoquist

(*c*) Caryl Emerson (*d*) none of these.

3.5 Summary

- Bakhtin was concerned with language or discourse as a social activity. The Bakhtin School comprising Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Volosphinov believed 'words' to be active, dynamic, that had several connotations and would mean something different to a different person or social hierarchy or whose meaning would differ according to time and place. Earlier linguist patronised the view that language was 'isolated ... divorced from its verbal and actual contest'. The Bakhtin School used the Russian word 'solvo' which can and is translated into English as 'word', but the Russian connotation extends a social flavour that would more readily imply utterance 'or even' discourse.
- Bakhtin considered the novel to be such a dynamic genere that would eventually take over, many other genres. For instance, Epic, which was characterized (according to Bakhtin) by an uncrossable gulf separating the characters and events fromthe audience was eventually subsumed by the novel, in such a way that a separation would be unthinkable.
- Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope concept offers for the study of the intrinsically hybrid genre of the historical novel. By applying the concept to the analysis of the early 19th -century Flemish historical novel, I illustrate how the chronotope of the adventure novel of ordeal, which structures a significant number of the historical novels published in Belgium between 1830 and 1850, and which can be traced back to the ancient Greek romance, can undergo drastic revisions under the influence of the particular poetics of the Belgian historical novel.
- The chronotope essays 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics' (henceforth referred to as FTC) and 'The Bildungsroman and Its

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Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historic Typology of the Novel)' (henceforth referred to as BSHR) constitute the basis for the theoretical framework that is developed in my dissertation on 19th century Belgian historical novels. One of the case-studies from this dissertation is presented here, albeit in a considerably abridged form.

- Bakhtin begins by briefly charting the course of the attempt to analysis and define the novel, and the resulting failure, because of the failure to explore the "stylistic specificum, of the novel as a genre." Bakhtin then provides a few examples of the use of imagery and metaphor within a novel, and how these elements different from their use in poetics. Bakhtin points out a distinctive characteristic of the novel "the image of the another's language and outlook on the world…, simultaneously represented and representing, is extremely typical of the novel."
- "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" is a less traditional essay in which Bakhtin reveals how various different texts from the past have ultimately come together to form the modern novel.

3.6 Key-Words

1. Polyglossia : Basically polyglossia situations involve two contrasting varieties (high and low) but in general it refers to communities that regularly use more than two languages.
2. Lexical borrowing : It results from the lack of vocabulary and it involves borrowing single words - mainly nouns. When speaking a second language, people will often use a term from their first language because they don't know the appropriate word in their second language. They also my borrow words from another language to express a concept or describe an object for which there is no obvious word available in the language they are using.

3.7 Review Questions

1. What is the Concept of Chronotopes? Discuss.
2. Discuss the Concept of Polyphony.
3. Examine Bakhtin's, "from the prehistory of Novelistic Discourse".

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*c*) (*iii*) (*c*) (*iv*) (*a*)

3.8 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 4: Two Types of Orientalism—Orientalism as a Literary Theory

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand Orientalism.
- Explain two Types of Orientalism.
- Discuss Orientalism as a Literary Theory.

Introduction

Orientalism is the study of Near and Far Eastern societies and cultures, languages and peoples by Western scholars. It can also refer to the imitation or depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures in the West by writers, designers and artists.

In the former meaning the term Orientalism has come to acquire negative connotations in some quarters and is interpreted to refer to the study of the East by Westerners shaped by the attitudes of the era of European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. When used in this sense, it implies old-fashioned and prejudiced outsider interpretations of Eastern cultures and peoples. This viewpoint was most famously articulated and propagated by Edward Said in his controversial 1978 book Orientalism, which was critical of this scholarly tradition and of modern scholars including Princeton University professor Bernard Lewis.

Orientalism is a term used by art historians, literary and cultural studies scholars for the imitation or depiction of aspects of Middle Eastern, and East Asian cultures (Eastern cultures) by American and European writers, designers and artists. In particular, Orientalist painting, depicting more specifically "the Middle East", was one of the many specialisms of 19th century Academic art. Since the publication of Edward Said's Orientalism, the term has arguably acquired a negative connotation.

4.1 Meaning of the Term

"Orientalism" refers to the Orient or East, in contrast to the Occident or West, and often, as seen by the West.

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"Orientalism" is widely used in art, to refer to the works of the many Western 19th century artists, who specialized in "Oriental" subjects, often drawing on their travels to Western Asia. Artists as well as scholars were already described as "Orientalists" in the 19th century, especially in France, where the term, with a rather dismissive sense, was largely popularized by the critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary. Such disdain did not prevent the Societé des Peintres Orientalistes ("Society of Orientalist Painters") being founded in 1893, with Jean-Léon Gérôme as honorary president; the word was less often used as a term for artists in 19th century England.

Since the 18th century, "Orientalist" has been the traditional term for a scholar of Oriental studies; however the use in English of "Orientalism" to describe the academic subject of "Oriental studies" is rare; the Oxford English Dictionary cites only one such usage, by Lord Byron in 1812. The academic discipline of Oriental studies is now more often called Asian studies. In 1978, the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said published his influential and controversial book, Orientalism, which "would forever redefine" the word; he used the term to describe a pervasive Western tradition, both academic and artistic, of prejudiced outsider interpretations of the East, shaped by the attitudes of European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Said was critical of both this scholarly tradition and of some modern scholars, particularly Bernard Lewis. Said was mainly concerned with literature in the widest sense, especially French literature, and did not cover visual art and Orientalist painting, though others, notably Linda Nochlin, have tried to extend his analysis to art, "with uneven results". Said's work has given rise to a new discipline called Postcolonialism or Postcolonial studies.

Like the term Orient itself Orientalism derives from a Latin word Oriens referring simply to the rising of the sun, to imply "the East" in a relative sense. This is the opposite of the term Occident, which has largely dropped from common usage. Similar terms are the French-derived Levant and Anatolia, from the Greek anatole, two further locutions for the direction in which the sun rises. In terms of The Old World, Europe was considered to be 'The West' or Occidental, and the furthest known Eastern extremity 'The East' or 'The Orient'.

From at least the time of the Roman Empire until at least the Middle Ages, what is now considered 'the Middle East' was then considered 'the Orient'. During that period, the flourishing cultures of the Far East were little known, just as Europe was essentially unknown in 'the Far East. Over time, the common understanding of 'the Orient' has continually shifted East as Western explorers traveled deeper into Asia. In Biblical times, the Three Wise Men 'from the Orient' were actually Magi from "The East" (relative to Palestine) meaning 'the Persian Empire'. After all period, as Europe gained knowledge of countries further to the East, the definition of the limit of 'the Orient' progressively shifted eastwards, until the Pacific Ocean was reached, in what is also known as 'the Far East'. This can cause some confusion about the historical and geographic scope of Oriental Studies.

However, there still remain some contexts where 'the Orient' or 'Oriental' refer to older definitions. For example, 'Oriental Spices' typically come from regions extending from the Middle East through the Indian sub-continent to Indo-China. Also, travel on the Orient Express (from Paris to Istanbul), is eastward bound (towards the sunrise), but does not reach what is currently understood to be the Orient.

In contemporary English, Oriental is usually a synonym for the peoples, cultures and goods from the parts of East Asia traditionally occupied by East Asians and Southeast Asians, excluding Indians, Arabs and other more westerly peoples. In some parts of America it is considered derogatory to use this term to refer to Asians (whether East, South, West or Central Asians). For example, in Washington state it is illegal to use the word 'oriental' in legislation and government documents .

4.2 History of Orientalism

It is difficult to be precise about the origin of the distinction between the "West" and the "East". However the rise of both Christianity and Islam produced a sharp opposition between European Christendom and the Muslim cultures to the East and in North Africa. During the Middle Ages Islamic peoples were the "alien" enemies of the Christian world. [citation needed] European

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knowledge of cultures further to the East was very sketchy. Nevertheless, there was a vague awareness that complex civilizations existed in India and China, from which luxury goods such as woven textiles and ceramics were imported. As European explorations and colonisations expanded a distinction emerged between non-literate peoples, for example in Africa and the Americas, and the literate cultures of the East.

In the 18th century Enlightenment thinkers sometimes characterized aspects of Eastern cultures as superior to the Christian West. For example Voltaire promoted research into Zoroastrianism in the belief that it would support a rational Deism superior to Christianity. Others praised the relative religious tolerance of Islamic countries in contrast with the Christian West, or the status of scholarship in Mandarin China. With the translation of the Avesta by Abraham Anquetil-Duperron and the discovery of the Indo-European languages by William Jones complex connections between the early history of Eastern and Western cultures emerged. However, these developments occurred in the context of rivalry between France and Britain for control of India, and it is sometimes claimed were associated with attempts to understand colonised cultures in order more effectively to control them. Liberal economists such as James Mill denigrated Eastern countries on the grounds that their civilizations were static and corrupt. Karl Marx characterised the "Asiatic mode of production" as unchanging and praised British colonialism in India. Christian evangelists sought to denigrate Eastern religious traditions as superstitions (see Juggernaut).

Despite this, the first serious European studies of Buddhism and Hinduism were undertaken by scholars such as Eugene Burnouf and Max Müller. In this period serious study of Islam also emerged. By the mid-19th century Oriental Studies was an established academic discipline. However, while scholarly study expanded, so did racist attitudes and popular stereotypes of "inscrutable" and "wily" orientals. Often scholarly ideas were intertwined with such prejudicial racial or religious assumptions. Eastern art and literature were still seen as "exotic" and as inferior to Classical Graeco-Roman ideals. Their political and economic systems were generally thought to be feudal "oriental despotisms" and their alleged cultural inertia was considered to be resistant to progress. Many critical theorists regard this form of Orientalism as part of a larger, ideological colonialism justified by the concept of the "white man's burden".

4.3 Orientalism in the Arts

Imitations of Oriental Styles

Similar ambivalence is evident in art and literature. From the Renaissance to the 18th century Western designers attempted to imitate the technical sophistication of Chinese ceramics with only partial success. Chinoiserie is the catch-all term for the fashion for Chinese themes in decoration in Western Europe, beginning in the late 17th century and peaking in waves, especially Rococo Chinoiserie, ca 1740-1770. Early hints of Chinoiserie appear, in the 17th century, in the nations with active East India companies: England (the British East India Company), Denmark (the Danish East India Company), Holland (the Dutch East India Company) and France (the French East India Company). Tin-glazed pottery made at Delft and other Dutch towns adopted genuine blue-and-white Ming decoration from the early 17th century, and early ceramic wares at Meißen and other centers of true porcelain imitated Chinese shapes for dishes, vases and teawares (see Chinese export porcelain). But in the true Chinoiserie décor fairyland, mandarins lived in fanciful mountainous landscapes with cobweb bridges, carried flower parasols, lolled in flimsy bamboo pavilions haunted by dragons and phoenixes, while monkeys swung from scrolling borders.

Pleasure pavilions in "Chinese taste" appeared in the formal parterres of late Baroque and Rococo German palaces, and in tile panels at Aranjuez near Madrid. Thomas Chippendale's mahogany tea tables and china cabinets, especially, were embellished with fretwork glazing and railings, ca 1753 - 70, but sober homages to early Xing scholars' furnishings were also naturalized, as the tang evolved into a mid- Georgian side table and squared slat-back armchairs suited English gentlemen as well as Chinese scholars. Not every adaptation of Chinese design principles falls within mainstream "chinoiserie." Chinoiserie media included imitations of lacquer and painted tin (tôle) ware that imitated japanning, early painted wallpapers in sheets, and ceramic figurines and table

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ornaments. Small pagodas appeared on chimneypieces and full-sized ones in gardens. Kew has a magnificent garden pagoda designed by Sir William Chambers.

After 1860, Japonaiserie, sparked by the arrival of Japanese woodblock prints, became an important influence in the western arts in particular on many modern French artists such as Monet. The paintings of James McNeill Whistler and his "Peacock Room" are some of the finest works of the genre; other examples include the Gamble House and other buildings by California architects Greene and Greene.

Depictions of the Orient in Art and Literature

"Le Bain turc," (Turkish Bath) by J.A.D. Ingres, 1862 Depictions of Islamic "Moors" and "Turks" (imprecisely named Muslim groups of North Africa and West Asia) can be found in Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque art. But it was not until the 19th century that "Orientalism" in the arts became an established theme. In these works the myth of the Orient as exotic and corrupt is most fully articulated. Such works typically concentrated on Near-Eastern Islamic cultures. Artists such as Eugène Delacroix and Jean-Léon Gérôme painted many depictions of Islamic culture, often including lounging odalisques, and stressing lassitude and visual spectacle. When Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, director of the French Académie de peinture painted a highly-colored vision of a turkish bath (illustration, right), he made his eroticized Orient publicly acceptable by his diffuse generalizing of the female forms, who might all have been of the same model. If his painting had simply been retitled "In a Paris Brothel," it would have been far less acceptable. Sensuality was seen as acceptable in the exotic Orient. This orientalizing imagery persisted in art into the early 20th century, as evidenced in Matisse's orientalist nudes. In these works the "Orient" often functions as a mirror to Western culture itself, or as a way of expressing its hidden or illicit aspects. In Gustave Flaubert's novel Salammbô ancient Carthage in North Africa is used as a foil to ancient Rome. Its culture is portrayed as morally corrupting and suffused with dangerously alluring eroticism. This novel proved hugely influential on later portrayals of ancient Semitic cultures.

Orientalism refers to a particular academic tradition in the West, preoccupied with conceptualising and representing the Oriental, albeit non-Western societies/cultures as the opposite - or the 'other' of the Occident (Said 1979]). The emergence of orientalism has a particular historical context, that is, the global ascendancy of the West, with the development of capitalism.

What is wrong with Orientalism? First, it misrepresents the social-cultural reality of both the East and the West in an attempt to present the latter as rational, forward looking, humane, and civilised, the characteristics typically absent in the latter, resulting in two types of society: one, with history and the other, without history. It tends to turn history into a "moral" project (Wolf 1982), with the good side emerging victorious in humanity's quest of progress. By presenting the progress of the West as a natural consequence of the intrinsic virtues of Western culture, it distorts the historical reality of Western modernity that is far from idyllic. It ignores the real history of the progress of the West in which the histories of the East and the West are intricately intertwined.

Historically, the development of capitalism was premised on colonialism. Colonialism was a coercive process. In the realisation of this project of Western domination, Orientalism serves an important ideological function. It not only justifies West's exploitation of the rest, rather, it turns it into a historic mission of West's noble attempt to help the 'other', the backward, the uncivilised, savage Orient to "assimilate" with the West. In other words, Orientalism turns the history of modernity upside down.

4.4 Latent and Manifest Orientalism

In this Unit, Said shows how latent and manifest Orientalism worked in conjunction with the West's academic, scientific and economic strength to reproduce a cycle of the Orient's marginalization and the West's domination. Latent Orientalism refers to the philosophical and subconscious applications of superiority, and I interpreted manifest Orientalism as the application of latent in order to secure and justify Eurocentric perceptions through socially revered institutions, such as science, government, economy, etc.

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- When thinking about latent orientalism, I immediately thought about the frightening racial superiority constructions that lead to human genocide such as the German third Reich party in WWII. The more I learn about the post-colonial political ramifications of racial superiority constructions, the more I realize that the past constructions manifest themselves in different ways. How do you think racial/ethnic superiority has manifested itself in contemporary times?

In order to isolate the East from social movement "in the deepest sense of the word," (208) the West feminizes the East in order to distance Oriental men from power and to conglomerate power with only European, aristocratic men. The analogies relating the East with feminine attributes implied an inherent weakness and dependency of the East on the West, and this mentality justified the West overtaking geographical space in order to help the "uncivilized" Orient.

- This section immediately reminded me of corporate chains incorporating into international spaces as symbols of civilization and progress, as if other countries could not be civilized without them. Do you see any other contemporary relationships where one country is feminized by the other in order to take over geographical space?

I chose the above painting to tie European dominance, feminization and geography together. I interpret the center to be a representation of Mother England because 1) Queen Victoria was the reigning monarch at the time and 2) qualities associated with motherhood such as charity, selflessness, devotion, leadership, etc. reflect the Orientalist perception of the West's role in the East. Also, I see this woman as implying a virgin sexual purity, because this polarizes England from the Orientalist definition of Oriental women as naturally sexually charged. The way she is reclining on top of the world with the other ethnic representations looking towards her at the center really hits the point: England saw themselves as the center of everyone else's Universe! She is not only at the center, but also at the top of the world, and I understand her, holding poseidon's staff, to be a symbol of dominance, empire and control over the oceans, nature and maybe even God.

4.5 Literary Theory and Children's Literature

Child psychology and children's literature can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with childhood-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, child psychology and children's literature as an adult style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over childhood.

Anyone distressed by these strongly critical words about our institutions for dealing with children will be happy to hear that I have made the words up. Or more accurately, I have borrowed them: I have merely inserted phrases relating to childhood institutions into a quotation that actually discusses a quite different topic: Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 3) I came upon the original quotation in Edward Said's Orientalism, a brilliant investigation of European attitudes towards Arabs and Asians. Said works to reveal that what we call "the Orient" has little to do with actual conditions in the East-that it is more significantly a European invention that has had a powerful influence of how Europeans have not only thought about but also acted upon the East.

As I read through Said's powerful descriptions of the history and structure of Orientalism, I was continually astonished by how often they suggested to me parallel insights into our most common assumptions about childhood and children's literature. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so astonished: after all, Jacqueline Rose's influential discussion of "the impossibility of children's fiction" works from the premise that children's literature is a form of colonization.1 Indeed, an exploration of the parallels between Said's descriptions of Orientalism and our representations of childhood in both child psychology and children's literature reveals a number of interesting things.

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1. Inherent Inferiority

According to Europeans, Europeans must describe and analyze the Orient because Orientals are not capable of describing or analyzing themselves. Not only is Orientalism an area of study that can be pursued only by outsiders, but what defines them as outside of their subjea is, exaaly, their ability to study it: "the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact". Orientalism is thus inherently and inevitably a study of what theorists often call the otherÂ-of that which is opposite to the person doing the talking or thinking or studying.2 Since the opposite of studying is an inability to study, the other is always conceived by those who study it to be unable to study itself, to see or speak for itself. Thus, what the study will always focus on is how and why the other lacks one's own capabilities.

It's fairly obvious that our descriptions of childhood similarly purport to see and speak for children, and that we believe them to be similarly incapable of speaking for themselves. As far as I know, the writers and readers of the Children's Literature Association Quarterly ate adults; children are not the ones who write either the texts we identify as children's literature or the criticism of those texts. Said's words force us to face the uncomfortable conclusion that our attempting to speak for and about children in these ways will always confirm their difference from, and presumably, inferiority to, ourselves as thinkers and speakers.

Of course, we may claim to believe that the inability of children to speak for themselves is not inferiority at all, but a wonderfully ideal state of innocence, just as Europeans have claimed throughout history to admire what they have interpreted as a lack of analytical reason in Orientals. But this supposed admiration of the inability to see and speak is undercut by the fact that it is based at least in theory on observation-seeing-and then, spoken about; it makes the other wonderful at the expense of making it not like us-in essence, not quite human. We undercut our admiration of the inability to speak as we do ourselves in the very act of speaking so enthusiastically about it.

2. Inherent Femaleness

Representations of those who can't see or speak for themselves are and must always be engendered by outsiders-those who can see and speak. According to Lacan's theory of the gaze, all such representations imply the right of he who observes and interpretes to observe and interpretes; he who can fix others in his gaze, and thus define who they are as no more and no less than what he sees, has authority over them. The representations of childhood we can find in child psychology and in children's literature thus imply our belief in our own right to power over children even just by existing. These representations, and the disciplines that produce them, are imperialist in essence. Furthermore, I said "he who fixes others in his gaze" deliberately.

In the history of art and in contemporary pin-up photography, it has traditionally been females who are subject to a male gaze, and therefore defined as appropriate subjects to be gazed at—available, passive and yielding to the convenience of detached observers. If the most obvious subject of a male gaze is female, then maleness and femaleness can and do become metaphoric qualities for gazers and gazees who aren't actually male or female: indeed, even oppressors who are actually female tend to describe themselves in language which implies their own aggressive maleness and the passive femaleness of those they oppress, both male and female. For Europeans for whom the Orient is subject to the gaze, it is therefore, metaphorically, female-and that allows Europe to represent itself and its own authority as male. Said describes how "images ... of frank sexual attention to the Orient proliferated" as "scholars, administrators, geographers, and commercial agents poured out their exuberant activity onto the fairly supine, feminine Orient".

The parallel holds here also. Whether male or female, adults often describe their dealings with children in language which manages to suggest something traditionally feminine about childhood, something traditionally masculine about adulthood, and something sexual about adult dealings with children. Scholars, administrators, writers, and teachers-we all pour out exuberant activity onto what we assume are (or ought to be) the fairly supine bodies of children.

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We gaze at them and talk about how charming they are in their passive willingness to be gazed at, how cute they are in their endearing efforts to put on a good show for those who observe them. We describe them as intuitive rather than rational, creative rather than practical. And meanwhile, we woo them to our values. We tell them that their true happiness consists in pleasing us, bending to our will, doing what we want. We plant the seeds of our wisdom in them. And we get very angry indeed when they dare to gaze back.

3. Inherent Distortion

Obviously, the representation of childhood as perceived by this sort of gaze is a distorted one. Said says, the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth,' of which it is itself a representation.

As I suggested earlier, then, no representation can be truly objective; the irony is that those who most claim objectivity must be the least trustworthy. "As a judge of the Orient," Said asserts, "the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from it objectively. His human detachment, whose sign is the absence of sympathy covered by professional knowledge, is weighted heavily with all the orthodox attitudes, perspectives, and moods of Orientalism that I have been describing" . No matter what claims we make to the contrary, our supposedly objeaive descriptions of childhood are equally anything but objective, and are similarly permeated with assumptions developed over a number of centuries by a history of adult observation and discussion.

The paradox is that we can claim objectivity for our observations only by being other than what we observe; but in being other, we have no choice but to tntevptet what we observe in terms of ourselves and own previously established assumptions. Thus, adult interpretation of children's behavior, whether in literature or in psychology, are always contaminated by previously established adult assumptions about childhood. Those assumptions emerge from the discourse about children developed over centuries in order to support the programs of various philosophical and political systems; they are now simply taken for granted as the absolute truth, even by those of us who no longer espouse those systems.

Piaget's notorious habit of always interpreting the results of his experiments in childhood development in terms that underestimated the capabilities of his subjects is a perfect example. He may or may not have shared the specific politic concerns or philosophical prejudices that led Locke to assert that childhood thinking was different from and lesser than adult thought; he simply assumed that it was, and then made his results accord with those already existing assumptions of his culture. It has taken later experimenters with different cultural assumptions to reveal how slightly different versions of the same experiments reveal vastly superior capabilities in children.

4. Inherently Adult-Centered

Orientalism was and still mostly is a study pursued by Europeans; its representation of the Orient is therefore for the benefit of European interests. As Orientalism is primarily for the benefit of Europeans, child psychology and children's literature are primarily for the benefit of adults. We may claim to study childhood in order to benefit children, but we actually do it so that we will know how to deal with children; and as Rose suggests, we write books for children to provide them with values and with images of themselves unapprove of or feel comfortable with. By and large, we encourage in children those values and behaviors that make children easier for us to handle: more passive, more docile, more obedient-and thus, more in need of our guidance and more willing to accept the need for it. It's no accident that the vast majority of stories for children share the message that, despite one's dislike of the constraints one feels there, home is still the best, the safest place to be.

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5. Silencing and Inherent Silence

In the act of speaking for the other, providing it with a voice, we silence it. As long as we keep on speaking for it, we won't get to hear what it has to say for itself- and indeed, that may be exactly why we are speaking in the first place. Said says, "There were-and are-cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West". Similarly, our discourse about childhood often replaces and even prevents our real perception of the brute realities of childhood.

For instance: we produce a children's literature that is almost totally silent on the subject of sexuality, presumably in order to allow ourselves to believe that children truly are as innocent as we claim- that their lives are devoid of sexuality. In doing so, however, we make it difficult for children to speak to us about their sexual concerns: our silence on the subject clearly asserts that we have no wish to hear about it, that we think children with such concerns are abnormal. And if we convince ourselves that they are abnormal, then we render ourselves unable to hear what children are saying even if they do attempt to speak about such matters. The final result of the silencing of the other is that we actually do make it incomprehensible to us. According to Said, The relationship between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard to reach object. Yet the Orientalist remained outside the Orient, which, however much it was made to appear intelligible, remained beyond the Occident. This cultural, temporal, and geographical distance was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise: phrases like "the veils of an Eastern bride" or "the inscrutable Orient" passed into the common language. In other words, the more we say about what we understand, the more we understand that we can't understand. The more we claim to know about childhood, the more we find ourselves insisting on its mysterious otherness-its silence about itself-and the more we feel the need to observe yet more, interprete yet further: to say yet more, and thus, create much more silence for us to worry about and speak about. The adult observation of childhood as an other that does not observe itself is always doomed to fail to understand, and thus, doomed to continue replicating itself forever-or at least until it stops assuming its subject is indeed other. But as long as the study of childhood makes that assumption, it can continue to be a necessary (and dare I suggest, profitable?) pursuit of adults.

6. Inherent Danger

Our eternal desire and failure to understand the other confirms something else alsoÂ-its paradoxical attraaiveness and danger to us. That paradox clearly relates to "femaleness"Â-it is the essence of our traditional discourse about women. Said speaks of "the motif of the Orient as insinuating danger. Rationality is undermined by Eastern excesses, those mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values" . It is because Europeans find themselves attraaed to those "excesses" of Orientals that they work to blot them out; they must try to make Orientals more like themselves in order to prevent Orientals from making Europeans more like them, and therefore weakening Europeans.

The parallels in our attitudes to childhood are obvious. What we chose to understand as childlike irrationality or lawlessness or carelessness is attraaively lax, a temptation to be less responsible, less mature, less adult. If adults have a secret desire to act childishly, and if that dangerous desire is engendered by the childish actions of children, then we must protect ourselves and our world by making children less childish. Our domination of children is for our own good as well as theirs.

7. The Stability of the Other

We have just seen how the mere faa of our speaking for what we see as a speechless group merely confirms its continuing silence-merely confirms that it always has been and always will be other than our speaking selves. One of the essential qualities of Orientalism is its insistence across centuries that there is such a thing as "an Oriental mind," a set of basic

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characteristics that transcend not only mere individuals but also such minor distinctions as those between Arabs and Asians, or Hinduism and Islam, or Egyptians and Turks, and that the Oriental mind doesn't change significantly despite the passing of time. Said asserts that, "whereas it is no longer possible to write learned (or even popular) disquisitions on either 'the Negro mind' or 'the Jewish personality,' it is perfectly possible to engage in such research as 'the Islamic mind' or 'the Arab charaaer" (262); indeed, a letter that appeared in my local paper as I was working on this essay insists that "Arab people do not share our modern thinking .... Modern man's striving for progress and the well-being of all people is lacking in the Arabs' social and governing systems" (Winnipeg Free Press, May 26,1991); I doubt the paper would have published that letter if it had said "Israeli" instead of "Arab." "Childhood" is equally stable in the works of child psychologists, writers of children's fiction, and children's literature specialists.

Just as "the scholarly investigator took a type marked 'Oriental' for the same thing as any individual Oriental he might encounter" (230), Piaget assumed that the few individual Swiss children he studied could accurately represent the inherent cognitive development of all children in all times and all cultures. Contemporary children's literature is filled with images of childhood experience that accord more with Wordsworth's visions of idyllic childhood innocence than with the realities of modern children's lives, and contemporary children's literature journals are filled with the same few generalizations about how all children are creative (unlike most adults), or have limited attention spans (unlike most adults). And we happily assume that it must have been the imaginative bits in medieval or eighteenth century literature that the children in the audience responded to, rather than the religious or moral parts-as if medieval or eighteenth century children were inherently different from their parents, inherently one with the children of contemporary urban agnostic liberals.

The major effects of these "eternal truths" is, obviously, to confirm our own eternal difference from the other. "What the Orientalist does," says Said, "Is to confirm the Orient in his readers' eyes; he neither tries nor wants to unsettle already firm convictions" . Neither, apparently, do most children's writers and most adult experts in aspects of childhood.

8. Power

But why? Why must we continually confirm our limiting assumptions in this way? The answer is simple: power. Knowledge is, quite literally, power. When we talk about mastering a subjea, we don't often allow ourselves to see the literal truth of the metaphor: our doing so is truly to subject it to our power.

To know something is to be separate from it, above it, objective about it, and therefore in a position to perceive (or simply invent') the truth about itÂ-to be able, in other words, to aa as if what one "knows" is in faa true. Thus, "knowing" that Orientals are different from and therefore inferior to themselves, Europeans have been able to justify their efforts to dominate the East-just as we North Americans continue to use our knowledge of "the Arab mind" to justify our efforts to dominate Iraq. We adults similarly use our knowledge of "childhood" to dominate children. My children's teachers have frequently justified blatantly cruel punishments or deceitfully manipulative uses of group pressure by telling me that children of this particular age or stage cannot possibly possess my subtle moral perceptions, and therefore are not actually being hurt. What would be painful for us is acceptable for them, and allows us to behave toward them as we would not behave towards each other. By and large, children's literature tends to be a more subtle version of the same kind of wielding of adult power. I spoke earlier about the silence of children's literature on the subjea of sexuality; indeed, we almost always describe childhood for children in the hope, unconscious or otherwise, that the children will accept our version of their lives. In a famous formulation, Jacqueline Rose suggests that, "If children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp" . In other words, we show children what we "know" about childhood in hopes that they will take our word for it and become like the fictional children we have inventedÂ-and therefore, less threatening to us.

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In crude forms, this is simply a matter of providing children stories which ask them to see themselves in and thus accept the moral conclusions reached by child characters they are supposed to, as we say, "identify with." In more subtle novels, as Rose shows, we provide young readers with a "realistic" description of people and events that insist on the reality of one particular way of looking at the world and themselves-our way.

9. Domination

Said says, "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered common place by an average nineteenth- century European, but also because it could be-that is, submitted to being-made Oriental". Children do similarly submit to our ideas about what it means to be childish, and do show us the childish behavior we make it clear to them we wish to see, simply because they rarely have the power to do anything else. Exercising power over the weak in this way might well be perceived as an aa of bullying. If children are indeed weak enough to be so easily overwhelmed by our power over them, then they are weak enough that our unquestioning willingness to exercise that power in the blind faith that it's good for them implies some moral weakness in ourselves.

10. Self-Confirming Description

The fact that Orientals might be "made Oriental"-be manipulated into acting as if they actually are what the outside other sees them as being-suggests the extent to which a discourse of the other can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Said says, "we might expect that the ways by which it is recommended that a lion's fierceness be handled will actually increase its fierceness, force it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about it". If we assume children have short attention spans and therefore never let them try to read long books, they do not in fact read long books. They will seem to us to be incapable of reading long books-and we will see those that do manage to transcend our influence and read long books as atypical, paradoxically freaks in being more like us than like our other. It may well be for this reason that a depressingly large number of children do seem to fit into Piagetian categorizations of childlike behavior, and that an equally large number of children do seem to like the kinds of books that adult experts claim to be the kind of books children like. Indeed, in the current children's book market, driven more and more by the marketing needs of a few major bookstore chains, almost no other kind of book gets published, and therefore few children have any way of discovering if they might indeed like any other kind. Whether or not real children really do share these attitudes, we have provided ourselves with no way of perceiving their behavior as representing anything else.

11. Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Furthermore, real children do often act as we perceive them to act. The discourse of the other does often manage to absorb the other into its conceptions of otherness. In treating children like children, we may well doom them to a conviction in and inability to transcend their inadequacy.

12. Other as Opposite

A century or so ago, the British colonial official Lord Cromer summed up his knowledge of the East by saying, "I content myself with noting the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European" (Said 39). Or in other words: I define who I am myself as a European by seeing the Oriental as everything I am not. A main purpose of a discourse of the other is always this sort of self definition:

we characterize the other as other in order to define ourselves. "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different,'" says Said; "thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'". Similarly, we adults can see ourselves as rational, virtuous, mature, and normal exactly because we have irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different children to compare ourselves to. We need children to be childlike so that we can understand what maturity is-the opposite of being childlike.

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13. The Other as Inherently Contradictory

"For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West" (Said 208). This statement implies an inherent contradiction in the discourse of the other as I've described it thus far, one that's highly significant in discussions of children's literature.

On the one hand, as we've seen, Orientals are the opposite of Europeans, in ways so basic and unchanging that the Oriental mind transcends differences of specific places and times, and always in ways that define European superiority. If there were no more colonies to colonize, imperialists could no longer perceive themselves as being imperial; and so in a very basic sense "Oriental" means "eternally and inalterably opposite to human."

On the other hand, however, as we've also seen, part of the European's superior humanity is a more evolved sense of obligation to others less superior; the strong must colonize the weak in order to help them become stronger, and so, in a very basic sense, "Oriental" means, "a less evolved being with the potential to become human."

A non-human in the process of becoming more human. There is no way of resolving this contradiction: Orientals cannot be both our unchanging opposite and in the process of changing into us. The same contradiction appears in our discourse about children and children's literature, and there is no way of resolving it there either. Instead, we tend to flip-flop, even within single texts, between two contradictory ideas about children and our reasons for writing to or about them.

I learned about this contradiction as I read through a Horn Book that appeared as I was preparing this piece (May/June 1991), looking for evidence of the current status of conventional assumptions about childhood in the journal most likely to represent it. On the one hand, various authors and advertisers told me, "the strength of children's imaginations is such that they can understand what other children are feeling" and "their imaginations make fanciful things become magically real". On the other hand, however, children reading one new book "will begin to look at their surroundings from a new perspective" (inside front cover) and another book "encourages children to look beyond and into". In other words, children are essentially and inherently imaginative, and so we must provide them with books which will teach them how to be imaginative.

In a concise statement of this paradox, one Horn Book writer talks about a book which describes how some children find an inventive use for an impractical gift: "the message in this celebration of play is optimistic. It suggests that children take from their surroundings, no matter how inconsistent or inappropriate, the raw material for imaginative creation". Is this a suggestion in the sense of an evocative description, or in the sense of a recommendation'. It seems to be both at once; children need to learn from books by adults how to act like children.

14. Origin vs. Decline

How is it that we adults know better than children do how to aa like children' Said provides an answer for this, too, as he describes how Orientalists approached their subject: proper knowledge of the Orient proceeded from a thorough study of the classical texts, and only after that to an application of those texts to the modern Orient. Faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Oriental, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past, classical Oriental grandeur in order to 'facilitate ameliorations' in the present Orient.

The parallel "classical texts" of childhood fall into two categories. First there are written descriptions of children of earlier times, not just the "classic" children's books but also the classic texts of child psychology-Piaget, Vygotsky, Kohlberg. Second, there are our personal versions of our own childhoods: what we identify as childhood memories. Believing that

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these texts describe an ideal childhood-childhood as it ought to be-and perceiving a gulf between this ideal childhood and the real behavior of children we know, we work in literature and life to make children more like the ideal-to restore to them a "childhood" they appear to have lost sight of.

But did we really experience childhood as we claim to remember it' Or have we come to believe we did because we ourselves in both our childhood and our adult lives have also read books by and had interactions with adults who worked to impose their visions of childhood upon us? Perhaps what we call "childhood" is always an imaginative construct of the adult mind, always being moved not only outwards to blind us to our actual perceptions of contemporary children but also backwards into the past, to blind us to our memories of our actual past experiences. Perhaps there never was a childhood as innocent, as creative, as spontaneous as adults like to imagine. Perhaps children are always more like adults than adults are ever able to see.

15. Circularity

Children oppressed by adult versions of childhood turn into the adults who oppress other children. Said suggests a similar circularity in the thought of Europeans about Orientals. Since the ancient Orient invented by European scholars is assumed to be the past of Europe as well as of the contemporary Orient, Europeans could assume that they were the true inheritors of that imaginary Oriental past. For instance, European linguists posited an ancient Indo-European of their own invention that evolved into both contemporary Eastern and European languages, then claimed that their own European languages were the natural evolution of Indo-European, the Eastern ones merely degenerate versions of it. This conviction of their own connection to ancient purity not only allowed Europeans to point out the degenerate nature of the modern Orient but also to work to replace it with the truly classical values they themselves represented an evolved version of. Similarly, we adults posit our own imagined childhood as what we must work to persuade contemporary children of.

But in actual faa, Orientals do not turn into Europeans who then oppress a new generation of Oriental. What distinguishes our thinking about childhood from other discourses about otherness is that in this case, the other does quite literally turn into ourselves. All those who survive childhood become adults, adults who tend to think of children as their other. Even those adults who happen to be feminists tend to talk and think of children of both sexes in terms of metaphors redolent of traditional assumptions about feminine weakness and passivity; and those members of oppressed minorities who are most adamant about their own need for freedom from oppression are often among those who are most vociferous about controlling the image of the world presented in children's literature, trying to ensure that children adopt their own correct attitudes. The irony in that is as obvious as it is depressing: if our thinking about children is an aa of colonization, then it is in fact ourselves we are colonizing, ourselves we are oppressing-albeit at one remove.

16. Fixity vs. Process

Said suggests two contradictory modes by which Europeans address Orientals. One is the evolutionary enterprise of educating them into being more like Europeans; the other is the self-confirming enterprise of educating them into being what Europeans have always imagined Orientals to be-typical representatives of "the Oriental mind." The same contradiction is so central to discourse about children and in children's literature that it might well be their defining characteristic.

On the one hand, we believe that good children's books accurately describe what is often identified as the wonder or spontaneity or creativity of childhood. In other words, they are good because they teach children how to be childlike by providing them with appropriate images of childhood. On the other hand, however, their themes or messages are almost always about becoming less

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egocentric, more rational, etc. In other words, they teach children how to be adults. Thus Anneof Green Gablesot Harriet the Spy ate considered to be good books, first, because they capture the joy of childhood, and second, because they end up by confirming adult ethical concerns. This inherent contradiction, which appears in just about all children's literature, emerges automatically from its being a discourse of the other. Viewed from the perspeaive of its efforts to colonize, children's literature is essentially and inevitably an attempt to keep children opposite to ourselves and an attempt to make children more like us. It may be exactly that contradiction at its heart that is its most characteristic generic marker.

By now I've persuaded myself that child psychology and children's literature are imperialist activities; I hope I've persuaded you. And most of us at least claim to dislike imperialism. So what should we do about it?' What can we do about it?

We might, of course, attempt to do what Peter Hunt calls "childish" criticism-to think about children and read children's literature from a child's point of view. But in fact, this is merely a deception-another form of allowing ourselves to see and speak for them. Male readers can't really know what it feels like for women to read male-oriented descriptions of women, any more than masculinist authors could avoid producing descriptions of women that were male-oriented in the first place; and no more can we adults read as children, even if we once could. The best we can do in that line is to read as what we imagine children to be-that is, in terms of our adult assumptions. Indeed, because it's our adult attempts to see and speak for children that create children's literature and child psychology in the first place, our attempts to analyze texts in these areas are doomed to inhabit the same discourse as they would be purporting to reveal and criticize.

So again: what can we do? We might simply say that we can't do anything. Theory teaches us that all discourse is in fact a discourse of the other. According to linguists, it's an inherent characteristic of language that any given word can be meaningful only within a field of differences-only by being other than other words. The very act of making meaning requires us both to evoke another (what we don't mean) and to marginalize it (make it less significant than what we do want to say). Furthermore, we wouldn't speak or write if we didn't imagine an other less than ourselves in at least one important way. An audience that doesn't yet know what we wish it to understand. As I do in this essay, we always speak to our audience in an attempt to speak for it-to colonize it with our own perceptions of things, including itself. If our discourse about childhood is imperialist, then, it may not be much more imperialist than any other form of human speech. But that inevitable imperialism might be less dangerous if we were willing to acknowledge it and at least attempt to be aware of it. Orientalism could oppress vast numbers of people exactly by denying that it was oppressive-indeed, by insisting that it was the opposite of oppressive, that it had a high-minded interest in helping others less fortunate than oneself. To be aware of the possible oppressiveness of our supposedly objective or even benevolent truths and assumptions about childhood does not mean that their potential oppressiveness will disappear. But we can at least work on it. We can try to move beyond thinking about individual children as if they did in fact represent some alien other. We can become suspicious of adults who claim to "like children," as if they did indeed share qualities en masse, and we can wonder about the suitability of those who make such claims to become teachers or child psychologists. We can try to see the oppressiveness inherent in our use of concepts such as "the eternal innocence of childhood" or stages of cognitive or moral development. We can try to operate as if the humanity children share with us matters more than their presumed differences from us.

I have to admit it: I find it hard to imagine a world in which children have the right to vote, serve on juries, and control their own destinies. But then I remind myself of all those people in recent history who found it hard to imagine a world in which women or Arabs could do these same things.

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Treating children as if they were really just human beings like the rest of us might have some specific consequences unfortunate for readers of this journal: it might mean the end of something specifically identified as children's literature. It might do us out of a job. But I don't think it will. No matter how hard we try, we aren't ever going to escape the imperialist tendencies at the heart of human discourse. There will always be somebody out there finding a new way to think about children or write about childhood; and the new ways will always inevitably work to impose somebody's ideas of childhood on both other adults and on children. Come to think if it, that's exactly what I'm trying to do here in this essay. The only difference is that I'm trying hard not to allow myself to forget that.

Indeed, not forgetting is the key to useful criticism. Which is to say: we critics of children's literature still have a job to do, and the job is to try to stop forgetting or ignoring or denying the ways in which children's literature is as inherently imperialist as all human discourse tends to be. If it is, then we need to explore how. What claims do specific texts make on the children who read them? How do they represent childhood for children, and why might they be representing it in that way? What interest of adults might the representation be serving? Perhaps above all, how does it work? How does children's literature make its claims on child readers?

What are the strategies by which texts encourage children to accept adult interpretations of their behavior? And can we devise ways of helping children to be more aware of those strategies themselves, to protect themselves from the oppressions of the other? Oh, yes, and one other thing: can we remember always to ask all these questions about our own writing about childhood and children's literature? Can I, for instance, allow myself the humbling embarrassment of suddenly realizing, as I did when I first wrote the last sentence in the preceding paragraph, my own imperial tendencies?. For imperialist they undoubtedly are: in order to combat colonialism, I am recommending a benevolently helpful colonizing attitude towards children.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Orientalist refers to the ..... .

(*a*) East (*b*) West

(*c*) South (*d*) North

(*ii*) The magazine article "Who is Afraid of Edward Said" published in ..... .

(*a*) 1999 (*b*) 1989

(*c*) 1995 (*d*) None of these

(*iii*) Noam Chomsky was a well-known ..... .

(*a*) Throrist (*b*) Philosopher

(*c*) Linguist (*d*) None of these

(*iv*) Edward said died in the early morning of September 25, ...

(*a*) 2004 (*b*) 2003

(*c*) 2008 (*d*) 2005

4.6 Summary

- Orientalism is a term used by art historians, literary and cultural studies scholars for the imitation or depiction of aspects of Middle Eastern, and East Asian cultures (Eastern cultures) by American and European writers, designers and artists.
- In particular, Orientalist painting, depicting more specifically "the Middle East", was one of the many specialisms of 19th century Academic art. Since the publication of Edward Said's Orientalism, the term has arguably acquired a negative connotation.

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- Like the term Orient itself Orientalism derives from a Latin word Oriens referring simply to the rising of the sun, to imply "the East" in a relative sense. This is the opposite of the term Occident, which has largely dropped from common usage.
- Similar terms are the French-derived Levant and Anatolia, from the Greek anatole, two further locutions for the direction in which the sun rises.
- In terms of The Old World, Europe was considered to be 'The West' or Occidental, and the furthest known Eastern extremity 'The East' or 'The Orient'.
- From at least the time of the Roman Empire until at least the Middle Ages, what is now considered 'the Middle East' was then considered 'the Orient'. During that period, the flourishing cultures of the Far East were little known, just as Europe was essentially unknown in 'the Far East.
- Over time, the common understanding of 'the Orient' has continually shifted East as Western explorers traveled deeper into Asia. In Biblical times, the Three Wise Men 'from the Orient' were actually Magi from "The East" (relative to Palestine) meaning 'the Persian Empire'. After all period, as Europe gained knowledge of countries further to the East, the definition of the limit of 'the Orient' progressively shifted eastwards, until the Pacific Ocean was reached, in what is also known as 'the Far East'. This can cause some confusion about the historical and geographic scope of Oriental Studies.
- However, there still remain some contexts where 'the Orient' or 'Oriental' refer to older definitions. For example, 'Oriental Spices' typically come from regions extending from the Middle East through the Indian sub-continent to Indo-China. Also, travel on the Orient Express (from Paris to Istanbul), is eastward bound (towards the sunrise), but does not reach what is currently understood to be the Orient.
- In contemporary English, Oriental is usually a synonym for the peoples, cultures and goods from the parts of East Asia traditionally occupied by East Asians and Southeast Asians, excluding Indians, Arabs and other more westerly peoples.
- In some parts of America it is considered derogatory to use this term to refer to Asians (whether East, South, West or Central Asians). For example, in Washington state it is illegal to use the word 'oriental' in legislation and government documents .

4.7 Key-Words

1. The Orient : It signifies a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and Western empire. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien ("Other") to the West.
2. Latent Orientalism : It is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. Its basic content is static and unanimous. The Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. It displays feminine penetrability and supine malleability. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior.
3. Manifest Orientalism : It is what is spoken and acted upon. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of Latent Orientalism.

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4.8 Review Questions

1. What is meant by Orientalism? Discuss.
2. Discuss the two types of orientalism.
3. What is the difference between latent and manifest orientalism?
4. Discuss orientalism as a literary theory.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*a*) (*iii*) (*c*) (*iv*) (*b*)

4.9 Further Readings

Books

1. Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: BBC, and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
2. Brainerd, Charles S., ed. Recent Advances in Cognitive Developmental Research. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983.
3. Brief, Jean-Claude. Beyond Piaget: A Philosophical Psychology. New York: Teachers College, 1983.
4. Rose, Jacqueline. The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction. London: Macmillan, 1984.
5. Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon, 1978.
6. Siegel, Linda S., and Charles J. Brainerd, ed. Alternatives to Piaget: Critical Essays on the Theory. New York: Academic, 1978.
7. Sugarman, Susan. Piaget's Construction of the Child's Reality. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

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Unit 5: Edward Said's Crisis [In Orientalism]: Textual Analysis

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand Orientalism.
- Discuss Textual Analysis, Edward Said's Crisis.

Introduction

Edward Said is a Palestinian, who was educated in Palestine and Egypt when those countries were under British jurisdiction, and subsequently in the United States. He is Parr Professor of English and Cooperative Literature at Columbia University, New York. Said's first book was critical study of Conrad, Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (1966), that took a phenomenological approach to its subject, but was recognizably within the tradition of Anglo-American 'New Criticism'. Said was one of the first critics in America to respond to the challenge of European structuralist and post-structuralist theory, and his thoughtful, sometimes anxious reflections upon these developments may be traced in his books Beginnings (1975) and The World, the Text and the Critic (1983). Said has disliked the increasing hermiticism of deconstructive criticism, and has been drawn to Marxist and Foucauldian analyses of literature and culture as sites of political and ideological struggle. In Orientalism (1978) he found a rewarding subject for such an approach, and, in Culture and Imperialism (1993), he examined his earlier premises in relation to the Western canon. Orientalism is the discourse of the West about the East, a huge body of texts—literary, topographical, anthropological, historical, sociological—that has been accumulating since the Renaissance. Said, concentrating his attention on writing about the Near East, is concerned to show how this discourse is at once self-validating, constructing certain stereotypes which become accepted as self-evident facts, and also in conscious or unconscious collusion with political and economic imperialism. 'Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point,' says Said, in the introduction to his book, 'Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.' Said is uniquely qualified to undertake such a study, and Orientalism impressively combines political passion with wide-ranging scholarship. The following extract, called simply 'Crisis' in the original text, conclude the first section of the book, entitled 'The Scope of Orientalism'.

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5.1 Orientalism

This work focuses on the binary: Orient vs. Occident or simply put East vs. West. Said concentrates on the images and ideas of the Orient that are at the forefront of Western thought on the region. Said believes that scholars and artists in the West failed to accurately describe the people, environment, and the culture of the Orient. Rather than describe the Orient with fairness and accuracy, these people, instead prescribed the qualities that the West would prefer to the Orient. This would allow the people from the West viewing the Orient to define themselves by giving the people in the Orient qualities which were considered inferior. Said Illustrates this in the following:

"The Orient was almost a place of European invention, and have been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. […] The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other".

Another problem Said has with the way that the colonial relationship between the West and the Orient is the view of the West as one homogenous entity. Just as there are many groups of people, cultures, nations lumped together into the term 'East' or 'Orient', the West is also being viewed as having one culture, perspective, viewpoint. In the following Said's opinion on this subject comes out:

"I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely there, just as the Occident itself is not just there either. We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural identities-to say nothing of historical identities-such as locales, regions, geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West".

The key to Said's Orientalism is the understanding that any ideas of the East, or West, are man made. They are products of the imaginations of generations of people and are not necessarily grounded in reality.

Heart of Darkness works well to explain Said's theories because we are only given the view of Africa from the point of view of Marlow, a Westerner. In other words, we are relying on a person, whose perspective cannot be relied on, to give the description of Africa as he travels down the Congo River. From this point of view comes the justification for colonization: they are godless, barbaric people and we will be doing them a great service by enlightening these people to our better society. This is not explicitly stated in the novella; however, this point of view can be seen behind most imperial justifications.

Said believes that Conrad presents the character Marlow as reinforcing the imperialist perspective because, quite simply, there was not another option available to the author writing in the late nineteenth century. Conrad was also limited in how he could present the novella to the audience at the time. "Heart of Darkness cannot just be a straightforward recital of Marlow's adventures: it is also a dramatization of Marlow himself, the former wanderer in colonial regions, telling his story to a group of British listeners at a particular time and in a specific place". The key word in that quote is "dramatization". This is what Said believes that all depictions of the Orient, as well as the Occident, are simply embellished for dramatic effect or financial gain.

Said believes that two "visions" emerge from the book Heart of Darkness. The first view is that colonialism is still occurring in the world today. The former colonial powers have retained authority in region formerly known as colonies. As Said states, "Westerners may have physically led their old colonies in Africa and Asia, but they retained them not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually. 'Show me the Zulu Tolstoy', as one American intellectual has recently put it". The second "vision" that emerges from Heart of Darkness is that of colonialism being of a specific time and place and like all other forms of government or rule would eventually come to an end. Said describes this vision below:

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Conrad does not give us the sense that he could imagine a fully realized alternative to imperialism: the natives he wrote about in Africa, Asia, or America were incapable of independence, and because he seemed to imagine that European tutelage was a given, he could not foresee what would take place when it came to an end. But come to an end it would, if only because-like all human effort, like speech itself- it would have its moment, then it would have to pass (Said, 375).

These two "visions" are not reconciled in the essay presented in our text book Modern Literary Theory, Said has left this up for the reader of post-colonial literature to decide.

5.2 Edward Said's Crisis

Edward Said's essay "Crisis (in Orientalism)" investigates the portrayals of Orientals within writing and as a people, through studying various works he unlocks the misconceptions made in Western culture. In his essay, "Crisis (in Orientalism)" Edward Said studies and critiques the placement of Orientals in literature and outside of it, arguing the powerfulness of misinterpretations and stereotype. He begins his essay by offering an analysis on texts, what makes a text empowering and how an author can create a falsity through character construction. Early in the essay Said offers a fun analogy of a "fierce lion" which acts as a decoder for the remainder of his essay. While the text is extremely readable and not as challenging as previous works, it is difficult at some points to uncover his position. Said cites authors who write on the Oriental who he claim are racist (Friedrich Schlegel), thought-provoking (Anwar Abdel Malek) and frank (Gustave Flaubert). His argument seems to be that there is an impossibility to having a true Oriental work or character. Western writers, he argues, have glossed over the Oriental with stereotypes, misreadings, and bias.

Midway through the essay, Said proposes a metaphorical bin to which Oriental works are placed. One sentence in particular creates a dichotomy of what is in the bin and what is outside of it as a struggle between Western and Oriental tradition, "It is as if, one the one hand, a bin called 'Oriental' existed into which all the authoritative, anonymous, and traditional Western attitudes to the East were dumped unthinkingly, while on the other, true to the anecdotal tradition of storytelling, one could nevertheless tell of experiences with or in the Orient that had so little to do with the generally serviceable bin". By using the terms authoritative and anonymous to describe Western culture, Said suggests an unbalanced validity and secrecy of the dominant attitude toward the Oriental. Also, the use of anecdotal tradition reminded me of Walter Benjamin's argument of oral tradition versus the use of text and how that was a struggle between a dominant and secondary source. On the other side (or, outside the "serviceable bin) of Western tradition, the Oriental use of storytelling wasn't as prevalent in comparison. Benjamin asserted a sense of power to anecdotal storytelling, likewise Said uses it as a form of comparison to the West.

While unexpected, Said's reference to Disney-Walt Disney, Disneyism, Disneyland-caused me to reread that portion to understand its meaning more clearly. Before making the comparison to Said and Orientals, I used Disney films as a reference point. Films such as Pocahontas, Aladdin, and Mulan all represent racial minorities through the Western lens. While they announce a true and accurate representation, most of the films feature stereotypes in colorful form. Said's assertion of this that "Orientals have never understood the meaning of self-government the way 'we' do" seems to imply a paternalistic attitude toward non-Western ideals. The third time he uses Disney, however, ("Disneyland") implies something different, "Please take all your ideas about a left and a right wing, revolutions, and change back to Disneyland" . The tone of this sentence is different because of it's implication that by having these ideas, the person is considered childish. While Disney is referential to many things-films, songs, Walt Disney, characters-Disneyland is a specialized as a place. Children go there, people who've yet to intellectually challenge, critique, and understand the world. Said's use of sarcasm also concedes that the people who believe in change and revolutions are reverted back to child-like patterns of thinking.

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5.3 Textual Analysis

It may appear strange to speak about something or someone as holding a textual attitude, but a student of literature will understand the phrase more easily if he will recall the kind of view attacked by Voltaire in Candide, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in Don Quixote. What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers is that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books -- texts -- say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin. One would no more think of using Amadis of Gaul a to understand sixteenth-century (or present-day) Spain than one would use the Bible to understand, say, the House of Commons. But clearly people have tried and do try to use texts in so simple-minded a way, for otherwise Candide and Don Quixote would not still have the appeal for readers that they do today. It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail?

Two situations favor a textual attitude. One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one has recourse not only to what in one's previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it. Travel books or guidebooks are about as 'natural' a kind of text, as logical in their composition and in their use, as any book one can think of, precisely because of this human tendency to fall back on a text when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seem to threaten one's equanimity. Many travelers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn't what they expected, meaning that it wasn't what a book said it would be. And of course many writers of travel books or guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country is like this, or better, that it is colorful, expensive, interesting, and so forth. The idea in either case is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes. The comedy of Fabrice del Dongo's search for the battle of Waterloo b is not so much that he fails to find the battle, but that he looks for it as something texts have told him about.

A second situation favoring the textual attitude is the appearance of success. If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion (I simplify, of course), the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them. But if, in addition, the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion, and the instructions work perfectly, then not only will the author be greatly believed, he will also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance. There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences. A book on how to handle a fierce lion might then cause a series of books to be produced on such subjects as the fierceness of lions, the origins of fierceness, and so forth. Similarly, as the focus of the text centers more narrowly on the subject -- no longer lions but their fierceness -- we might expect that the ways by which it is recommended that a lion's fierceness be handled will actually increase its fierceness, force it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about it.

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described, is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is composed out of those pre-existing units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of idées reçues. In the light of all this, consider Napoleon and de Lesseps.

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Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism, placed in its library of idées reçues; for them the Orient, like the fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent because the texts made that Orient possible. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions devised for it. Earlier I called such a relation between Western writing (and its consequences) and Oriental silence the result of and the sign of the West's great cultural strength, its will to power over the Orient. But there is another side to the strength, a side whose existence depends on the pressures of the orientalist tradition and its textual attitude to the Orient; this side lives its own life, as books about fierce lions will do until lions can talk back. The perspective rarely drawn on by Napoleon and de Lesseps -- to take two among the many projectors who hatched plans for the Orient -- is the one that sees them carrying on in the dimensionless silence of the Orient mainly because the discourse of Orientalism, over and above the Orient's powerlessness to do anything about them, suffused their activity with meaning, intelligibility, and reality. The discourse of Orientalism and what made it possible -- in Napoleon's case, a West far more powerful militarily than the Orient -- gave them Orientals who could be described in such works as the Description de l'Égypte and an Orient that could be cut across as de Lesseps cut across Suez. Moreover, Orientalism gave them their success -- at least from their point of view, which had nothing to do with that of the Oriental. Success, in other words, had all the actual human interchange between Oriental and Westerner of the judge's 'said I to myself, said I' in Trial by Jury. Once we begin to think of Orientalism as a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient, we will encounter few surprises. For if it is true that historians like Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville, and Burckhardt emplot their narratives 'as a story of a particular kind', 1 the same is also true of Orientalists who plotted Oriental history, character, and destiny for hundreds of years. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Orientalists became a more serious quantity, because by then the reaches of imaginative and actual geography had shrunk, because the Oriental-European relationship was determined by an unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, resources, and colonies, and finally, because Orientalism had accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution. Evidence of this metamorphosis is already apparent in what I have said of Napoleon, de Lesseps, Balfour, and Cromer. Their projects in the Orient are understandable on only the most rudimentary level as the efforts of men of vision and genius, heroes in Carlyle's sense. In fact Napoleon, de Lesseps, Cromer, and Balfour are far more regular, far less unusual, if we recall the schemata of d'Herbelot and Dante and add to them both a modernized, efficient engine (like the nineteenth-century European empire) and a positive twist: since one cannot ontologically obliterate the Orient (as d'Herbelot and Dante perhaps realized), one does have the means to capture it, treat it, describe it, improve it, radically alter it. The point I am trying to make here is that the transition from a merely textual apprehension, formulation, or definition of the Orient to the putting of all this into practice in the Orient did take place, and that Orientalism had much to do with that -- if I may use the word in a literal sense -- preposterous transition. So far as its strictly scholarly work was concerned (and I find the idea of strictly scholarly work as disinterested and abstract hard to understand: still, we can allow it intellectually), Orientalism did a great many things. During its great age in the nineteenth century it produced scholars; it increased the number of languages taught in the West and the quantity of manuscripts edited, translated, and commented on; in many cases, it provided the Orient with sympathetic European students, genuinely interested in such matters as Sanskrit grammar, Phoenician numismatics, and Arabic poetry. Yet -- and here we must be very clear -- Orientalism overrode the Orient. As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one; an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet multiplied itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia. Similarly a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality. Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient, absolutely different (the reasons change from epoch to epoch) from the West. And Orientalism, in its post-eighteenth-century form, could never revise itself. All this makes Cromer and Balfour, as observers and administrators of the Orient, inevitable. The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put

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it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth. It raises questions about the predisposition towards innocence or guilt, scholarly disinterest or pressure-group complicity, in such fields as black or women's studies. It necessarily provokes unrest in one's conscience about cultural, racial, or historical generalizations, their uses, value, degree of objectivity, and fundamental intent. More than anything else, the political and cultural circumstances in which Western Orientalism has flourished draw attention to the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study. Can any other than a political master--slave relation produce the Orientalized Orient perfectly characterized by Anwar Abdel Malek?

1. On the level of the position of the problem, and the problematic . . . the Orient and Orientals [are considered by Orientalism] as an 'object' of study, stamped with an otherness -- as all that is different, whether it be 'subject' or 'object' -- but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character. . . . This 'object' of study will be, as is customary, passive, non- participating, endowed with a 'historical' subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, nonsovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or 'subject' which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined -- and acted -- by others.
2. On the level of the thematic, [the Orientalists] adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations and peoples of the Orient under study, a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnist typology . . . and will soon proceed with it towards racism.

According to the traditional orientalists, an essence should exist - sometimes even clearly described in metaphysical terms -- which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all the beings considered; this essence is both 'historical,' since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical, since it transfixes the being, 'the object' of study, within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity, instead of defining it as all other beings, states, nations, peoples, and cultures -- as a product, a resultant of the evection of the forces operating in the field of historical evolution.

Thus one ends with a typology -- based on a real specificity, but detached from history, and, consequently, conceived as being intangible, essential - which makes of the studied 'object' another being with regard to whom the studying subject is transcendent; we will have a homo Sinicus, a homo Arabicus (and why not a homo Aegypticus, etc.), a homo Africanus, the man -- the 'normal man,' it is understood -- being the European man of the historical period, that is, since Greek antiquity. One sees how much, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the hegemonism of possessing minorities, unveiled by Marx and Engels, and the anthropocentrism dismantled by Freud are accompanied by europocentrism in the area of human and social sciences, and more particularly in those in direct relationship with non-European peoples. Abdel Malek sees Orientalism as having a history which, according to the 'Oriental' of the late twentieth century, led it to the impasse described above. Let us now briefly outline that history as it proceeded through the nineteenth century to accumulate weight and power, 'the hegemonism of possessing minorities', and anthropocentrism in alliance with Europocentrism. From the last decades of the eighteenth century and for at least a century and a half, Britain and France dominated Orientalism as a discipline. The great philological discoveries in comparative grammar made by Jones, Franz Bopp, Jakob Grimm, and others were originally indebted to manuscripts brought from the East to Paris and London. Almost without exception, every Orientalist began his career as a philologist, and the revolution in philology that produced Bopp, Sacy, Burnouf, and their students was a comparative science based on the premise that languages belong to families, of which the Indo-European and the Semitic are two great instances. From the outset, then, Orientalism carried forward two traits:

1. a newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe, and
2. a proclivity to divide, subdivide, and redivide its subject matter without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform and radically peculiar object.

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Friedrich Schlegel, who learned his Sanskrit in Paris, illustrates these traits together. Although by the time he published his Über die Spracbe und Weisbeit der Indier [On the Language and Wisdom of India] in 1808 Schlegel had practically renounced his Orientalism, he still held that Sanskrit and Persian on the one hand and Greek and German on the other had more affinities with each other than with the Semitic, Chinese, American, or African languages. Moreover, the IndoEuropean family was artistically simple and satisfactory in a way the Semitic, for one, was not. Such abstractions as this did not trouble Schlegel, for whom nations, races, minds, and peoples as things one could talk about passionately -- in the ever-narrowing perspective of populism first adumbrated by Herder -- held a lifelong fascination. Yet nowhere does Schlegel talk about the living, contemporary Orient. When he said in 1800, 'It is in the Orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism,' he meant the Orient of the Sakuntala, the Zend-Avesta, and the Upanishads. i As for the Semites, whose language was agglutinative, unaesthetic, and mechanical, they were different, inferior, backward. Schlegel's lectures on language and on life, history, and literature are full of these discriminations, which he made without the slightest qualification. Hebrew, he said, was made for prophetic utterance and divination; the Muslims, however, espoused a 'dead empty Theism, a merely negative Unitarian faith..

Much of the racism in Schlegel's strictures upon the Semites and other 'low' Orientals was widely diffused in European culture. But nowhere else, unless it be later in the nineteenth century among Darwinian anthropologists and phrenologists, was it made the basis of a scientific subject matter as it was in comparative linguistics or philology. Language and race seemed inextricably tied, and the 'good' Orient was invariably a classical period somewhere in a long-gone India, whereas the 'bad' Orient lingered in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and Islam everywhere. 'Aryans' were confined to Europe and the ancient Orient; as Léon Poliakov has shown (without once remarking, however, that 'Semites' were not only the Jews but the Muslims as well), the Aryan myth dominated historical and cultural anthropology at the expense of the 'lesser' peoples. The official intellectual genealogy of Orientalism would certainly include Gobineau, Renan, Humboldt, Steinthal, Burnouf, Remusat, Palmer, Weil, Dozy, Muir, to mention a few famous names almost at random from the nineteenth century. It would also include the diffusive capacity of learned societies: the Société asiatique, founded in 1822; the Royal Asiatic Society, founded in 1823; the American Oriental Society, founded in 1842; and so on. But it might perforce neglect the great contribution of imaginative and travel literature, which strengthened the divisions established by Orientalists between the various geographical, temporal, and racial departments of the Orient. Such neglect would be incorrect, since for the Islamic Orient this literature is especially rich and makes a significant contribution to building the Orientalist discourse. It includes work by Goethe, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Kinglake, Nerval, Flaubert, Lane, Burton, Scott, Byron, Vigny, Disraeli, George Eliot, Gautier. Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we could add Doughty, Barrès, Loti, T. E. Lawrence, Forster. All these writers give a bolder outline to Disraeli's 'great Asiatic mystery'. In this enterprise there is considerable support not only from the unearthing of dead Oriental civilizations (by European excavators) in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, but also from major geographical surveys done all through the Orient. By the end of the nineteenth century these achievements were materially abetted by the European occupation of the entire Near Orient (with the exception of parts of the Ottoman Empire, which was swallowed up after 1918). The principal colonial powers once again were Britain and France, although Russia and Germany played some role as well. 5 To colonize meant at first the identification -- indeed, the creation -- of interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, cultural. With regard to Islam and the Islamic territories, for example, Britain felt that it had legitimate interests, as a Christian power, to safeguard. A complex apparatus for tending these interests developed. Such early organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1698) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701) were succeeded and later abetted by the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews (1808). These missions 'openly joined the expansion of Europe'. 6 Add to these the trading societies, learned societies, geographical exploration funds, translation funds, the implantation in the Orient of schools, missions, consular offices, factories, and sometimes large European communities, and

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the notion of an 'interest' will acquire a good deal of sense. Thereafter interests were defended with much zeal and expense. So far my outline is a gross one. What of the typical experiences and emotions that accompany both the scholarly advances of Orientalism and the political conquests aided by Orientalism?

First, there is disappointment that the modern Orient is not at all like the texts. Here is Gérard de Nerval writing to Théophile Gautier at the end of August 1843: I have already lost, Kingdom after Kingdom, province after province, the more beautiful half, of the universe, and soon I will know of no place in which I can find a refuge for my dreams; but it is Egypt that I most regret having driven out of my imagination, now that I have sadly placed it in my memory. This is by the author of a great Voyage en Orient. Nerval's lament is a common topic of Romanticism (the betrayed dream, as described by Albert Béguin in L'Ame romantique et le rêve [The Romantic Spirit and the Dream]) and of travelers in the Biblical Orient, from Chateaubriand to Mark Twain. Any direct experience of the mundane Orient ironically comments on such valorizations of it as were to be found in Goethe 'Mahometsgesang' or Hugo 'Adieux de I'hôtesse arabe'. Memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination, sends one back to the imagination as a place preferable, for the European sensibility, to the real Orient. For a person who has never seen the Orient, Nerval once said to Gautier, a lotus is still a lotus; for me it is only a kind of onion. To write about the modern Orient is either to reveal an upsetting demystification of images culled from texts, or to confine oneself to the Orient of which Hugo spoke in his original preface to Les Orientales, the Orient as 'image' or 'pensée,' symbols of 'une sorte de préoccupation générale [a kind of general preoccupation].' If personal disenchantment and general preoccupation fairly map the Orientalist sensibility at first, they entail certain other more familiar habits of thought, feeling, and perception. The mind learns to separate a general apprehension of the Orient from a specific experience of it; each goes its separate way, so to speak. In Scott novel The Talisman (1825), Sir Kenneth (of the Crouching Leopard) battles a single Saracen to a standoff somewhere in the Palestinian desert; as the Crusader and his opponent, who is Saladin in disguise, later engage in conversation, the Christian discovers his Muslim antagonist to be not so bad a fellow after all. Yet he remarks:

I well thought . . . that your blinded race had their descent from the foul fiend, without whose aid you would never have been able to maintain this blessed land of Palestine against so many valiant soldiers of God. I speak not thus of thee in particular, Saracen, but generally of thy people and religion. Strange is it to me, however, not that you should have the descent from the Evil One, but that you should boast of it. For indeed the Saracen does boast of tracing his race's line back to Eblis, the Muslim Lucifer. But what is truly curious is not the feeble historicism by which Scott makes the scene 'medieval', letting Christian attack Muslim theologically in a way nineteenth-century Europeans would not (they would, though); rather, it is the airy condescension of damning a whole people 'generally' while mitigating the offense with a cool 'I don't mean you in particular.'

Scott, however, was no expert on Islam (although H. A. R. Gibb, who was, praised The Talisman for its insight into Islam and Saladin), and he was taking enormous liberties with Eblis's role by turning him into a hero for the faithful. Scott's knowledge probably came from Byron and Beckford, but it is enough for us here to note how strongly the general character ascribed to things Oriental could withstand both the rhetorical and the existential force of obvious exceptions. It is as if, on the one hand, a bin called 'Oriental' existed into which all the authoritative, anonymous, and traditional Western attitudes to the East were dumped unthinkingly, while on the other, true to the anecdotal tradition of storytelling, one could nevertheless tell of experiences with or in the Orient that had little to do with the generally serviceable bin. But the very structure of Scott's prose shows a closer intertwining of the two than that. For the general category in advance offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate: no matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is first an Oriental, second a human being, and last again an Oriental.

So general a category as 'Oriental' is capable of quite interesting variations. Disraeli's enthusiasm for the Orient appeared first during a trip East in 1831. In Cairo he wrote, 'My eyes and mind yet ache with a grandeur so little in unison with our own likeness.' 11 General grandeur and passion inspired a transcendent sense of things and little patience for actual reality. His novel Tancred is

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steeped in racial and geographical platitudes; everything is a matter of race, Sidonia states, so much so that salvation can only be found in the Orient and amongst its races. There, as a case in point, Druzes, Christians, Muslims, and Jews hobnob easily because -- someone quips -- Arabs are simply Jews on horseback, and all are Orientals at heart. The unisons are made between general categories, not between categories and what they contain. An Oriental lives in the Orient, he lives a life of Oriental ease, in a state of Oriental despotism and sensuality, imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism. Writers as different as Marx, Disraeli, Burton, and Nerval could carry on a lengthy discussion between themselves, as it were, using all those generalities unquestioningly and yet intelligibly. With disenchantment and a generalized -- not to say schizophrenic -- view of the Orient, there is usually another peculiarity. Because it is made into a general object, the whole Orient can be made to serve as an illustration of a particular form of eccentricity. Although the individual Oriental cannot shake or disturb the general categories that make sense of his oddness, his oddness can nevertheless be enjoyed for its own sake. Here, for example, is Flaubert describing the spectacle of the Orient:

To amuse the crowd, Mohammed Ali's jester took a woman in a Cairo bazaar one day, set her on the counter of a shop, and coupled with her publicly while the shopkeeper calmly smoked his pipe. On the road from Cairo to Shubra some time ago a young fellow had himself publicly buggered by a large monkey -- as in the story above, to create a good opinion of himself and make people laugh. A marabout died a while ago -- an idiot -- who had long passed as a saint marked by God; all the Moslem women came to see him and masturbated him -- in the end he died of exhaustion -- from morning to night it was a perpetual jacking-off. . . .

Quid dicis [what say you?] of the following fact: some time ago a santon (ascetic priest) used to walk through the streets of Cairo completely naked except for a cap on his head and another on his prick. To piss he would doff the prick-cap, and sterile women who wanted children would run up, put themselves under the parabola of his urine and rub themselves with it. Flaubert frankly acknowledges that this is grotesquerie of a special kind. 'All the old comic business' -- by which Flaubert meant the well-known conventions of 'the cudgeled slave . . . the coarse trafficker in women . . . the thieving merchant' -- acquire a new, 'fresh . . . genuine and charming' meaning in the Orient. This meaning cannot be reproduced; it can only be enjoyed on the spot and 'brought back' very approximately.

The Orient is watched, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples of what the Description de l'Égypte called 'bizarre jouissance'. The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness. And this tableau quite logically becomes a special topic for texts. Thus the circle is completed; from being exposed as what texts do not prepare one for, the Orient can return as something one writes about in a disciplined way. Its foreignness can be translated, its meanings decoded, its hostility tamed; yet the generality assigned to the Orient, the disenchantment that one feels after encountering it, the unresolved eccentricity it displays, are all redistributed in what is said or written about it. Islam, for example, was typically Oriental for Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carl Becker argued that although 'Islam' (note the vast generality) inherited the Hellenic tradition, it could neither grasp nor employ the Greek, humanistic tradition; moreover, to understand Islam one needed above all else to see it, not as an 'original' religion, but as a sort of failed Oriental attempt to employ Greek philosophy without the creative inspiration that we find in Renaissance Europe. For Louis Massignon, perhaps the most renowned and influential of modern French Orientalists, Islam was a systematic rejection of the Christian incarnation, and its greatest hero was not Mohammed or Averroës but al-Hallaj, a Muslim saint who was crucified by the orthodox Muslims for having dared to personalize Islam. What Becker and Massignon explicitly left out of their studies was the eccentricity of the Orient, which they backhandedly acknowledged by trying so hard to regularize it in Western terms. Mohammed was thrown out, but al-Hallaj was made prominent because he took himself to be a Christ-figure. As a judge of the Orient, the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from it objectively. His human detachment, whose sign is the absence of sympathy covered by professional knowledge, is

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weighted heavily with all the orthodox attitudes, perspectives, and moods of Orientalism that I have been describing. His Orient is not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized. An unbroken arc of knowledge and power connects the European or Western statesman and the Western Orientalists; it forms the rim of the stage containing the Orient. By the end of World War I both Africa and the Orient formed not so much an intellectual spectacle for the West as a privileged terrain for it. The scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire, and it was this absolute unanimity between the two that provoked the only crisis in the history of Western thought about and dealings with the Orient. And this crisis continues now. Beginning in the twenties, and from one end of the Third World to the other, the response to empire and imperialism has been dialectical. By the time of the Bandung Conference in 1955 j the entire Orient had gained its political independence from the Western empires and confronted a new configuration of imperial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Unable to recognize 'its' Orient in the new Third World, Orientalism now faced a challenging and politically armed Orient. Two alternatives opened before Orientalism. One was to carry on as if nothing had happened. The second was to adapt the old ways to the new. But to the Orientalist, who believes the Orient never changes, the new is simply the old betrayed by new, misunderstanding dis-Orientals (we can permit ourselves the neologism). A third, revisionist alternative, to dispense with Orientalism altogether, was considered by only a tiny minority.

One index of the crisis, according to Abdel Malek, was not simply that 'national liberation movements in the ex-colonial' Orient worked havoc with Orientalist conceptions of passive, fatalistic 'subject races'; there was in addition the fact that 'specialists and the public at large became aware of the time-lag, not only between orientalist science and the material under study, but also -- and this was to be determining -- between the conceptions, the methods and the instruments of work in the human and social sciences and those of orientalism. The Orientalists -- from Renan to Goldziher to Macdonald to von Grunebaum, Gibb, and Bernard Lewis -- saw Islam, for example, as a 'cultural synthesis' (the phrase is P. M. Holt's) that could be studied apart from the economics, sociology, and politics of the Islamic peoples. For Orientalism, Islam had a meaning which, if one were to look for its most succinct formulation, could be found in Renan's first treatise: in order best to be understood Islam had to be reduced to 'tent and tribe'. The impact of colonialism, of worldly circumstances, of historical development: all these were to Orientalists as flies to wanton boys, killed -- or disregarded -- for their sport, never taken seriously enough to complicate the essential Islam. The career of H. A. R. Gibb illustrates within itself the two alternative approaches by which Orientalism has responded to the modern Orient. In 1945 Gibb delivered the Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago. The world he surveyed was not the same one Balfour and Cromer knew before World War I. Several revolutions, two world wars, and innumerable economic, political, and social changes made the realities of 1945 an unmistakably, even cataclysmically, new object. Yet we find Gibb opening the lectures he called Modern Trends in Islam as follows:

The student of Arabic civilization is constantly brought up against the striking contrast between the imaginative power displayed, for example, in certain branches of Arabic literature and the literalism, the pedantry, displayed in reasoning and exposition, even when it is devoted to these same productions. It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. This is, I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that 'lack of a sense of law' which Professor Macdonald regarded as the characteristic difference in the Oriental.

It is this, too, which explains -- what is so difficult for the Western student to grasp [until it is explained to him by the Orientalist] -- the aversion of the Muslims from the thought-processes of rationalism. . . . The rejection of rationalist modes of thought and of the utilitarian ethic which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called 'obscurantism' of the Muslim

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theologians but in the atomism and discreteness of the Arab imagination. This is pure Orientalism, of course, but even if one acknowledges the exceeding knowledge of institutional Islam that characterizes the rest of the book, Gibb's inaugural biases remain a formidable obstacle for anyone hoping to understand modern Islam. What is the meaning of 'difference' when the preposition 'from' has dropped from sight altogether? Are we not once again being asked to inspect the Oriental Muslim as if his world, unlike ours -- 'differently' from it -- had never ventured beyond the seventh century? As for modern Islam itself, despite the complexities of his otherwise magisterial understanding of it, why must it be regarded with so implacable a hostility as Gibb's? If Islam is flawed from the start by virtue of its permanent disabilities, the Orientalist will find himself opposing any Islamic attempts to reform Islam, because, according to his views, reform is a betrayal of Islam: this is exactly Gibb's argument. How can an Oriental slip out from these manacles into the modern world except by repeating with the Fool in King Lear, 'They'll have me whipp'd for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipp'd for lying; and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace.' Eighteen years later Gibb faced an audience of English compatriots, only now he was speaking as the director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard. His topic was 'Area Studies Reconsidered', in which, among other aperçus, he agreed that 'the Orient is much too important to be left to the Orientalists'. The new, or second alternative, approach open to Orientalists was being announced, just as Modern Trends exemplified the first, or traditional, approach. Gibb's formula is well-intentioned in 'Area Studies Reconsidered', so far, of course, as the Western experts on the Orient are concerned, whose job it is to prepare students for careers 'in public life and business.' What we now need, said Gibb, is the traditional Orientalist plus a good social scientist working together: between them the two will do 'interdisciplinary' work. Yet the traditional Orientalist will not bring outdated knowledge to bear on the Orient; no, his expertise will serve to remind his uninitiated colleagues in area studies that 'to apply the psychology and mechanics of Western political institutions to Asian or Arab situations is pure Walt Disney'.

In practice this notion has meant that when Orientals struggle against colonial occupation, you must say (in order not to risk a Disneyism) that Orientals have never understood the meaning of self-government the way 'we' do. When some Orientals oppose racial discrimination while others practice it, you say 'they're all Orientals at bottom' and class interest, political circumstances, economic factors are totally irrelevant. Or with Bernard Lewis, you say that if Arab Palestinians oppose Israeli settlement and occupation of their lands, then that is merely 'the return of Islam', or, as a renowned contemporary Orientalist defines it, Islamic opposition to non-Islamic peoples, 18 a principle of Islam enshrined in the seventh century. History, politics, and economics do not matter. Islam is Islam, the Orient is Orient, and please take all your ideas about a left and a right wing, revolutions, and change back to Disneyland.

If such tautologies, claims, and dismissals have not sounded familiar to historians, sociologists, economists, and humanists in any other field except Orientalism, the reason is patently obvious. For like its putative subject matter, Orientalism has not allowed ideas to violate its profound serenity. But modern Orientalists -or area experts, to give them their new name -- have not passively sequestered themselves in language departments. On the contrary, they have profited from Gibb's advice. Most of them today are indistinguishable from other 'experts' and 'advisers' in what Harold Lasswell has called the policy sciences. Thus the military -- national-security possibilities of an alliance, say, between a specialist in 'national character analysis' and an expert in Islamic institutions were soon recognized, for expediency's sake if for nothing else. After all, the 'West' since World War II had faced a clever totalitarian enemy who collected allies for itself among gullible Oriental (African, Asian, undeveloped) nations. What better way of outflanking that enemy than by playing to the Oriental's illogical mind in ways only an Orientalist could devise? Thus emerged such masterful ploys as the stick-and-carrot technique, the Alliance for Progress, SEATO, and so forth, all of them based on traditional 'knowledge' retooled for better manipulation of its supposed object.

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Thus as revolutionary turmoil grips the Islamic Orient, sociologists remind us that Arabs are addicted to 'oral functions', while economists -- recycled Orientalists -- observe that for modern Islam neither capitalism nor socialism is an adequate rubric. As anticolonialism sweeps and indeed unifies the entire Oriental world, the Orientalist damns the whole business not only as a nuisance but as an insult to the Western democracies. As momentous, generally important issues face the world -- issues involving nuclear destruction, catastrophically scarce resources, unprecedented human demands for equality, justice, and economic parity -- popular caricatures of the Orient are exploited by politicians whose source of ideological supply is not only the half-literate technocrat but the superliterate Orientalist. The legendary Arabists in the State Department warn of Arab plans to take over the world. The perfidious Chinese, half-naked Indians, and passive Muslims are described as vultures for 'our' largesse and are damned when 'we lose them' to communism, or to their unregenerate Oriental instincts: the difference is scarcely significant. These contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. 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. No better instance exists today of what Anwar Abdel Malek calls 'the hegemonism of possessing minorities' and anthropocentrism allied with Europocentrism: a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition 'it' is not quite as human as 'we' are. There is no purer example than this of dehumanized thought. In a sense the limitations of Orientalism are, as I said earlier, the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region. But Orientalism has taken a further step than that: it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West. So impressive have the descriptive and textual successes of Orientalism been that entire periods of the Orient's cultural, political, and social history are considered mere responses to the West. The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behaviour. Yet if history during the twentieth century has provoked intrinsic change in and for the Orient, the Orientalist is stunned: he cannot realize that to some extent the new [Oriental] leaders, intellectuals or policy-makers, have learned many lessons from the travail of their predecessors. They have also been aided by the structural and institutional transformations accomplished in the intervening period and by the fact that they are to a great extent more at liberty to fashion the future of their countries. They are also much more confident and perhaps slightly aggressive. No longer do they have to function hoping to obtain a favorable verdict from the invisible jury of the West. Their dialogue is not with the West, it is with their fellow-citizens. Moreover, the Orientalist assumes that what his texts have not prepared him for is the result either of outside agitation in the Orient or of the Orient's misguided inanity. None of the innumerable Orientalist texts on Islam, including their summa, The Cambridge History of Islam, can prepare their reader for what has taken place since 1948 in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, or the Yemens. When the dogmas about Islam cannot serve, not even for the most Panglossian Orientalist, there is recourse to an Orientalized social-science jargon, to such marketable abstractions as élites, political stability, modernization, and institutional development, all stamped with the cachet of Orientalist wisdom. In the meantime a growing, more and more dangerous rift separates Orient and Occident. The present crisis dramatizes the disparity between texts and reality. Yet in this study of Orientalism I wish not only to expose the sources of Orientalism's views but also to reflect on its importance, for the contemporary intellectual rightly feels that to ignore a part of the world now demonstrably encroaching upon him is to avoid reality. Humanists have too often confined their attention to departmentalized topics of research. They have neither watched nor learned from disciplines like Orientalism whose unremitting ambition was to master all of a world, not

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some easily delimited part of it such as an author or a collection of texts. However, along with such academic security-blankets as 'history,' 'literature,' or 'the humanities,' and despite its overreaching aspirations, Orientalism is involved in worldly, historical circumstances which it has tried to conceal behind an often pompous scientism and appeals to rationalism. The contemporary intellectual can learn from Orientalism how, on the one hand, either to limit or to enlarge realistically the scope of his discipline's claims, and on the other, to see the human ground (the foul-rag-and-bone shop of the heart, Yeats called it) in which texts, visions, methods, and disciplines begin, grow, thrive, and degenerate. To investigate Orientalism is also to propose intellectual ways for handling the methodological problems that history has brought forward, so to speak, in its subject matter, the Orient. But before that we must virtually see the humanistic values that Orientalism, by its scope, experiences, and structures, has all but eliminated.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Edward said was born in ..... .

(*a*) 1935 (*b*) 1940

(*c*) 1945 (*d*) 1946

(*ii*) Orientalism was published in ..... .

(*a*) 1979 (*b*) 1980

(*c*) 1989 (*d*) 1995

(*iii*) Culture and Imperialism was published in ..... .

(*a*) 1990 (*b*) 1985

(*c*) 1991 (*d*) 1993

(*iv*) The socié asiatique was founded in ..... .

(*a*) 1850 (*b*) 1822

(*c*) 1825 (*d*) 1840.

5.4 Summary

- This book and Edward Said in general seem capable of generating such intense controversy. Many reviewers of this book seem to forget actually to review the work and focus on attacking Edward Said as a person, many others still forget to review the book and proceed to speak for Palestinian rights and the negative western attitudes of Islam. I will attempt to present an actual review of this book based on MY own reading of it.
- In Orientalism, Said sets about dismantling the study of the "orient" in general with primary focus on the Islamic Near East. Said argues that concepts such as the Orient, Islam, the Arabs, etc. are too vast to be grouped together and presented as one coherent whole, encompassing all there is to know about the subject. Said bases his view on the shear width and breadth of the subject, the inherent bias of conflicting cultures and more recently the role of the Orientalism in colonialism. It is indeed difficult to attempt to represent a book that is so focused on anti essentialism.
- Said's research of western / occidental discourse was very thorough indeed and he does illustrate through repeated examples how misinformation sufficiently repeated can become accepted academic work. Said also presents an analysis of the causes and motives and theorizes about his findings. A lengthy and a times tedious discussion of the origins of Orientalism is rather repetitive and hard to follow for a non specialist like me.

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- Edward Said however seem to have fallen in the same trap he attributes to Orientalism, he has not attempted to explore Arab writings of the periods he discussed nor has he attempted to present (possibly even read) work by Egyptian and Arab historians of the periods he was addressing save for work carried out in the west and within western universities. In doing so, Said fails to see how the modern and contemporary "orient" sees itself through primarily "oriental" eyes such as Ibn Khaldoun, Al Maqrizi and also through the writings of orientalists like Lane. Said also fails to address the work carried out by orientalists based on many manuscripts of Orientals.
- I particularly enjoyed Said's analysis of the strong ties that Orientalism has with power and colonialism. Said analysis of the diverging development of the British and French practice based on the latter's limited success as a colonial power was very enjoyable and very well thought out. The Orientalism Today and indeed the Afterwards section are also very informative and as these were more familiar areas for Said his presentation of ideas and thoughts came across more clearly and the writing was far less tedious than the earlier parts of the book.
- Orientalism is not an easy read, it will challenge many established views, indeed it has already with a fair degree of success led to changes in the way the Near East is studied. To me, most of all I see this as a book that offers in part a largely coherent explanation for the on-going misunderstanding between the West and the Near East and in Islam. And while Occidentalism does not exist as a field of study in a place like Egypt per se, Said fails to see that the west is viewed largely in terms of its wealth, promiscuous habits, hypocrisy and anti Islam and thus fails to see it as 2 way street, albeit with unequal power.

5.5 Key-Words

1. Orientalism : It is "a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient." It is the image of the 'Orient' expressed as an entire system of thought and scholarship.
2. The Oriental : It is the person represented by such thinking. The man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because poses a threat to white, Western women. The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic. The Oriental is a single image, a sweeping generalization, a stereotype that crosses countless cultural and national boundaries.

5.6 Review Questions

1. Why, according to Said, can't Orientalism simpl be dismissed as the product of Western imperialism? What specific ideas and phenomena does Said, on page 1993, include in the concept of Orientalism?
2. What is Said's view on whether "pure knowledge" can be kept separate from "political knowledge" (1997)? Why is it nonetheless necessary to "eliminate from the start any notion that 'big' facts like imperial domination can be applied mechanically and deterministically to such complex matters as culture and ideas" (1999)?
3. How does Said, around page 2002, justify his method of delimiting and dealing with Orientalism as a subject for study?
4. How does Said account for "the personal dimension"--that is, for his own situation as a Palestinian writing about Orientalism?
5. What is the goal of his book Orientalism? How does his Introduction function as a defense of theorizing about Orientalism?

Notes

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*a*) (*iii*) (*d*) (*iv*) (*b*)

5.7 Further Readings

Books

1. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 12.
2. Anwar Abdel Malek, "'Orientalism in Crisis'", Diogenes 44 (Winter 1963): 107-18.
3. Friedrich Schlegel, Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begrundung der Altertumstunde (Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer, 1808), pp. 44-59; Schlegel, Philosophie der Geschichte: In achtzehn Vorlesungen gehalten zu Wien im Jahre 1828, ed. Jean-Jacques Anstett, vol. 9 of Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, ed. Ernest Behler (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971), p. 275.
4. Læon Poliakov, The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Basic Books, 1974).
5. See Derek Hopwood, The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine, 1843-1943: Church and Politics in the Near East (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

Notes

Unit 6: Edward Said's Crisis [In Orientalism]: Detailed Study

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand the Scope of Orientalism.
- Discuss Structures and Restructures.

Introduction

Orientalism by Edward Said is a cononical text of cultural studies in which he has challenged the concept of orientalism or the difference between east and west, as he puts it. He says that with the start of European colonization the Europeans came in contact with the lesser developed countries of the east. They found their civilization and culture very exotic, and established the science of orientalism, which was the study of the orientals or the people from these exotic civilization.

Edward Said argues that the Europeans divided the world into two parts; the east and the west or the occident and the orient or the civilized and the uncivilized. This was totally an artificial boundary; and it was laid on the basis of the concept of them and us or theirs and ours. The Europeans used orientalism to define themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the orientals, and whatever the orientals weren't the occidents were. The Europeans defined themselves as the superior race compared to the orientals; and they justified their colonization by this concept. They said that it was their duty towards the world to civilize the uncivilized world. The main problem, however, arose when the Europeans started generalizing the attributes they associated with orientals, and started portraying these artificial characteristics associated with orientals in their western world through their scientific reports, literary work, and other media sources. What happened was that it created a certain image about the orientals in the European mind and in doing that infused a bias in the European attitude towards the orientals. This prejudice was also found in the orientalists (scientist studying the orientals); and all their scientific research and reports were under the influence of this. The generalized attributes associated with the orientals can be seen even today, for example, the Arabs are defined as uncivilized people; and Islam is seen as religion of the terrorist.

Here is a brief summary of the book, followed by a critique by Malcolm Kerr.

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6.1 The Scope of Orientalism

In this section, Edward Said explains how the science of orientalism developed and how the orientals started considering the orientals as non-human beings. The orientals divided the world in to two parts by using the concept of ours and theirs. An imaginary geographical line was drawn between what was ours and what was theirs. The orients were regarded as uncivilized people; and the westerns said that since they were the refined race it was their duty to civilize these people and in order to achieve their goal, they had to colonize and rule the orients. They said that the orients themselves were incapable of running their own government. The Europeans also thought that they had the right to represent the orientals in the west all by themselves. In doing so, they shaped the orientals the way they perceived them or in other words they were orientalizing the orients. Various teams have been sent to the east where the orientalits silently observed the orientals by living with them; and every thing the orientals said and did was recorded irrespective of its context, and projected to the civilized world of the west. This resulted in the generalization. Whatever was seen by the orientals was associated with the oriental culture, no matter if it is the irrational action of an individual.

The most important use of orientalism to the Europeans was that they defined themselves by defining the orientals. For example, qualities such as lazy, irrational, uncivilized, crudeness were related to the orientals, and automatically the Europeans became active, rational, civilized, sophisticated. Thus, in order to achieve this goal, it was very necessary for the orientalists to generalize the culture of the orients.

Another feature of orientalism was that the culture of the orientals was explained to the European audience by linking them to the western culture, for example, Islam was made into Mohammadism because Mohammad was the founder of this religion and since religion of Christ was called Christianity; thus Islam should be called Mohammadism. The point to be noted here is that no Muslim was aware of this terminology and this was a completely western created term, and to which the Muslims had no say at all.

6.2 Orientalist Structures and Restructures

In this section, Edward Said points the slight change in the attitude of the Europeans towards the orientals. The orientals were really publicized in the European world especially through their literary work. Oriental land and behaviour was highly romanticized by the European poets and writers and then presented to the western world. The orientalists had made a stage strictly for the European viewers, and the orients were presented to them with the colour of the orientalist or other writers perception. In fact, the orient lands were so highly romanticized that western literary writers found it necessary to offer pilgrimage to these exotic lands of pure sun light and clean oceans in order to experience peace of mind, and inspiration for their writing. The east was now perceived by the orientalist as a place of pure human culture with no necessary evil in the society. Actually it was this purity of the orientals that made them inferior to the clever, witty, diplomatic, far-sighted European; thus it was their right to rule and study such an innocent race. The Europeans said that these people were too naive to deal with the cruel world, and that they needed the European fatherly role to assist them.

Another justification the Europeans gave to their colonization was that they were meant to rule the orientals since they have developed sooner than the orientals as a nation, which shows that they were biologically superior, and secondly it were the Europeans who discovered the orients not the orients who discovered the Europeans. Darwin's theories were put forward to justify their superiority, biologically by the Europeans.

In this chapter, Edward Said also explains how the two most renowned orientalists of the 19th century, namely Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan worked and gave orienatlism a new dimension. In fact, Edward Said compliments the contribution made by Sacy in the field. He says that Sacy organized the whole thing by arranging the information in such a way that it was also useful for the future orientalist. And secondly, the prejudice that was inherited by every orientalist was

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considerably low in him. On the other hand, Renan who took advantage of Sacy's work was as biased as any previous orientalist. He believed that the science of orientalism and the science of philology have a very important relation; and after Renan this idea was given a lot attention and many future orientalists worked of in its line.

6.3 Orientalism Now

This section starts off by telling us that how the geography of the world was shaped by the colonization of the Europeans. There was a quest for geographical knowledge which formed the bases of orientalism.

The author then talks about the changing circumstances of the world politics and changing approach to orientalism in the 20th century. The main difference was that where the earlier orientalists were more of silent observers the new orientalists took a part in the every day life of the orients. The earlier orientalists did not interact a lot with the orients, whereas the new orients lived with them as if they were one of them. This wasn't out of appreciation of their lifestyle but was to know more about the orients in order to rule them properly. Lawrence of Arabia was one of such orienatlists.

Then Edward Said goes on to talk about two other scholars Massignon and Gibb. Though Massignon was a bit liberal with orientalists and often tried to protect their rights, there was still inherited biased found in him for the orientals, which can be seen in his work. With the changing world situation especially after World War 1, orientalism took a more liberal stance towards most of its subjects; but Islamic orientalism did not enjoy this status. There were constant attacks to show Islam as a weak religion, and a mixture of many religions and thoughts. Gibb was the most famous Islamic orientalist of this time.

After World War 1 the centre of orientalism moved from Europe to USA. One important transformation that took place during this time was instances of relating it to philology and it was related to social science now. All the orientalists studied the orientals to assist their government to come up with policies for dealing with the orient countries. With the end of World War 2, all the Europeans colonies were lost; and it was believed that there were no more orientals and occidents, but this was surely not the case. Western prejudice towards eastern countries was still very explicit, and often they managed to generalize most of the eastern countries because of it. For example Arabs were often represented as cruel and violent people. Japanese were always associated with karate where as the Muslims were always considered to be terrorists. Thus, this goes on to show that even with increasing globalization and awareness, such bias was found in the people of the developed countries.

6.4 Influence

Orientalism is considered to be Edward Said's most influential work and has been translated into at least 36 languages. It has been the focus of any number of controversies and polemics, notably with Bernard Lewis, whose work is critiqued in the book's final section, entitled "Orientalism Now: The Latest Phase." In October 2003, one month after Said died, a commentator wrote in a Lebanese newspaper that through Orientalism "Said's critics agree with his admirers that he has single-handedly effected a revolution in Middle Eastern studies in the U.S." He cited a critic who claimed since the publication of Orientalism "U.S. Middle Eastern Studies were taken over by Edward Said's postcolonial studies paradigm". Even those who contest its conclusions and criticize its scholarship, like George P. Landow of Brown University, call it "a major work." The Belgian-born American literary critic Paul De Man supported Said's criticism of such modern scholars, as he stated in his article on semiotic rhetoric: "Said took a step further than any other modern scholar of his time, something I dare not do. I remain in the safety of rhetorical analysis where criticism is the second best thing I do."

However, Orientalism was not the first to produce of Western knowledge of the Orient and of Western scholarship: "Abd-al-Rahman al Jabarti, the Egyptian chronicler and a witness to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, for example, had no doubt that the expedition was as much

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an epistemological as military conquest." Even in recent times (1963, 1969 & 1987) the writings and research of V. G. Kiernan, Bernard S. Cohn and Anwar Abdel Malek traced the relations between European rule and representations.

Nevertheless, Orientalism is cited as a detailed and influential work within the study of Orientalism. Anthropologist Talal Asad argued that Orientalism is "not only a catalogue of Western prejudices about and misrepresentations of Arabs and Muslims", but more so an investigation and analysis of the "authoritative structure of Orientalist discourse - the closed, self-evident, self-confirming character of that distinctive discourse which is reproduced again and again through scholarly texts, travelogues, literary works of imagination, and the obiter dicta of public men [and women] of affairs." Indeed, the book describes how "the hallowed image of the Orientalist as an austere figure unconcerned with the world and immersed in the mystery of foreign scripts and languages has acquired a dark hue as the murky business of ruling other peoples now forms the essential and enabling background of his or her scholarship."

Said does not include Orientalist painting or other visual art in his survey, despite the example on the book's cover, but other writers, notably Linda Nochlin, have extended his analysis to cover it, "with uneven results".

Evaluation

Edward Said's evaluation and critique of the set of beliefs known as Orientalism forms an important background for postcolonial studies. His work highlights the inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions as it questions various paradigms of thought which are accepted on individual, academic, and political levels.

The Orient signifies a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and Western empire. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien ("Other") to the West.

Orientalism is "a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient." It is the image of the 'Orient' expressed as an entire system of thought and scholarship.

The Oriental is the person represented by such thinking. The man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because poses a threat to white, Western women. The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic. The Oriental is a single image, a sweeping generalization, a stereotype that crosses countless cultural and national boundaries.

Latent Orientalism is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. Its basic content is static and unanimous. The Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. It displays feminine penetrability and supine malleability. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior.

Manifest Orientalism is what is spoken and acted upon. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of Latent Orientalism.

Earlier Orientalism

The first 'Orientalists' were 19th century scholars who translated the writings of 'the Orient' into English, based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples. This idea of knowledge as power is present throughout Said's critique. By knowing the Orient, the West came to own it. The Orient became the studied, the seen, the observed, the object; Orientalist scholars were the students, the seers, the observers, the subject. The Orient was passive; the West was active.

One of the most significant constructions of Orientalist scholars is that of the Orient itself. What is considered the Orient is a vast region, one that spreads across a myriad of cultures and countries.

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It includes most of Asia as well as the Middle East. The depiction of this single 'Orient' which can be studied as a cohesive whole is one of the most powerful accomplishments of Orientalist scholars. It essentializes an image of a prototypical Oriental—a biological inferior that is culturally backward, peculiar, and unchanging—to be depicted in dominating and sexual terms. The discourse and visual imagery of Orientalism is laced with notions of power and superiority, formulated initially to facilitate a colonizing mission on the part of the West and perpetuated through a wide variety of discourses and policies. The language is critical to the construction. The feminine and weak Orient awaits the dominance of the West; it is a defenseless and unintelligent whole that exists for, and in terms of, its Western counterpart. The importance of such a construction is that it creates a single subject matter where none existed, a compilation of previously unspoken notions of the Other. Since the notion of the Orient is created by the Orientalist, it exists solely for him or her. Its identity is defined by the scholar who gives it life.

Contemporary Orientalism

Said argues that Orientalism can be found in current Western depictions of "Arab" cultures. The depictions of "the Arab" as irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and--perhaps most importantly--prototypical, are ideas into which Orientalist scholarship has evolved. These notions are trusted as foundations for both ideologies and policies developed by the Occident. Said writes: "The hold these instruments have on the mind is increased by the institutions built around them. For every Orientalist, quite literally, there is a support system of staggering power, considering the ephemerality of the myths that Orientalism propagates. The system now culminates into the very institutions of the state. To write about the Arab Oriental world, therefore, is to write with the authority of a nation, and not with the affirmation of a strident ideology but with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force." He continues, "One would find this kind of procedure less objectionable as political propaganda--which is what it is, of course--were it not accompanied by sermons on the objectivity, the fairness, the impartiality of a real historian, the implication always being that Muslims and Arabs cannot be objective but that Orientalists. . .writing about Muslims are, by definition, by training, by the mere fact of their Westernness. This is the culmination of Orientalism as a dogma that not only degrades its subject matter but also blinds its practitioners."

Said's Project

Said calls into question the underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. A rejection of Orientalism entails a rejection of biological generalizations, cultural constructions, and racial and religious prejudices. It is a rejection of greed as a primary motivating factor in intellectual pursuit. It is an erasure of the line between 'the West' and 'the Other.' Said argues for the use of "narrative" rather than "vision" in interpreting the geographical landscape known as the Orient, meaning that a historian and a scholar would turn not to a panoramic view of half of the globe, but rather to a focused and complex type of history that allows space for the dynamic variety of human experience. Rejection of Orientalist thinking does not entail a denial of the differences between 'the West' and 'the Orient,' but rather an evaluation of such differences in a more critical and objective fashion. 'The Orient' cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner; rather, the scholar is obliged to study more focused and smaller culturally consistent regions. The person who has until now been known as 'the Oriental' must be given a voice. Scholarship from afar and second-hand representation must take a back seat to narrative and self-representation on the part of the 'Oriental.'

Conclusion

Edward Said concludes his book by saying that he is not saying that the orientalists should not make generalization, or they should include the orient perspective too, but creating a boundary at the first place is something which should not be done. Said contends that the Orient, as much as the Occident, "is not an inert fact of nature" . It is, rather, an "idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence for the West" . All this is not to say that the Orient is "essentially an idea, or creation with no corresponding reality" .

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However, what Said is interested in is the Orient as a "regular constellation of ideas". Acknowledging that "ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood without . . . their configurations of power being studied", Said underscores that the discursive construction of the East is possible because the relationship between Occident and Orient is an asymmetrical one, a "relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony". The "discourse about the Orient" (for example, how Flaubert "spoke for and represented" his Egyptian courtesan and, in the process, "produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman" was enabled because of a "pattern of relative strength between East and West" .

Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of 'discourse,' rather than the familiar Marxist distinction between ideology or 'false consciousness' and scientific knowledge, Said stresses that Orientalism should not be thought of as a "structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away". Said's point is that Orientalism is not merely some "airy European fantasy about the Orient" . It is, rather, a "system of knowledge about the Orient", a created body of theory and practice in which . . . there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism . . . an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied . . . the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.

Said underscores Orientalism's "close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions". Said draws on Gramsci's distinction between civil and political society, the latter consisting in state institutions (the army, police, the central bureaucracy, etc.) and the former in voluntary affiliations like schools, families and unions. Culture, Said writes, is to be found operating within civil society "where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent" . In any society, certain "cultural forms" and "ideas" predominate over others: the "form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony".

Said stresses that the discursive construction of the Oriental serves a vital purpose: it subtends the exclusionary process upon which European identity is predicated, that is, the "idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" . The result is an "idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all those non-Europeans". Said is at pains to point out that discourse on the Orient must be understood in relation to the "period of extraordinary European ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present": the scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader or the soldier was in, or thought about the Orient because he could be there, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part. Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. The 'Oriental world,' in short, 'emerged' out of the "unchallenged centrality" of a "sovereign Western consciousness" . Significantly, these 'truths' were developed "according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections".

Said wonders whether Orientalism should be equated with the "general group of ideas overriding the mass of material . . . shot through with doctrines of European superiority, various kinds of racism, imperialism and the like" or the "much more varied work of almost uncountable individual writers, whom one would take up as individual instances of authors dealing with the Orient" . These are "two alternatives, general and particular, are really two perspectives on the same material", Said contends, which he intends to apply conjointly the mass of material under investigation, avoiding the possibility of "distortion" by steering his way between the extremes of "too dogmatic a generality" and "too positivistic a localised focus". In so doing, he believes, he avoids the

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dangers of both "coarse polemic on so unacceptably general a level of description" and" so detailled and atomistic a series of analyses as to lose all track of the general lines of force informing the field". His goal is accordingly to "recognise individuality and to reconcile it with its . . . general and hegemonic context".

The Distinction between Pure and Political Knowledge Said points out that the prevailing assumption, especially in the humanities, is that knowledge is "nonpolitical, that is, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief". However, he argues, no one has ever devised a method for detaching a scholar from the circumstances of his life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society. Arguing that the "political societies" of the imperial powers inevitably imparted to their "civil societies" a "direct political infusion . . . where and whenever matters pertaining to their imperial interests abroad are concerned" , Said contends that the British intellectual in the nineteenth century, for example, took an interest in British colonies "that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies". For Said, thus, the issue at hand is determining the nature of the relationship between the "big dominating fact, as I have described it" and the "details of everyday life that govern the minute discipline of a novel or a scholarly text as each is being written". The fact of imperialism, that is, the economic, political and military involvement of Europeans and, later, Americans in the Orient necessarily shaped how seemingly apolitical institutions and individuals viewed the Orient.

In short, like any discursive practice, Orientalism must be understood in relation to the imbalance of power, in this case, that which has existed between Europe and the rest of the world for the last few centuries. Said, however, rejects the notion that "'big' facts like imperial domination can be applied mechanically and deterministically to such complex matters as culture and ideas".

Undoubtedly all discourse on the Orient was politically-motivated but, he contends, "it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic and military rationales" . Orientalism is accordingly 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; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographic 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 uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we'). Said points out that most scholars would not deny that "texts exist in contexts" and acknowledge the fact of "intertextuality, . . . the pressures of conventions, predecessors and rhetorical styles". However, Said contends that most are unwilling to admit that "political, institutional and ideological constraints act in the same manner on the individual author". Many are reluctant to give up their belief in the "principle of 'creativity,' in which the poet is believed on his own, and out of his pure mind to have brought forth his work" . In the same way that there is an "explicit connection " in classic philosophers such as Locke "between their 'philosophic' doctrines and racial theory, justifications of slavery, or arguments for colonial exploitation" . Said acknowledges that much materialist criticism has been 'vulgar' or "crudely iconoclastic", and has often failed to keep up with the "enormous technical advances in detailed

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textual analysis". Gesturing towards the Marxist Base/superstructure model, he opines, too, that there has been little serious effort to bridge the "gap between the superstructural and the base levels in textual, historical scholarship". Said is at pains to argue that such political influences "were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting" or restrictive. In the case of Orientalism, however, "political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions - in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility.

In short, Said argues, nearly every nineteenth century (if not before) literary writer,

he contends, "was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire". It is in this light that aid views Orientalism as a "dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires - British, French, American". From this point of view, Said believes that the following "political questions" are the crucial ones:

what other sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one? How did philology, lexicography, history, biology, political and economic theory, novelwriting and lyric poetry come to the service of Orientalism's broadly imperialist view of the world? What changes, modulations, refinements, even revolutions take place within Orientalism? What is the meaning of originality, of continuity, of individuality in this context? How does Orientalism transmit or reproduce itself from one epoch to another? In fine, how can we treat the cultural, historical phenomenon of Orientalism as a kind of willed human work - not of mere unconditioned ratiocination - in all its historical complexity, detail and worth without at the same time losing sight of the alliance between cultural work, political tendencies, the state and the specific realities of domination? For Said,"humanistic study can responsibly address itself to politics and culture" without establishing a "hard-and-fast rule about the relationship between knowledge and politics". Each particular study must, rather, "formulate the nature of that connection in the specific context of the study, the subject matter, and its historical circumstances".

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Orientalism has been translated into ..... .

(*a*) 20 languages (*b*) 85 languages

(*c*) 36 languages (*d*) none of these

(*ii*) Napolean's invasions of Egypt took place in ..... .

(*a*) 1795 (*b*) 1798

(*c*) 1990 (*d*) 1985

(*iii*) The orient was ..... .

(*a*) active (*b*) passive

(*c*) both (*a*) and (*b*) (*d*) none of these.

6.5 Summary

- Orientalism administered a much-needed correction to the study of the Arab and Asian worlds. Any historian, social scientist or humanist working in related fields should own a copy. The strength of Edward Said's Orientalism is its highlighting of the underlying assumptions of dominance and subjection in Orientalist scholarship. Said correctly points out that the British, French and United States have relied on the reduction of the Orient to an academic study backed by a mythical image of its inhabitants and cultures as more primitive, passionate, mystical and illogical. Complementing this has been a presumption of Western superiority that allows diagnosis of social ills and prescription of Western remedies for these ills.

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- Said also pointed out a secondary weakness in the Orientalist approach to its studies. If Westerners presume the Orient to be more passionate and mystical, they may assume that it provides absolute alternatives to the ills of Western culture and modernism. Thus the span of Western history scrutinized by Said has seen individuals and groups embracing ill-understood religions and cultural precepts. The anti-majoritan/left-leaning subcultures arising during the upheavals of the 1960's are particularly susceptible to this.
- This leads naturally to Aijid Ahmad's primary criticism of Said. Orientalism doesn't consider the varied responses of the Orient/Third-World to its theories. In particular, Ahmad correctly points out that Orientalism over-focuses blames on the West and doesn't address the self-inflicted problems of "Oriental" societies. Based on this criticism, the proper approach is to balance the effects of Western Orientalism and the indigenous difficulties. Essentially, Ahmad advocates abandoning the simple depiction of the Orient for a complex and layered reality.
- Orientalism's uncriticized weakness lies in its treatment of Europe. Said willingly admits his limited focus on Britain, France and United States may miss some important scholarship found elsewhere. This concentration has some logic to it. His trio of nations has been among the strongest if not dominant powers in the colonial and post-colonial world. A complete survey of European Orientalism could run for several volumes. Yet in this focus, Said misses those European nations who had had longer and more intricate relations with the "Orient".
- Said mentions his lack of attention to German scholarship on the Orient. Beyond the loss in additional scholarship, he cannot take account of the direct influence of the German academic tradition on the rest of Europe and particularly the United States. Beyond this immediate effect, Said loses the transmitted experience of the German Reich's participation in the direct struggle against the Ottoman Empire. While he mentions the Medieval and Renaissance hostility to Islam based on direct threat and conflict, he ignores the extension of this conflict into the 18th and 19th centuries. Yet this conflict remained a dominant factor in the existence of the Austrian and Russian Empires. As long as the struggle continued, the Orient in the form of Islam would have a direct influence on the course of European history. The simple illustration of this is the European approach to independence for the Balkan states and occasional support for the Ottomans versus an opponent. While this support was partially based on the perceived weakness of the Ottomans and resultant manipulability, it also concedes the existence of some real and beneficial power.
- Said's exclusion of other European states weakens his structure in a different manner. It's useful to consider the British and French perceptions of Austria and Russia. A simple interpretation of Orientalism presumes a unified Europe as opposed to the Orient. Yet this ignores the equally institutionalized denigration of Austria and Russia. We can refer to the image of the mythical Slavic province of Ruritania (cf. Anthony Hope's The Prisoner of Zenda), a den of intrigue and iniquity. Add to this Said's notes on the relative knowledge of the Near Orient versus the Far Orient. This suggests more of a subtle gradation in the construction of the Other than is represented by Orientalism's sharp division between Occident and Orient.
- Other historical patterns also stress the need for the representation of a more complex Occident. For instance Said argues that European exploration and extension of trade routes to India and the Far East shows hostility to Islam. A simpler explanation may be mercantile concerns for lowering expenses and increasing profits. Direct trade was more profitable than relying on Arab middlemen. The Arab reaction to Portuguese penetration of the Indian Ocean reflected a concern with being excluded from the profits of trade with India rather than with the intrusion of a new power in the region. This concern with trade leads to different motivations for learning languages and examining cultures. A variety of motivations for scholarship argue for a more complex Occident. The need for more complexity does not necessarily invalidate Said's central points on the institutionalized domination common to Western European Orientalism. Rather it demands refinement of a useful critique of the study of colonialism.

Notes

6.6 Key-Words

1. Defamiliarization : The Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky uses the term ostranenie, usually translated as 'making strange' or 'defamiliarization', to denote what he sees as the primary function of literary texts—to make the familiar unfamiliar, to renew the old, or make the habitual appear fresh or strange.
2. Deixis : A term from linguistics, referring to the use of words concerning the place and time of utterance, e.g. 'this', 'here'.
3. Dénouement : (Fr: 'unknotting') either the events following the climax of a plot, or the resolution of this plot's complications at the end of a short story, novel or play.

6.7 Review Questions

1. To what extent is Said a Foucauldian? What other theorists does he bring into his analysis, and how does he employ their ideas either to qualify or supplement his own and Foucault's framework? What reason does Said offer on page 1996 (bottom) for not simply sticking with one theoretical framework rather than integrating the work of several theorists?
2. Said wants to move away from theories that he believes have construed the literary text as an object apart from the world, from everyday reality. How, according to Said, does Paul Ricoeur's analysis of the opposition between speech and texts reproduce the problem that Said wants to avoid?
3. What is the Scope of Orientalism"? Explain .
4. Discuss the Orientalist Structures and Restructures."

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*c*) (*ii*) (*b*) (*iii*) (*b*)

6.8 Further Readings

Books

1. Bourdieu, Pierre. 1971. Reproduction culturelle et reproduction sociale. Social Science Information. April 10: 45-79. 1990b.
2. The Logic of Practice, translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1993a. Sociology in Question, translated by Richard Nice. London: Sage Publications.
3. Læon Poliakov, The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Basic Books, 1974).
4. Derek Hopwood, The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine, 1843-1943: Church and Politics in the Near East (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
5. A. L. Tibawi, British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 5.-285-
6. Gérard de Nerval, Oeuvres, ed. Albert Béguin and Jean Richet (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 1:933.
7. Hugo, Oeuvres poétiques, 1:580.
8. Sir Walter Scott, The Talisman (1825; reprint ed., London: J. M. Dent, 1914), pp. 38-9.
9. See Albert Hourani, "'Sir Hamilton Gibb, 1895-1971'", Proceedings of the British Academy 58 (1972):495.

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Unit 7: Edward Said's Crisis [In Orientalism]: Inter-Textual Analysis (Alluding Fanon, Foucaut and Bhabha)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the idea of the wide field known as Postcolonial.
- Explain 'Orientalism' (Said), 'Subalternity' (Spivak) and '(Bhabha)'.

Introduction

As stated earlier, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan are three French thinkers (they are mostly clubbed under 'poststructuralism') who have exercised a profound influence on almost all that has happened in literary theory in recent times. In the case of postcolonial theory, the man who has exercised the greatest influence on the field is Foucault. Said's work shows his influence in a very marked way. Spivak and Bhabha also draw from him. The more obvious influence on Spivak is that of Drrida and Bhabha's case the more obvious influence is that of Lacan.

Since power is a major issue in postcolonial theory let us take a look at Foucault's view of power. Simply stated, 'discourse' (to Foucault) is a system of statements within which and by which the world can be known Discourses are ways of constituting knowledge together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations that inhere in such knowledge and the relations between them. Power too is a relation and gets exercised within discourses in the ways in which these discourses constitute and govern individual subjects. In *The History of Sexuality. Volume One, An Introduction*, Foucault defines power as:

The multiplicity of force relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization, as the process by which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverse them; as the support which these force relations find in one another thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another and lastly as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystalization is embodies in the State apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.

Postcolonialism involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its present effects bothat the level of ex-colonial societies and of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire.

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What was is that gave rise to postcolonialism? Why was it that a study of the cultural dimension of imperialism became important? First, independence movements around the world put an end to colonialism. Yet the residual effects of imperialism continued to affect the coltures of the erstwhile colonies. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is one such intervention in colonial discourse. By the 1980's a substantial body of commonwealth literature had emerged in which writers tried to make sense of the impact of colonialism. There was a greater awareness of the power relations between the West and Third World cultures. All these led to a study and analysis of colonialism and its after-effects.

7.1 The Holy Trinity

Said's Orientalism which appeared in 1978 is a good starting point for us. Said sees Orientalism as a discourse by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, socientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period. Said states:

Taking the eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism can be defined as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it, in whort Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.

On page 3 itself, Said acknowledges that he had found it useful to employ Foucault's notion of discourse as described by him in *The Archcology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish.*

A very important statement which Said makes on page 12 of Orientalism is:

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 it is representative and expressive of a nefarious 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Orient World'. It is rather a distribution of geographical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological and philosophical text; it is an claboration not only of a basic geographical distinction but also a whole sense of 'interest'...

By means of the discourse of orientalism, Westerm cultural institutions are responsible for the creation of those 'others'. The Orientals' very difference from the Occident helps establish that opposition by which Europe's own identity can be established. The knowledge of the Orient created by and embodied within the discourse of Orientalism serves to construct animage of the Orient and the Orientals as subservient and subject to domination by the Occident. The knowledge of 'subjectraces' or 'Orientals' makes their management easy and profitable.

Did u know? Said's book establishes that stereotypes and general ideology about the orient as 'the other' have helped to produce myths about the laziness, deceit and irrationality of Orientals.

Knowledge of the Orient is generated out of strength and such strength-generated knowledge, in turn, 'creates' the Orient, the Oriental and his/her world. In most cases the Oriental is 'contained' the 'represented' by dominating frameworks and the encoding and comparison of the orient with the West ensures in the long run that oriental culture and perspectives are a devialion and a perversion that justify an inferior status for the latter. The Orient is seen as essentially monolithic with an unchanging history, while the Occident is dynamic with an active history. Not only that, the Orient and the Oriental are seen to be passive, non-participatory 'objects' of study. The Orient, in that sense, was sought to be established as a textual construct. On page 36 of his book Said states:

Knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control. The whole thing thus becomes an on-going project.

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These then are the essentials of Said's formulations about 'Orientalism'. Let us now move to the essentials of Gayatri Spivak's notion of 'subalternity'. Spivak is a leading contemporary feminist deconstructionist who pays careful attention to issues of gender and race. Her use of the term 'subaltern' is influenced by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci consistently referred to a subordinate position in terms of class, gender, race and culture. Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' addressed the way the 'subaltern' woman is constructed, as absent or silent or not listened to. The 'muteness' of women in postcolonial societies is the main issue which her work confronts. The main argument of her essay is that, between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of woman disappears not into a pristine nothingness, but into a marginal position between tradition and modernization.

Spivak uses the term 'subaltern' (of lower rank) for women, blacks, the colonized and the working class. Subalternity comes to suggest the repressive dominance of white Western thinking and an allegory of the displacement of the gendered and colonized (i.e. subaltern) subject, y the imposition of narratives of internationalism and nationalism. The violence inflicted by Western forms of thought upon the East is of great concern to Spivak. She takes 'the third world' to be a creation of the west that locks non-western cultures into an imperial representation. 'Worlding' is the name she gives to the process through which 'colonized space' is 'brought into the workd; that is made to exist aspart of a world essentially constituted by Eurocentrism.'

In these kinds of formulations one of the possible pitfalls in atteibuting an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse in creating the native and not making enough room for the resistance of the native. That brings us to Bhabha, the third figure in 'the Holy Trinity' and to his key notion that is 'mimicry'.

To Bhabha the operations of the unconscious in the imperial context are far from simple because desire for, as well as fear of, 'the other', does not allow the identities of the colonizer and the colonized to stay fixed and unitary. Colonial power undermines its own authority and can paradixocally provide the means for native resistance. The site of resistance, the strategic reversal of the process of domination that looks the colonial power squarely in the eye, is marked by 'hybridity', an 'in-between' space. It not only displaces the history that creates it, but sets up new structures of authority and generates new political initiatives. It undermines authority because it imitates it only outwardly.

On account of the difficulty of categorizing different cultures into universalist frameworks, Bhabha' finds the idea of the 'nation' a little problematic. He thinks that the idea stems from the imposition of a rather arbitrary 'national' character upon a necessarily very heterogencous collection of people(s).

Did u know? 'Mimicry' designates a gap between the norm of civility as presented by European Enlightenment and its distorted colonial imitation. It serves as the sly weapon of anti-colonial civility and is an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience.

7.2 Said on Heart of Darkness

The thrust of Said's 1966 book Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography is somewhat different from his comments on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness in Culture and Imperialism* (1993). On page 25 of the latter book, Said states:

This narrative ... is connected directly with the redemptive force, as well as the waste and horror of Europe's mission in the dark world. 'Whatever is lost or elided or simply made up in Marlow's immensely compelling recitation is compensated for in the narrative's sheer historical momentum, the temporal forward movement.'

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To Said, the imperialist politics and aesthetics which *Heart of Darkness* embodies was in the closing years of the nineteenth century an aesthetics, politics and epistemology which were almost unavoidable and inevitable. The strength of Said's reading in this case is in his balancing of the aesthetic and the political. That is something which one cannot say about the reaction of someone like Chinua Achebe who saw Heart of Darkness as 'out and out' a racist book.

In the same vein Rudyard Kipling's Kim (which does not figure in your course) is seen by Said as a great document of its aesthetic moment, the realization of a great and cumulative process, which, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, is reaching its last major moment before India's independence; on the one hand, surveillance and control over India: on the other, love for and fascinated attention to its every detail (Culture and Imperialism, P. 195)

These kinds of readings are more open than those which merely refute, challenge and oppose. Most 'high modernist' text deserve and demand a reading of that kind in view of their complexity and of the irony that mostly goes into their making.

The general characteristic of reading in postcolonial criticism is that a text is 'read back' from the perspective of the colonized. Such reading characyteristically rejects the claims to universalism made on behalf of canonical Western literature and seeks to show its limitations of outlook especially its general inability to empathize across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference.

7.3 Foucault's Concept of Discourse

The mechanism which Edward W. Said deploys in order to set his concept of Orientalism in motion relies on Foucault's concept of discourse or discursive representation, which allows Said to talk about Orientalism as a body of texts that operates through a network of textual referentiality. Said also relies on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, to explain power-differentials between the East and the West. Orientalism gains power through the superiority of the hegemonic culture. The subjugation of the East is achieved not only by direct coercion but also by partial representation through a collection of texts-ranging from travel writings, novels, translations, religious tracts and historical documents to laws and codes-whose coherent density is able to claim the power to represent the East and, to a certain extent, becomes sufficient to speak on behalf of the East without the East speaking for itself. However, Orientalism has faced a number of criticisms in recent decades. Some of the major attacks have come from David Kopf (1980, reprinted 2000), who sees Orientalism as lacking historical reality; Michael Richardson (1990, reprinted 2000), who attacks Orientalism for the absence of a reciprocal relationship between the East and the West; and Sadik Jalal al-'Azm (1981, reprinted 2000), who argues that Orientalism tends to essentialise the West in the same way that Said accuses the West of essentialising the East for imperialist ends. Lisa Lowe (1991) questions the lack of heterogeneity in Orientalism with regard to the difference between British and French Orientalisms.

While many of these criticisms have drawn mainly on various aspects of Orientalism, only a few have mentioned the problem of agency in the methodology Said adopted in theorising Orientalism (e.g. Bové 1986). Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to revisit Said's methodology and its application to Orientalism. I will examine the impact of Said's use of Foucauldian discourse on the notion of 'author,' or in this case the Orientalist agents. I will then explore the problem of agency which becomes manifest as a by product of the unresolved tension between subjectivism and objectivism defaulted in Foucauldian discourse. In light of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology, I will critique Said's concept of the 'author' through Bourdieu's concept of habitus and assess the possibility of reading Orientalist authors, who can, as I will argue, be treated as active cultural agents and hence their role pertaining to a form of habitus. While Said did not refer to Bourdieu's work in his Orientalism, his explanation of the transferable profession of the Orientalists is similar to the concept of cultural agency advocated by Bourdieu. This paper does not intend to fill in the gap in Said's methodology but rather to shed light on the possibility of reading Orientalism as cultural reproduction. In fact, I will argue that Said's approach to Orientalism, to a certain degree, already lends itself to the theory of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu's sociology, also known as 'generative structuralism,' complements what critics view as a methodological shortcoming by shedding light

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on a more dynamic sociological approach, as opposed to a usually held 'static' discourse. Said's approach to knowledge Like Foucault, Said sees language as a battleground where speakers and societies compete for power and domination. Foucault argues that the formation of discourse is subject to the use of power which yields both repressive and generative effects at the same time. Nevertheless, with the strong influence of structuralism and the cult of the death of the author, to entrust discourse, which is theoretically deprived of agents, with a generative function seems an awkward business. This problem can be seen in Foucault's concepts of "archaeology" and "genealogy."

Foucault explains the repressive control of discourse as a feature of archaeology which we can see in statements that attempt "to mark out and distinguish the principles of ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse" (Foucault 1969: 234). We understand discourse as a 'limited system of presence' in which only enunciations or the rarity of statements give meanings to discourse and not the unsaid. While archaeology refers to the formation of objective structure, Foucault develops another concept called genealogy to account for the generative effects of discourse. In his later essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1977), he explains how his use of 'genealogy' is derived from Nietzsche's view of the development of morals through power. While the word tends to suggest the idea of 'tracing back to the origin', Foucault's genealogy does not seek to establish a linear development of historical events. On the contrary, Foucault uses genealogy to deconstruct that very linearity that is central to the traditional way of writing history-as he puts it, genealogy "seeks to makes visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (1977: 162). However, Foucault's notion of genealogy, as David Eick points out, remains a 'hazy' distinction from the concept of archaeology. It is questionable that genealogy really has a generative function that archaeology does not offer, when, in fact, one can argue that archaeology can pinpoint the same problem of historical discontinuity. Furthermore, Foucault does not explain if one needs to venture into the realm of the unsaid, the absent, the unannounced, in order to reconstruct genealogy. If so, it would also call into question the need to inquire into the subjective mode of the absent, which is what Foucault excludes in theorising discourse and archaeology for "[t]he analysis of statements operates therefore without reference to a cogito" (Foucault 2004: 138). Simon During raises the same problem in his article "Genealogy, Authorship, Power":

Where does this system of constraint end? Where does the positive programme of enabling the "unsayable or unsaid" to speak, begin? To give prisoners, gays, the colonized or the marginal a voice is also to demand of them their "truth," to suppose that they are the originating subjects of a specific, more or less univocal, "voice," and therefore, to some degree at least, to call them into that de-centred centre which constitutes the (post)modern world. (During 1992: 127) In effect, Foucault's critics, such as Dreyfus and Rabinow, see the concepts of archaeology and genealogy as incompatible, with archaeology encapsulated by the statements and governing rules of discourse and genealogy seeking to trace the root of power and deconstruct precisely the discursive rules which situate it (Eick 1999: 88).

Following Foucault's archaeology, Said bases his argument on a network of texts which forms a web of interrelated discourse. Orientalism is a concept which works through its textual re-presence in which stories, accounts and memoirs reenact the presence of thoughts and concepts about the Orient as a textual presence, which in turn marks itself as representation in written format. Said's Orientalism, together with the subsequent book Culture and Imperialism (1993) which is a postcolonial expansion of his thesis in the former, are an archaeological project that attempted to map out the discursive representations of the Orient and the colonies by the West and the empires. In the Foucauldian manner, Said traces how the images of the West's other are constructed and distinguished through a rarefaction and objectification of statements that provides a ground for investigating the representations of the Orient and the colonies. Wolfgang Iser (2006) notes the strong influence of Foucauldian discourse in Said's Culture and Imperialism: Edward Said's postcolonial discourse, as developed in his book Culture and Imperialism, works as an imposition in the Foucauldian sense on both colonial and anticolonial discourse. These are the "objects" to be charted and it is this tripartite relationship through which postcolonial discourse gains salience. Hence the latter assumes a critical position toward what it operates upon, although it has the same

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structure as the discourse on which it focuses its power. It is also marked by the same rarefaction that distinguishes all discourse, which are only differentiated from one another by the motivation that causes their respective restrictions.

Similarly, in Orientalism, discourse is described as consisting of collected statements on the Orient, but Said adds that it operates on two principal concepts which Said calls strategic location and strategic formation. These two terms, while they rely on discursive formation as a central theoretical tool, reintroduce the 'author' into the analysis of power by incorporating the presence of the author into the formation of texts: My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called strategic location, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and strategic formation, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large.

Said deploys strategic location as an extension to discourse: the author is seen as using the text to locate his position visà- vis the Orient. By 'locating', Said is referring to the author's choice of narrative styles, themes, images and motifs which are woven into the particular way of presenting the Orient to the audience. This is how Orientalists construct their discourse about the faraway land. The Orientalist narrative which Said explores at great length is the style of two French Orientalist scholars who engaged in Arabic studies in the nineteenth century - Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) and Ernest Renan (1823-1892). Said identifies two themes in Sacy's works and approaches to studying Arabic literature: one is his endeavour to become champion of Arabic scholarship through his various political roles, namely, as resident Orientalist at the French Foreign Ministry (Said 1979: 124), and the other is his 'dedicated sense of pedagogic and rational utility'- the latter theme is derived from Sacy's role as professor of Arabic at the celebrated Collège de France and his utilitarian approach to the selection of Arabic poems in his Chrestomathie Arabe (1806). These two themes inform Sacy's position as an Orientalist who strives to make his work useful to the French public through his status as an Arabic specialist. Said argues that Sacy's dedicated and utilitarian approaches to his works can be seen in texts bearing his name. As for Renan, Said derives the theme of his Orientalism from Renan's contribution of philology to Orientalist scholarship in France. Renan is identified as the trendsetter who imposed on the study of Oriental languages a scientific methodology, in which language is broken down into units that can be categorised and compared in an objective manner. In this way, Said places these authors/ Orientalists in the text, and reads their presence as a personal imprint in the text; this is the point at which Said claims to depart from the discursive method of Foucault, to whom he admits being greatly indebted: Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, The author in Edward Said's "Orientalism". I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism.'

For Said, individual names play an important part in providing 'labels' and links to which other texts can refer. The example that occurs quite frequently throughout his book is how Edward William Lane's Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (1836) became a major reference for writers about the Orient such as Nerval, Flaubert and Richard Burton. Lane's authority can be viewed as indispensable and it gives credibility to whoever cites him in their works. The image of Egypt during the nineteenth century is therefore a product of textual referentiality, in which each text looks to other texts for reference in terms of information and authority, through labels carrying the names of individuals. Critiquing Said's 'Author' from Bourdieu's perspective While the author seems to gain more presence in Said's textual analysis than in Foucault's classic discourse, the role of the author is still limited: Said tends to treat authors as being part of the text rather than text producers. This points to the problem of the role of agents in relation to structures, which, as Eick points out, is not elaborated in Foucault's usage of discourse or archaeology, and the generative function of Foucault's notion of genealogy remains largely abstract. Bourdieu sees the problem as

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bringing structuralist theory to an impasse- structuralism is unable to go beyond a treatment of knowledge confined to objective structure alone. Bourdieu also finds subjectivist modes of knowledge, such as existentialism and aesthetics, to be focusing too much on personal accounts, especially individual understanding, rather than the external conditions which shape or influence public mentality. Having dealt with the problem of this objective/ subjective contradiction, Bourdieu tries to break away from relying on either mode of knowledge. His sociology is a dialectically interactive mode of knowledge production which does not confine itself to either the objective or the subjective but rather integrates functions of both objective structure and experiential production (See Bourdieu 1972, 1990a, 1990b, 1993a, 1993b, 1998). Bourdieu's break with exclusive subjectivism or exclusive objectivism yields a new type of mediation which he calls practice-an act which links social agents with social structures. David Swartz (1997: 58) suggests that Bourdieu's introduction of a mediating device called for an epistemological break which resulted in Bourdieu's investigation of two questions. The first is how practice and structure inform each other reciprocally; practices by social agents constitute social structures and, in turn, are determined by them. Such a relationship can be seen in the concept of habitus in which Bourdieu combines actions by social agents with structural factors of their society. The second is in the way theoretical and practical knowledge should be handled by social scientists. Bourdieu's sociology is a response to the notion of the 'disinterestedness' of scholars and their so-called 'object of study.' Bourdieu contends that the academic tradition, especially in the social sciences, has become absorbed in a theoretical approach to the point at which theory itself has become the sole narrative of a social event, no matter how varied each single context appears to be. Bourdieu's concern is that MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities, Special Issue No. 18, 2009 scholars lack reflexive vigilance towards practical knowledge and are likely to subscribe to a type of academic disinterestedness that divides sociological research from practical reality. Yet it is still important for researchers to have a conceptual paradigm which is able to capture and theorise social patterns in a critical manner. From this direction, Bourdieu developed an approach to sociological research which he terms "reflexive sociology," a theory that aims to make scholars aware of the 'scholastic fallacy' of detaching academic tradition from the social world. Structuralism, especially that of Lévi- Strauss and Althusser, is criticised by Bourdieu as engaging in objectifying social events into reductionistic structures which dissociate the written report from social reality. Sameh F. Hanna points out that such a gap is the result of the objective implementation of clear-cut structuralist binary oppositions, which leads to the omission of agency-the cause of the structuralist scholastic fallacy. This neat delineation of the social phenomenon which underlies the concept of 'structure' purportedly provides a tool for describing and predicting phenomena, but in fact it constrains social reality within deterministic patterns by means of which all phenomena are projected as exact actualisations of the structuralist model. To further consolidate the objectivist character of their model, structuralists confine themselves to describing the material reality of the social world, excluding the social agents' representations of this reality.

While Foucault is generally associated with structuralism, we may hold that he 'narrowly' escaped the objectivist approach that dominates structuralism in that he was aware of the genealogy of discourse through the generative effect of agency as we can see in the works after The Archaeology of Knowledge such as "Discourse on Language" (1971), Discipline and Punish (1975), The Will to Knowledge (1976-the first volume of The History of Sexuality). However, while Foucault tried to trace the genealogy of ideology, power, sexuality and explain the 'history of the present,' the motivation of those agents or carriers of these values were 'left out' and this has subjected Foucault to a great deal of criticism. Charles Taylor, one of his severest critics, attacked Foucault for an 'unintelligible' account of history which fails to recognise the 'purposeful actions' of agents whose roles in shaping discourses cannot easily be dismissed (During 1992: 137). Said is aware of the importance of the experiential mode of production and the problem of academic disinterestedness, for, as he states in the introduction to Orientalism, his life as an Arab Palestinian living in the US does make him a part of the whole project of Orientalism, as someone living with the impact of Orientalist discourse.

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7.4 The Importance of Postcolonialism

'Orientalism', 'subalternity' and 'mimicry' are important aspects of the work of the three critics. One of the problems that Orientalism (the book) suffers from is (that it assumes) too readily that an unequivocal intention on the part of the West was always realized through its discursive productions. The other two critics do not seem to give enough direct power and role ot 'agency' on behalf of the colonized people. Also, Bhabha's style is so involved that an oppositional stance does not come through and is obscured by the meanderings of language.

And yet the cumulative achievement of the three critics discussed in this unit has been really admirable. There is all around us a new cultural politics of difference with all its inner complexities and subtle nuances. One of the challenges for postcolonial theory today is to come to terms with specific local conditions and with comparison that can be discerned in and between them. There is also the daunting task of trying to know the story of colonial and neo-colonial engagements in all their complexity. Finding a proper language and terminology for representing those engagements is another major challenge. The three critics taken up here have done more than most others in indicating some of the directions that can be fruitfully followed, sometimes aided by poststructuralism and postmodernism.

Some more general charges, however, remain. Aijaz Ahmad an Indian critic objects that postcolonial theorists 'live and do their theories' in First World countries and that (in Ahmad's view) affects the impact of their work. Arif Dirlik sees the postcolonial intellectual as complicitousin feeding into the goals of the capitalist frame of postcolonial theory. Kwame Appaiah argues that the 'post' of postcolonial theory and ostmodermism are spaces created by capitalism to market cultural products in the developing world.

7.5 Summary

- Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha are said to be 'the Holy Trinity' of postcolonial, theory. Having said that, it becomes important to point out that their work cannot be clubbed together in any homogeneous way. Each of themis different and important for the contributions she has made to the field. Said's main contribution to the field is the concept of 'orientalism'—the attempt on the part of the West to establish the East as lazy, deceitful and irrational. Spivak answers the question 'Can the Subaltem Speak?' with a 'No'. Women are 'doubly effeced' in Spivak's scheme of things. Bhabha's theorizing about 'mimicry' builds on the potential for irreverence and mockery in the colonizer/colonized relationship. All three critics are influenced by Fjoucault's views on power and discourse. Additionally, Spivak is influenced by Derrida and Bhabha by Lacan. All three draw on other resources as well.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Discoure of Language published in ..... .

(*a*) 1971 (*b*) 1961

(*c*) 1975 (*d*) 1985

(*ii*) The first volume of the history of sexuality ..... .

(*a*) The will to knowledge (*b*) Disciphine and punish

(*c*) Discourse on language (*d*) None of these

(*iii*) Heart of Derridaness was written by ..... .

(*a*) Derrida (*b*) Trilling

(*c*) Conrad (*d*) None of these.

Notes

7.6 Key-Words

1. Hegemony : In the work of the Italian Marxist thinker Gramsci, the word is used to account for the way in which a ruling class maintains itself in power.
2. Subaltern : Of lower rank.
3. Mimicry : The fact that the colonizer in his/her relationship with the colonized is always vulnerable to the irreverence and mockery beneath the seeming servility of the colonised.

7.7 Review Questions

1. What is the main argument of Edward Said's book Orientalism?
2. How have Foucault's view on discourse and power influenced Said's Orientalism?
3. What does Spivak mean by 'subalternity?' What distresses her about the condition of women in colonial societies?
4. What does Bhabha mean by 'minicry' in the colonial context?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*a*) (*iii*) (*c*)

7.8 Further Readings

Books

1. Edward Said, Orientalism. London: Routledge, 1978. Culture and Imperialism. Lonson: Chatto and Windus, 1993.
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Gary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. London: Macmillna, 1998.
3. Homi Bhabha *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.
4. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffins (eds) *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 1989.
5. Robert Young, *White Mythologies,* London: Routledge, 1990.

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Unit 8: Gynocriticism and Feminist Criticism: An Introduction

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the development as a Literary Critique.
- Explain the future of gynocriticism.
- Understand Feminist Criticism.

Introduction

Gynocriticism is the historical study of women writers as a distinct literary tradition. Elaine Showalter coined this term in her essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics." It refers to a criticism that constructs "a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories" The work of gynocriticism has been criticized by recent feminists for being essentialist, following too closely along the lines of Sigmund Freud and New Criticism, and leaving out lesbians and women of color.

Gynocriticism is the study of feminist literature written by female writers inclusive of the interrogation of female authorship, images, the feminine experience and ideology, and the history and development of the female literary tradition. During the late eighteen hundreds and early nineteen hundreds respectively, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir began to review and evaluate the female image and sexism in the works of male writers. During the nineteen sixties the feminist movement saw a reaction and opposition to the male oriented discourse of previous years. Most thoroughly developed during the late seventies and early eighties, gynocriticism was a result of the interrogative critiques utilised in post-structuralism and psychoanalysis.

8.1 Development as a Literary Critique

Gynocriticism developed as a literary critique from the theories and techniques of post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. Post-structuralism is by nature, the study of the uncertain (Barry 2009). According to Barry, post-structuralism questions and interrogates the scientific certainty that structuralism took for granted, identifying the fact that language is ambiguous and therefore the

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universe is indeterminate. Psychoanalytic criticism focuses on the word of Freud, and the concept of the unconscious. The textual content is both conscious and unconscious and the critique involves the uncovering or decoding of the two. Additionally, Freudian psychoanalysis identifies repression and sublimation, two unconscious processes that involve the struggle with identity. Gynocriticism, examines the female struggle for identity and the social construct of gender. If gender is inherently constructed from an ideology, then that ideology is by nature, indeterminate and fluid, susceptible to the analysis of differences. According to Elaine Showalter, gynocriticism is the study of not only the female as a gender status but also the 'internalized consciousness' of the female. The uncovering of the female subculture and exposition of a female model is the intention of gynocriticism.

According to Showalter, literary history has seen three distinct phases of gynocriticism. Until the twentieth century, the female literature tradition was constructed of images and values of the idealized 'feminine', constructed from the patriarchal oppression that sought to identify the woman as "other". During the twentieth century, the 'feminist' movement saw a reaction to the patriarchy of previous times and protested the ideology of the feminine. The most recent development is the 'female' criticism, where a female identity is sought free from the masculine definitions and oppositions. The recognition of a distinct female canon and the development of the 'female reader' are fundamental aspects of gynocriticism.

8.2 Gynocriticism and Psychology

Gynocriticism arose as a feminist critique as a result of the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective of the female inadequacy. According to Freudian psychology, the female possesses a psychological deficiency in the lack of male anatomy and as a result suffers envy and feelings of inadequacy and injustice combined with feelings of intellectual inferiority. However it is not just the physical female inadequacy that led to the inception of gynocriticism. The prejudice against the female, incites a specific noesis that becomes attributed to the female. Psychologist Karen Horney theorised that the ideal of woman is not necessarily innate to her sex but that the patriarchal pressures and cultural influence compel her to behave in conformity with the image. This prejudice has concealed the female literary tradition to the point of imitating the masculine.

Did u know? The male 'phallic prejudice' itself, creates a female consciousness that demands a critique of the female perspective.

8.3 Flaws as a Critique

However gynocriticism aims to uncover a female psyche, it frequently fails to encompass the female as a whole. Often critics critique the feminist literature to the exclusion of other considerations such as race, class, social interest, political inclination, religion and sexuality. According to Friedman, the self 'is not singular, it is multiple'. Identity is not constructed of gender alone. The female encompasses other attributes such as race, class, sexuality etc. that are all subject to different positions of oppression and are in fact, related. The separation of these properties would create a one dimensional view of the female. However if gender and identity are merely constructs then it becomes difficult to assign any inherent qualities of nature or language by which to critique.

8.4 The Future of Gynocriticism

Gynocriticism is a literary theory that is relatively new and continues to evolve. Until the patriarchal ideology of the female is resolved and gender inequality and social subjugation are neutralised, then it remains necessary to review and examine the female literary canon. Indeed, even when gender inequality is no longer an issue, interrogation of 'female' literature will remain valuable, as it is the study of sameness and difference in gender that delineates the 'female' literary theory.

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8.5 Feminist Criticism: An Introduction

Any survey of feminist criticism is fraught with difficulties, the most serious of which is the avoidance of reductionism. This introduction to feminist work attempts to identify key figures, central concerns, and general "movements." Such an attempt is a strategic move to organize a vital and growing body of work into some sort of scheme that can be collated and presented. Despite the existence of American, French, and British "feminisms," for example, no such clear-cut schools or movements exist in a fixed way. The various writers included in this essay, and the various trends and movements discussed, share many positions and disagree on many important points. Such agreements and disagreements have less to do with nationality than with the rapid changes occurring in feminist criticism. Three general perspectives on feminism are summarized here, as reflected in the work of American, French, and British writers. The work of two pivotal feminist writers, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, is discussed at some length, and there is also an attempt to isolate a few general trends and issues within the feminist movement.

Feminism has diverse goals, many of which overlap in the work of individual writers. This work is filled with pitfalls and temptations: Because women have been participants in their cultures, feminine thinking and writing cannot be separated from the methods of the cultures in which they have lived. Nor can a woman be separated from her race or sexual orientation. Furthermore, feminist criticism may be combined with other methods of criticism, such as deconstruction, psychoanalytic criticism, and Marxist criticism. Generally, however, feminist writers are concerned with encouraging the equality of women-political equality, social equality, and aesthetic equality-and researching the impact of gender upon writing-determining how the writing of women differs from the writing of men.

Gender Systems

Feminist critics have produced a variety of models to account for the production, reproduction, and maintenance of gender systems. They discuss the female writer's problems in defining herself in the conventional structures of a male-dominated society, structures that restrict the possibilities of women and impose standards of behavior upon women personally, professionally, and creatively. Again, to generalize, once women experience themselves as subjects, they can attempt to undermine the social, cultural, and masculine subject positions offered them.

Feminist critics may, for example, reexamine the writing of male authors (an approach associated with American feminists) and, in particular, reexamine the great works of male authors from a woman's perspective in an attempt to discover how the great works reflect and shape the ideologies that hold back women. In this reexamination, feminist critics will carefully analyze the depictions of female characters to expose the ideology implicit in such characterizations. They may also seek to expose the patriarchal ideology that permeates great works and to show how it also permeates the literary tradition. This particularly American approach is seen in the work of Kate Millett, Judith Fetterley, and Carolyn Gold Heilbrun.

Notes In particular, the place within feminism of women of color is a controversial issue, as black writers such as Phillis Wheatley, Toni Morrison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and others challenge and enter the canon. Other practitioners of gynocriticism include Patricia Meyer Spacks and Susan Gubar.

Gynocriticism

A second approach used by American feminists is termed "gynocriticism." This method of inquiry takes as its subject the writings of women who have produced what Elaine C. Showalter, who coined the term "gynocriticism," calls "a literature of their own." A female literary tradition is

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examined to discover how women writers have historically perceived themselves and their cultures. Other goals of gynocriticism are to preserve and chronicle the history of women's writing and to rediscover lost or neglected women writers. Showalter describes feminine writing as a form of the general experience of minority cultures, cultures that are also "Others" and whose members are struggling to find a place usually reserved for white males. This leads to the problem of multiple marginalization, since some men and women may be Others in terms of ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Language

Feminist writers may also focus on language, defining it as a male realm, and exploring the many ways in which meaning is created. This language-based feminism is typically associated with French feminism. Such feminists may conceive of language as phallocentric, arguing that it privileges the masculine by promoting the values appreciated by the male culture. Such a language-based approach typically attempts to reveal a relationship between language and culture, or, more specifically, the way the politics of language affects and even determines women's roles in a culture. Radical French feminists may associate feminine writing with the female body, so that the repression of female sexual pleasure is related to the repression of feminine creativity in general. They insist that once women learn to understand and express their sexuality, they will be able to progress toward a future defined by the feminine economy of generosity as opposed to the masculine economy of hoarding. Such a position has drawn criticism from other feminists, since it seems to reduce women to biological entities and fosters (though it reverses) a set of binary oppositions-female/male. Julia Kristeva, Annie Leclerc, Xaviere Gauthier, and Marguerite Duras are four French feminists.

Interestingly, differences between the French and English languages involve complicated feminist issues. The English language distinguishes between sex and gender, so that human beings are either female or male by sex and feminine or masculine by gender. The feminine/masculine opposition permits some fluidity, so that androgyny can become a central, mediating position between the two extremes. The distinction between male and female, however, is absolute. The way the English language categorizes people has itself created a debate within feminism, over naming. In French, by comparison, the concepts of femininity and femaleness are included in the same word.

Political and Social Agendas

Finally, British feminists have tended to be more historically oriented than French and American feminists. These British critics tend to be materialistic and ideological; they look carefully at the material conditions of historical periods and consider such conditions as central to understanding literature. Literature, in this model, is culturally produced. Some British feminists consider that an American opposition to male stereotypes has produced a feminine reaction that has led to an ignorance of real differences among women's races, social classes, and cultures. British feminists also emphasize that women's development of individual strategies to obtain real power within their political, social, or creative arenas is actually a negative move. They argue that such examples mystify male oppression and perpetrate the myth that, somehow, male oppression creates for women a world of special opportunities.

Generally, the British position encourages historical and political engagement to promote social change. This model of activism contrasts with the American and French models, which focus primarily on sexual difference. A typical strategy of the British approach is to examine a text by first placing the text in its historical context and then exposing the patriarchal ideologies that structure the text and govern the depiction of women characters. Because of historical oppression, the women characters tend to be either silent or mouthpieces for men's myths. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt are two examples of British feminists.

History

Feminist criticism owes much to the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, two founders of contemporary feminist thought. De Beauvoir explored many ways in which women are defined

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and limited in relation to men. Her most important work is probably The Second Sex (1949). Such limiting, de Beauvoir contends, cannot be avoided in a male-dominated culture; even women perceived as "independent" are still negatively affected by the ideas and the relations of the male society. Western society in general, for de Beauvoir, is patriarchal and denies freedom of expression to women. In this patriarchal society, women become Others, viewed not as they are but as projections of male needs and subordinate to male expectations. Her approach tends toward a Marxist model in identifying an economic and political limiting of women with sexism in literature. De Beauvoir finds in literature reflections of a more general socioeconomic oppression of women. Her approach emphasizes art's mimetic quality: Through its powers of reflection, art yields valuable insights into the sexism that is culturally prevalent.

The otherness examined by de Beauvoir and other feminist writers is a condition of women, so that the characteristic of identity for women is separation. Constituted through a male gaze, the feminine exists as something that is inexpressible. Women function as objects of the male gaze. Therefore, women's bodies are vehicles for ambivalent feelings toward the mother. These problems extend into the Western philosophical tradition, so that Western (usually male) thinkers express their philosophical positions as essential and universal while embracing a center that is unexamined and male.

In her essay A Room of One's Own (1929), Virginia Woolf introduced many topics that have become vital to feminist critics. She contends that art is a collective product, incorrectly romanticized in theory as individual and personal. Woolf's conceptualization of a metaphorical "room," a female place, merges the introspection often associated with female discourse and the social sanctuary within which a woman may achieve her potential. Woolf helped to establish the broad range of feminist criticism, from cultural critique to discourse. The most important portion of A Room of One's Own ironically and satirically traces the lost career of "Shakespeare's sister," whose creativity had no outlet in the sixteenth century. Woolf problematizes the structures of the male ego, its rituals, titles, and institutions, which are created at the expense of Others. This ironic introduction sets the stage in the text for a historical discussion of women writers and the problems they had in pursuing their careers. Furthermore, in her discussion of women novelists of the nineteenth century, especially George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Jane Austen, Woolf foreshadowed contemporary research on language.

Woolf argued that a woman writer should write as a woman writer and as a woman who is not self-conscious of her gender. She strove to be aware of the alienating and repressive effects of the myths created around women and also to avoid creating alternative myths. She set forth the attempt to discover a collective concept of subjectivity that would foreground identity constructs and argued that such a concept of subjectivity is a characteristic of women's writing. Other women writers, however, are more interested in the alienation created by structures that permit women only very restricted and repressive roles, roles as Others, in society.

In her writing, Woolf is striving, like later feminists, to uncover the effects of a phallocentric culture that idolizes the autonomous and rational ego. She also attempts to offer an alternative to this idolatry, an alternative that emphasizes subjectivity and connectedness, if in a historically fluid context. Through her struggle to redefine women, she tries to avoid simply reversing the binary oppositions that polarize men and women into specific categories. She does not argue for a reversal of the categories.

Gender Rules and Relations

Since de Beauvoir and Woolf, the naming and interrogating of phallocentrism has become more assured. Feminist critics are challenging the stereotypical masculine virtues, no longer accepting them as measures of virtue and excellence. One strategy many feminist critics adopt is to locate both men and women within a larger context, as both being captives of gender in vastly different, but interrelated, ways. Though men may appear to be the masters under the rules of gender, they are not therefore free, for like women they remain under gender rules.

If both men and women are influenced by gender, then the conceptualizations of women and the conceptualizations of men must be examined in terms of gender relations. Feminist critical models are complex and often contradictory. Claims about the centrality of gender relations in the formation

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of self, knowledge, and power relations, and the relationships of these areas to one another, continue to be debated. Feminist critics have developed many theories on how gender systems are created, continue, dominate, and maintain themselves. Each of the theories, however, identifies a single process or set of processes as vital to gender relations. Influential feminist theorists have suggested the centrality of the sexual division of labor, childbearing and child-rearing practices, and various processes of representation (including aesthetic and language processes, for example). Such positions address the meanings and nature of sexuality and the relationship of sexuality to writing, the importance and implications of differences among women writers, and the effects of kinship and family organizations. Each of these many theories and debates has crucial implications for an understanding of knowledge, gender, power, and writing.

Juliet Mitchell has argued for the importance of Freudian theories to feminist theories of gender relations. Her work entails a defense of Lacanian psychoanalysis. She argues that Sigmund Freud's work on the psychology of women should be read as a description of the inevitable effects on feminine psychic development of patriarchal social power. Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow contribute to this psychoanalytical approach a larger account of the unconscious and its role in gender relations. They also examine the traditional sexual division of labor in the West, how this tradition has been passed on, and how it influences male-female relations.

Male vs. Female Discourse

Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray find fundamental psychological differences between men and women. They have concluded that women are more influenced by pre-Oedipal experience and believe that the girl retains an initial identification with her mother, so that the relationship between mother and daughter is less repressed than that of the mother and son. This retention affects women's selves, so that they remain fluid and interrelational. As a result of this difference between men and women, masculine writing has an ambivalent response to women. Women tend to remain outside or on the fringes of male discourse, and feminine pleasure poses the greatest challenge to masculine discourse. Masculine discourse is also logocentric and binary; its meaning is produced through hierarchal, male-dominated, binary oppositions. Masculine discourse creates a situation in which feminine discourse is characterized by omissions and gaps. Latent in these gaps and omissions are conflicting feelings regarding sexuality, motherhood, and autonomy.

An important question raised by feminist criticism iswhether there is a gender-based women's language that is significantly and inevitably different from the language of men. In Language and Woman's Place (1975), Robin Lakoff argues that there is more to "speaking like a woman" than vocabulary. Examining syntactical patterns of a typical female and evaluating the frequency with which women use tag questions, she concludes that the traditional powerlessness of women in a Western society is reflected in many aspects of women's language. Other theorists who are interested in differences between male and female languages explore sociolinguistic issues, such as the practice of women assuming their fathers' names at birth and their husbands' names when married, the frequency with which women are addressed by familiar names, the frequency of interruption in speech between men and women, and the large number of pejorative terms applicable to women. Writers interested in these latter linguistic areas are Cheris Kramarae and Julia Penelope Stanley.

In this conflict between male and female discourse, writing may be an anticipatory, therapeutic experience of liberation. Writing may return woman's repressed pleasure to her. It may also create a collective space in which women writers may speak of and to women. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explores discourse and literature in general as discursive practices. In In Other Worlds (1987) she shows the tendency in Western cultures to universalize particular examples into human examples. Spivak examines feminism in relation to British imperialism in India and then situates feminist criticism within middle-class academia. This approach argues that what has been assumed to be universal truth is in fact the Western colonial or male conception of truth, a perspective that distorts or ignores the experiences of Others. The goal of such a critical perspective is to authenticate the expression of Others based on individual experience and shared understanding and to call into question the accepted definitions of truth and meaningful discourse.

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Differences among Women

Another concern that has become important in feminist criticism is the differences among women themselves. A model that presumes a universal feminine experience requires that women, unlike men, be free from cultural and racial determination. Under such a model, the barriers to shared experience created by race and class and gender are somehow cleared away when one is a woman. Women critics of color, such as Barbara Smith, argue that it is incorrect to assume that there is one universal feminine experience or writing. For example, the sexuality of black women tends to be represented as natural, primitive, and free from traditional cultural inhibitions. Yet this assumption has been invoked both to justify and to deny the sexual abuse of black women and the lack of respect given to them. In general, Smith criticizes fellow feminists for excluding or ignoring women of color. She also observes that both black and white male scholars working with black authors neglect women.

Furthermore, it is not possible to discuss a universal experience of motherhood. Racism affects women of color differently from the way it affects white women, especially in the effort to rear children who can be self-sufficient and self-respecting. These troubles are inherent in a culture that holds as natural the binary opposition white/black, wherein white is the privileged term. This opposition is deeply rooted in the colonial history of Western civilization. Women of color cannot be exempt from the insidious consequences of this binary opposition, and white women cannot participate in productive dialogue with women of color whenever this traditional opposition is ignored.

Lesbian Criticism

Another friction within the feminist movement involves lesbian feminist criticism. Just as women of color have considered themselves excluded, lesbian feminists consider themselves excluded, not only by the dominant white male culture but also by heterosexual females. Authors concerned with this problem include Bonnie Zimmerman and Adrienne Rich. In fact, Rich provides a definition of lesbianism so broad that it encompasses most of feminine creativity.

Feminist Psychoanalytic Criticism

In the 1970's a general movement toward psychoanalysis and toward women's reading men and one another occurred within feminism. This movement is exemplified in the writings of such feminists as Mary Jacobs, Jane Gallop, and Juliet Richardson. For feminist theorists, the limitations of traditional theories accounting for the origins of oppression had been uncovered. Writers in the 1970's became very interested in, for example, the positioning of women within repressive sexual and political discourses. Many feminist writers have become interested in the establishment of an identity that involves both separation and connection, so that a binary relationship is not created and one is not perceived as a threat. In such a new relationship, women would no longer need, for example, to attempt to create an Oedipal triangle through their children. Each of the sexes might develop less threatening relations to the other.

Reading Differences

In regard to women's reading men and one another, Annette Kolodny investigated methodological problems from an empiricist stance. She concludes that women, in fact, do read differently from men. Her "A Map for Rereading" (1980) examines how the two contrasting methods of interpretation of men and women appear in two stories and how the differences between masculine and feminine perspectives are mirrored in the reaction of the public to the two stories (Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers"). Judith Fetterley's work also presents a model for gender differences in reading. Her book The Resisting Reader (1978) argues against the position that the primary works of American fiction are intended, and written, for a universal audience and that women have permitted themselves to be masculinized in order to read these texts. One of the first steps, Fetterley contends, is for women to become resisting, rather than assenting, readers.

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Varieties of Feminism

Feminism has engaged in and with other branches of criticism, including Marxist criticism and deconstruction. Nancy K. Miller and Peggy Kamuf, for example, have incorporated deconstructive approaches in their work. Judith Lowder Newton and Lillian Robinson have incorporated Marxism.

The movement toward alternative ways of writing, however, involves drastic changes in the relationship between public and private and the traditional opposition between emotional and rational. Such an attempt in literature was heralded by Woolf's writing (for example, The Waves, 1931 and To the Lighthouse, 1927) and may be read in the work of Muriel Spark (The Hothouse by the East River, 1973), Angela Carter (The Passion of New Eve, 1977), Toni Morrison (The Bluest Eye, 1970), Alice Walker (Meridian, 1976), Marge Piercy (Women on the Edge of Time, 1976), Margaret Atwood (The Edible Woman, 1969), Joanna Russ (The Female Man, 1975), and Fay Weldon (The Life and Times of a She-Devil, 1983), among others since.

Perhaps the most agreed-upon accomplishment of feminist criticism (though even in this agreement there is caution) has been to find and identify a variety of feminine traditions in literature. Numerous women writers have been "rediscovered," introduced into the literary canon, and examined as important to the literary tradition. This interest in expanding the study of literature by women has had a significant impact in colleges and universities. Indeed feminist criticism, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, had joined with other traditions-Native American, African American, Asian American, gay and lesbian-in an ongoing effort to celebrate and express diversity in the ongoing investigation of identity.

8.6 The New Feminist Criticism

During the last decade, the influence of feminist literary theory and criticism has dramatically increased, not only changing the shape of literary studies but also substantially affecting work in other fields that are concerned with the definition of interpretive strategies. Because many significant essays first published in feminist and academic journals have not been widely available, there is cause to celebrate the publication of ''The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory'' edited by Elaine Showalter, one of its earliest exponents. The 18 essays here are important both in defining many areas of concern and disagreement that have chiefly occupied feminist critics in recent years and in suggesting some strengths and weaknesses of one of the primary theoretical approaches to have emerged.

The first section, ''What Do Feminist Critics Want? The Academy and the Canon,'' usefully explores assumptions implicit in a literary tradition almost entirely white, male and middle class; it analyzes why women have been excluded from all accounts of literary influence and identifies and corrects misreadings of several works by women. The second section, ''Feminist Criticisms and Women's Cultures,'' raises significant political and theoretical questions about the most appropriate focus for a feminist critical theory and methodology -the desirable relation of the theory to various forms of what has come to be referred to as ''male discourse,'' and the theory's capacity to adequately represent the experiences and perspectives of women diverse in economic and ethnic background as well as in sexual orientation.

In identifying the qualities unique to women's writing - its points of social reference, its recurrent images, symbols and themes - the essays in the last part of the collection provide examples of good practice of theo-retical statements defined earlier in the volume.

Provocative insights and readings may be found throughout the book. Annette Kolodny contrasts the feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman with Edgar Allan Poe and discovers in Gilman's short story ''The Yellow Wallpaper'' a revisionist reading of ''The Pit and the Pendulum.'' Susan Gubar powerfully illuminates the works of several women writers (among them Isak Dinesen and H. D.) as she analyzes the metaphors and strategies through which they have explored their creativity. Bonnie Zimmerman struggles with the complexities of defining a lesbian literary esthetic; and Barbara Smith, in mapping the achievements and potential of black feminist criticism, offers

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a stunning, if controversial, reading of Toni Morrison's "Sula." Lillian Robinson sets out the rationale for reformulating the literary canon; and Rosalind Coward's essay seeks to distinguish between feminist fiction and women's novels.

This collection will be generally appreciated for what it suggests about the nature and significance of feminist criticism in rectifying past errors of judgment. By focusing on women as readers and writers, virtually all of these critics have been able to reveal the distortions of what is referred to as "masculinist" bias. They also help us to redefine literary influence and reconceptualize literary history. They ask probing questions about the special nature of women's creativity, retrieving and placing in context the works of women poets and novelists who have been underestimated, misread or flatly ignored. B ECAUSE her own theoretical position has determined her selection of the essays, however, Mrs. Showalter has been less successful in suggesting the existing range of theoretical and methodological approaches. Her view, developed in the two central essays of the collection, is that the proper study of women is women: that feminist critics should neither treat texts written by men nor draw their methodologies from a male-centered critical tradition. Her preference is for a "gynocriticism" that is "genuinely women-centered, independent, and intellectually coherent." She is concerned with the psychodynamics of female creativity which she observes in both the individual and collective habits of women writers. While Mrs. Showalter acknowledges that the national, racial, ethnic, sexual and personal differences that separate women from each other must also relate them socially, psychologically and economically to men, she does not wish to develop a methodology capable of exploring these complex interconnections.

Some of the critics whose work appears in the collection do not themselves share her perspective, but the book's selections nonetheless fall into the category of "gynocriticism." As a result, with the exception of an article by Nina Baym on how theories of American fiction exclude women authors, interpretive essays that examine texts by male authors are not included. Particularly unfortunate is the omission of representative essays that examine conjointly male and female texts that are both theoretical and literary. However, a number of feminist critics engaged in this project have not only given us fresh readings but, by helping us to understand the role of gender in determining basic interpretive patterns, have enabled us to develop a more complex understanding of human culture. The work of these critics calls for at the least a companion volume.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Gynocriticism is the tudy of feminist literature written by ..... .

(*a*) male writers (*b*) female writers

(*c*) both (*a*) and (*b*) (*d*) none of these

(*ii*) A second approach used by ..... .

(*a*) feminist (*b*) gynocriticism

(*c*) both (*a*) and (*b*) (*d*) none of these

8.7 Summary

- Gynocriticism is the historical study of women writers as a distinct literary tradition. (Friedman 18) Elaine Showalter coined this term in her essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics." It refers to a criticism that constructs "a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories"
- Gynocriticism developed as a literary critique from the theories and techniques of post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. Post-structuralism is by nature, the study of the uncertain (Barry 2009).

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- Gynocriticism arose as a feminist critique as a result of the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective of the female inadequacy. According to Freudian psychology, the female possesses a psychological deficiency in the lack of male anatomy and as a result suffers envy and feelings of inadequacy and injustice combined with feelings of intellectual inferiority.
- A second approach used by American feminists is termed "gynocriticism." This method of inquiry takes as its subject the writings of women who have produced what Elaine C. Showalter, who coined the term "gynocriticism," calls "a literature of their own."

8.8 Key-Words

1. Female Self-Discovery : A literature of their own; stop imitating others = Gynocriticism.

8.9 Review Questions

1. What do gynocritics look for?
2. What are the links between women writers; how does female influence work?
3. Is there a coherent "muted" tradaition?
4. What are the problems that have plagued attempts to define a "female" traditon or aesthetic?
5. What is a "female aesthetic"? -- The idea that women's art is different from men's, that they create differently.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*b*) (*ii*) (*b*)

8.10 Further Readings

Books

1. Beauvoir, Simone de. The Second Sex. 1949. Reprint. New York: Random House, 1990.
2. Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. New York: Methuen, 1980.
3. Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990.
4. Delany, Sheila. Writing Women: Women Writers and Women in Literature, Medieval to Modern. New York: Schocken, 1984.
5. Eagleton, Mary, ed. Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader. New York: Blackwell, 1988.
6. Fetterley, Judith. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
7. Finkle, Laurie A. Feminist Theory, Women's Writing. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992.

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Unit 9: Features of Feminist Criticism

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand the concerns and features of feminist theories.
- Examine areas of sensitivity and difficulty.

Introduction

I'd like to begin by recalling a fragment of a conversation from Jane Austen's last completed novel. *Persuasion*. It is a conversation between two friends, Captain Harville and Anne Elliot on the subject of constancy in love. As you will see, it begins with a reference to Captain Benwick, a common friend of theirs, whose situation they are discussing. It goes on however well beyond the personal. Captain Harville has just tried to tell Anne men's feelings are as strong and long-lasting as women's. Anne has disagreed.

'Well, Miss Elliot...we shall never agree, I suppose, upon this point. No man and woman would, probably. But let me observe that all histories are against you — all stories, prose and verse. If I had such a memory as Benwick, I could bring you fifty quotations in a moment on my side [of] the argument, and I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs all talk of women's fickleness. But, perhaps, you will say, these were alt written by men.'

'Perhaps I shall. Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything.' (*Persuasion* 1088-89)

Quite a few points jump out of this little snatch of conversation. *First* as Captain Harville suggests at the start, there is no beginning and no end to the dialogue between women and men. It is indeed one feature of human existence that cuts across ail barriers of time and space. Feminist theories then are one set of manifestations of that dialogue. They do not live — sectioned-off— in a curriculum for you and me to study and teach. They are the blood and bone of life's ongoing debate in all eras and cultures, between as it were 'one half of the sky' and the other. **Next**, the logical development of this line of thought is that feminist theories —however intellectually inaccessible some may seem at first — are not wholly or even largely the concern of the academy. They are illustrations of how the world and the academy intervene in each other's lives. Look at the way in which the conversation veers and swings. Harville and Anne begin with a purely

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personal concern. Their friend has given up mourning for his dead fiancee and found a new love. But Harville does not let the matter rest here. He goes on to speak of books, their writers and of all those engaged in the arts. He moves, in other words, from the world of ordinary life to the academy in which literature is taught, assessed and marketed. Harville and Anne go back (after the extract cited here) to talk of the personal once more. **Thus** this suggests the way in which feminist theories 'happen'. For instance, the critical establishment for a very long time said that Austen (though she lived through the Napoleonic wars) never alluded to the 'great world outside' and wrote only about the sheltered world of family life Yet look at how revolutionary ideas are quietly being nudged into place here. The notions that the literary establishment is not just male but likely to be male-biased as well, that women have been historically disadvantaged because education, history and literature have always been the preserve, and that therefore the academy (which produces and disseminates these studies) is suspect, are the stuff of which women's revolutions have been made. **All** these notions are articulated in this conversation.

Sometimes a revolution may happen in an obviously public arena : the Votes for Women movement in the Britain of the 1920's or the campaign for parliamentary seats for women in the India of the 1990's. At other times it may happen quietly in the give-and-take of a private conversation. That feminist theories seem to go underground at times, or speak largely in private space, is itself a comment on the way in which women have been silenced or marginalised at all times and in all places. **Also** look at the specifically literary aspects considered here. Literature concerns both women and men. So it is not only a case of men imbibing its gender-biases but also of women writers and readers being unknowingly conditioned by these biases. In this context therefore Anne is right to rule out an unmediated, *ad hoc* use of literature as a key to understanding life. Feminist theories try to identify such biases and then negotiate them by sensitising readers to their existence and organising strategies of resistance against such biases. **Besides**, examine the tone of this exchange again. Yes, the man and the woman are in an adversarial relationship in terms of ideas, but no, there is no hostility. Does this context of friendship help advance the feminist argument through means of friendly persuasion or does it retard the argument since persuasion can reduce radicalism ? Woolf for instance is criticised for using persuasive, feminine charm to win over her readers. Logically, if culture-conditioning is granted, the debate is not between women and men, but between feminists and anti-feminists. **Finally** look once more at the conversation, not for the tone this time but for the structure, or the way in which it orders its thoughts. At the molecular level — the level of the sentence — do you think you would know it was written by a woman if you had no prior information that the author is Austen ? Some theorists claim there is such a thing as 'a woman's sentence.' It is shaped so as to be deliberately personal, supple and easy as a response to the more public, ponderous and relatively hostile sentence of a man. Others suggest this kind of discrimination is itself an extension of gender-bias. What do *you* think ?

9.1 Working Definition

9.1.1 Sex and Gender

I wouldn't like to offer you — even if I could construct it — a hard and fast definition of the nature of feminist theories. That would set parameters to an experience which I still think is exciting because its chief business is the stretching of parameters and the disturbing of received wisdom. I wouldn't wish, so to speak, to domesticate the terror. At the same time I would like to suggest some areas and sensitivities peculiar to feminist theories, and to play around with some of the applications of these theories. So I shall try to put two working definitions before you. Consider their areas of clarity and put question-marks over their areas of confusion. Mere is the first :

...feminism is a political perception based on two fundamental premises : (1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, by which women suffer systematic social injustice, and (2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences. This perception provides feminism with its double agenda; to understand the social and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality and then to change them. (Morris, 1)

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Please set aside the word 'political' for the moment [I will discuss it 23.1.2] and focus on the paired concepts of sex and gender. Sex here refers to the determining of identity on the basis of biological category, while gender connotes 'the cultural meaning attached to sexual identity. In other words, gender is the product of culture-conditioning. Thus women may be stereotyped as being compelled to have certain 'womanly' qualities which restrict them to a subordinate role. Celia in *Middlemarch* finds happiness much quicker than Dorothea since for her life centres around her own hearth and home like that of a much-petted kitten. Dorothea steps out of the role nineteenth-century English provincial life offers her by trying to enter the homes of others, as a social worker or would-be architect. As a result her own home-centred happiness is that much harder to find. Sex-difference (the notion of the woman as reproducer) sanctions gender-difference (the notion that a woman must set up a family as her chief priority) which in turn requires punishment. *Middlemarch* society is that much more harsh to Dorothea because of her refusal to conform.

This is heart-rending. Simultaneously however even as feminist theorising — the sex-gender distinction in this case — uncovers these biases in cultural history, by drawing the attention of readers to these biases it helps resist them. Eliot's own conclusion to the novel can be read as a sell-out to culture-conditioning. Dorothea is perhaps the only one to believe in her own happiness. The remake of *Middlemarch* for BBC television in the 1990's though was interesting because it showed a conclusion more resistant to gender-bias. The visuals were those of provincial placid society and against this the conclusion of the novel was read out in a voice-over. This suggested an author disturbed and disappointed by her society. The priority of making readers uncover hidden biases in a text and in a sense thus re-writing a text is part of the revisionary imperative (or the need to bring about change) that is crucial to feminist theories.

9.1.2 Politics and Ideology

How are such biases created and sustained ? More specifically what are the institutions that make gender-bias possible ? The conversation cited in referred to education, history and literature. If these forces are put together they suggest the collective presence of the academy : the collective term to describe the study, teaching and publishing of the arts and the sciences. Feminist theories range themselves against various structures and inter-relationships of power — the state, the church, law and the academy — which they see as patriarchal. To be patriarchal is to sustain and act out the belief that both nature and culture make men superior to women. To combat patriarchy — which may be the basis of many institutions — is to call for action as the definition in 24.1.1 does. The definition I am going to put before you now, I think, sets out some of the action itself.

The first step is to recognise that politics is not the sole preserve of professionals called politicians. On the contrary ... 'everything is politics,' especially those things which claim or are claimed to be apolitical like those 'truths' which great literature is said to embody, and which still get labelled 'universal' .... 'Politics' in this wider sense means 'power' or rather 'power relations': who does what to whom and in whose interests. And because human relationships are necessarily interpersonal, 'the personal is the political' ... to read a canonical text in a feminist way is to force that text to reveal its hidden sexual ideology ... (Ruthven 30-1)

I will try to apply these ideas to a novel you have studied so as to clarify them. *Tom Jones* is — among other things — about a hero's quest for wisdom symbolised in the name of the heroine Sophia (meaning wisdom) whom he ultimately marries. A man's quest for wisdom is usually presented as a universal truth about life. Here it takes on the added dimension of the personal — a lover's quest for his beloved. Supposing though I argue that it is not universal and not merely personal but political, I could say it deals with patriarchal structures of power and the relationships between them. I might say that Fielding's readers (both women and men) demanded novels that re-inforced the gender-stereotypes that men can experiment but women must conform. Fielding's publisher (according to this reading) would want to give the readers what the latter would like to buy and read. So of course Fielding the writer creates a loving, patient, wise woman and a man who is eternally forgiven. Thus structures of power —which are therefore described as political —

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operate to re-inforce gender-stereotypes. They compel readers, writers and publishers to demand and produce such stereotypes endlessly. Unless alerted by feminist theorists subsequent readers of the text — who may go on to teach and prescribe it — will share its own inadequacies and ideology. 'Ideology is that never fully articulated system of assumptions by which a society operates, and which permeates everything it produces, including of course what is deemed to be literature'. At which points can feminist theories engage with patriarchal ideology so as to challenge it ? Are these areas themselves problematic?

9.2 Concerns of Feminist Theories

9.2.1 While Reading

Reading — which includes studying and teaching — is a cultural practice organised and mediated by the academy. The academy controls reading by means of the syllabus it constructs. This syllabus reflects in turn the canon : the body of texts it values enough to recommend. Like all other structures of power, the canon projects and confirms the cultural biases of those who construct it. '... canons are complicit with power; and canons are useful in that they enable us to handle otherwise unmanageable historical deposits. They do this by affirming that some works are more valuable than others, more worthy of minute attention ...'. In 24.1.2, I suggested how patriarchy might influence and shape a single text. Now try to imagine how patriarchy might determine a body of texts down the ages. It might suggest that only texts which had an arbitrarily determined value — say in terms of grandeur or length — ought to be included. This in turn would ensure the inclusion of certain genres such as the epic—with its emphasis on public action and high cultural significance — and the exclusion of others — the short story, say, with its emphasis on private space and domesticity. Now try to think of what this exclusion means. Traditionally women have used the short story which requires a brief absence only from work, and a (relatively) less format or 'classical' education which have frequently been all they can afford. The exclusion of a genre in which women have often been ahead of men is only one way in which the canon confirms patriarchy. Try now to think of other ways. The canon may include in a syllabus only texts of confirmed 'greatness' as compulsory and include women's writing in an optional paper which may be omitted. In this course you and I are. lucky to have a 'well-established' romantic like Wordsworth along with Wollstonecraft who is one of those rescued from oblivion by feminist theorists and almost forcibly brought to the notice of the academy. Feminist theories try to 'take over' the canon and rescue it from patriarchy by helping readers scan texts, genres or movements so as to relentlessly make visible the components of gender and gender-bias in the academy which has so far tried to conceal them.

9.2.2 While Writing

The best-known articulation of this problem comes from Elizabeth Barrett Browning a Victorian poet who said in 1845 'England has had many learned women ... and yet where are the poetesses?... I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none' (Walder 27). Another poet Emily Dickinson lamented over a similar problem in the United States of 1862 'They shut me up in Prose — As when a little Girl /They put me in the closet / Because they liked me "still"' (ibid). There are *two* problems with reference to these gaps in literary ancestry. For *one* thing it can make women writers feel at a disadvantage when compared to their male counterparts because to not feel part of a tradition can breed a sense of impoverishment and deprivation. As a contemporary poet Adrienne Rich complains 'this is one of the ways ... in which women's work and thinking has been made to seem sporadic, errant, orphaned of any tradition of its own' (Ruthven 124). For **another**, movements lose their radical capacity for change when they are made to seem sporadic and unorganised. As Dickinson points out, to be restricted to a genre which is not of one's choice— prose as against verse in her case — is to reduce a writer's potential for creatively rebellious writing. By rewriting histories of literature so as to free these of gender bias, by reconstructing syllabi (so that say, Premchand *and* Ismat Chugtai get read in a course on Indian writing), by

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retrieving genres in which women have excelled (diary-writing, the short story) and by publishing women's writing (the Virago Press in the U.K, the Feminist Press in the U.S and Kali for Women in India, to name a few) feminist theories create a space for women writers.

9.3 Grey Areas in Feminist Theories

9.3.1 While Practising

There are certain areas which are problematic or grey areas in feminist theories. Ought these theories to be applied across all cultures ? After all women as a class account for at least fifty percent of all cultures and there is an irreducible minimum of women's experience common to all times and places. At the same time is it not culturally unacceptable to market theory constructed by the Western academy as if it is equally valid across the Indian subcontinent as if theory were another multinational product ? Look at the following remark : 'How then, can one learn from and speak to the millions of illiterate rural and urban women who live "in the pores of capitalism inaccessible to the capitalist dynamics that allow us our shared channels of communication, the definition of common enemies?

Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak, who made this comment has been herself described as a 'Marxist feminist American academic, trained in literary deconstruction, [who] was born in India, and thus writes at the intersection of cultural and intellectual tensions' (Morris 166). In other words the experience of women is not wholly the same across all cultures. Some cultures are capitalistic or free-enterprise cultures which provide the illusion at least of choice. Others are state controlled. Literacy levels vary both within and across cultures. Feminist theorists approach the discipline from a variety of other theoretical backgrounds [of which more will be said in 23.3.2] All these points suggest that no easy essentialism should enter feminist criticism or create a totalising narrative that wipes out cultural difference or even set up the experience of the Western academy as normative. At the same time this problem should not inhibit theorists or cause theory to retreat. For to do this Would mean that the very conspiracy of silence patriarchy creates around genres, movements or cultures that are women-centred will be continued. Feminist theories I think should articulate such silences. Even if it means acknowledging they cannot speak **for** or **to** a culture with any great authority, they should speak **of** it however haltingly. What do **you** feel ?

9.3.2 While Theorising

Feminist criticism — like other forms of literary theory — relates across critical boundaries as well. Simone de Beauvoir always claimed for instance that as a marxist she was primarily interested in a class-based analysis which treated women as a class among the oppressed all over the world rather than in the condition of women in itself. New historicists — of whose work Edward Said's *Orientalism* is an example — have a vexed relationship with feminist theories. On the **one** hand a colleague of Said's found it useful to build a parallel between his work and hers : 'I realised, in reading his book that ...far more than Arabs internalised the western view [of their inferiority] women have internalised the male view of themselves' (Showalter 26). On the **other** Aijaz Ahmad a marxist has criticised Said for limiting his focus to race while erasing class and gender as factors of oppression. Feminist theories then, cannot only develop an ethic of suffering. They must think, intervene and reshape the academy and the world.

9.4 Possible Application

Now turn to the poem by Kamala Das please and give it a quick read, keeping in mind the theoretical issues discussed in this unit. For instance take a look at the opening : 'I don't know politics but I know the names / Of those in power, and can repeat them like / Days of the week or names of months, beginning with / Nehru ... I think the ironic opening (along with the title) works on the level of an ironic disclaimer. It sets itself out as an introduction to the woman writer

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but immediately suggests how apart from the public arena is the private world of the woman writer. Look at the way the problems of cultural difference appear. 'I am Indian, very brown born in / Malabar I speak three languages, write in / Two, dream in one...' An inhabitant of this world of power-structures (the world of politics) is a mockery of meaning as a mindless catalogue of days or months would be. The woman writer is condemned to a history she has not helped shape by an education she has not had, isn't she ? Look also at the relationship indicated between sex and gender. Sex is the category based on natural or biological instinct : 'I was child and later they / Told me I grew for I became tall...' In contrast gender is a culture-conditioned construct which has everything to do with the expectations and rules imposed by society on the individual 'I wore a shirt and my / Brother's trousers, cut my hair short...' I think the pressures of the academy are worked in rather cleverly. A chorus of self-styled literary critics try to tell poet the way in which she should position herself. 'Be Amy, or be Kamala or better /Still, be Madhavikutty ...' Each of these literary identities has specific choices and implications which shape it, I think there is the western role-model, the autobiographical **and** the poet who writes in the regional language respectively mentioned here. The poet thus finds people attempting to choose her literary ancestors for her, and this choice in its turn is an effort to force her present and future into manageable categories. How do you think a patriarchy pressures the individual woman writer in this poem to conform? See 24.2.2 for the parallel with any of the poets cited there and also look out for the pun on 'still' (don't move **and** don't rebel) which is the same as that in the quotation from Dickinson.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) Jane Ansten's last completed novel was ..... .

(*a*) imma (*b*) pride and prejudice

(*c*) persuasion (*d*) none of these

(*ii*) The votes for women movement in the Britain took place in ..... .

(*a*) 1920s (*b*) 1930s

(*c*) 1940s (*d*) none of these

9.5 Summary

- Feminist theories begin — it seems to me — as one manifestation of an ongoing dialogue between women and men. They illustrate the way in which the world and the academy intervene in the lives and processes of each other.
- The revolutions that make feminist theories possible (and vice versa) do not always happen in the public domain.
- Education, history and literature — which are public institutions have belonged to men for much longer than to women. Feminist literary theories identify the gender-biases of literature and thus help both women and men defeat these biases by reading against them.
- The argument is not so much between women and men as it is between feminists and anti-feminists. One pair of components recurring in feminist theories is that of sex (based on biological difference) and gender (the result of culture-conditioning).
- Politics refers to the power structures feminist theories try to combat and ideology to the invisible but inherent theoretical assumptions that govern a society. Patriarchy is the ideology committed to male supremacy and is combated by feminist theories which show up gender biases in the reading and writing of literatures.
- Feminist theories negotiate problems of cultural difference and of relationship with other forms of criticism such as marxism and new historicism. These use class and race respectively as means to scan literature rather than gender.

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9.6 Key-Words

1. Aesthetic of suffering : The reduction of women to the status of passive victims
2. Orientalism : Said's coinage to describe the reductive way in which the West has represented the East so as to colonise and exploit it

9.7 Review Questions

1. Outline the structures of power mentioned in the conversation between Anne Elliot and Captain Harville that feminist theories challenge.
2. What are the implications of the distinction between sex and gender as set by feminist theories?
3. Use 'An Introduction' to discuss the problems faced by feminist theories.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*c*) (*ii*) (*a*)

9.8 Further Readings

Books

1. Ruthven, K.K. *Feminist literary studies* : *an Introduction*. 1984, repr. Cambridge, C.U.P., 1990.
2. Morris, Pam. *Literature and Feminism*: *An Introduction*. Oxford : Blackwell, 1993.
3. Walder, Dennis (ed.) *Literature in the Modern World* : *Critical Essays and Documents*. Oxford : O.U.P., 1990.

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Unit 10: Gynocriticism and Feminist Criticism: Analysis

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Introduce Gynocriticism.
- Discuss the contribution of Gynocriticism.

Introduction

The feminist study of women's writings. The term is sometimes used to mean any literary criticism devoted to works written by women. More often, it designates a body of literary criticism principally produced by academic feminists in the United States between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s that sought to characterize imaginative writing by women in contrast to canonical literature written by men. Gynocriticism celebrated a distinctive "voice" in women's literature across genres and periods that it explained in terms of women's cultural position as an oppressed group; of women's experiences, especially experiences of male domination and of female bonding; and of psychological traits supposedly typical of women such as empathy and fluid ego boundaries. This approach, sometimes simplistically labeled "American feminist criticism," pioneered feminist literary history and established a canon of women's literature influential in teaching, publishing, and scholarship. By broadly endorsing women's creativity, gynocriticism overlaps "cultural feminism."

Gynocriticism's most important precursor is Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929), which posed influential questions about "women and literature." Following Woolf, American feminists of the late 1960s and thereafter saw imaginative literature as an important force affecting women. While some scholars attacked male writers for stereotyping women, other feminists sought role models and found energizing identifications in female characters drawn by women writers. For example, in 1972 Nancy Burr Evans rejoiced to see her "own experiences mirrored" in fiction by women (in Images of Women in Fiction, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon). Similarly, Louise Bernikow's Among Women (1980) and Rachel Brownstein's Becoming a Heroine (1982) emphasized the satisfactions of reading women writers who portrayed female friendships and women's search for identity.

Compared with the long tradition of the feminist practice or women's liberation, feminist literary criticism is a modern criticism approach that just started in 20th century. The chief pioneers of this approach are English writer Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and French writer Simone de Beauvior (1908-1986). They firstly had an insight into the twist of the female image and sexism in the male writers' works. This initiated the pursuing of the female reading and writing in the feminist criticism. Since 1960s, Kate Millet with her Sexual Politics made the feminist literary criticism

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become a theoretical branch. American poet and writer Adrienne Rich, Mary Ellmann; professors Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and Elaine Showalter; French writer Helene Cixous and English psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell also contributed a lot. In this period, feminist criticism transformed from the "Female Aesthetic" to" Gynocritics." After 1980s, feminist literary criticism got to the way of finding the self of female and affirming the self. The theorists in this period, for example, Julia Kristeva and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak implied poststructuralism, psychoanalysis to explore the gender theory. Till now, after a series of ideological trend, feministcriticism was to find a kind of "discourse," which is neither masculine nor feminine, but exists in a "third" form. From the history of theoretical feminism, we usually divided it into two parts, the Anglo-American and the French. These two parts have different theoretical backgrounds, study objects and research methods: American and English critics have for the most part engaged in empirical and thematic studies of writings by and about women; on the other hand, the most prominent feminist critics in France, have been occupied with the theory of the role of gender in writing, conceptualized within various post-structural frames of, and above all Jacques Lacan's reworking of Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of Saussure's linguistic theory. Here, we shall mainly go into the Anglo-American feminism, which may be divided into three phases: criticism of male sexism in the "androtexts," discovery of the women writers in history or spade works for "gynotexts," and feminist discourse for female identity. The first phase is concerned with woman as reader with woman as the consumer of male-produced literature, and with the way in which the hypothesis of a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes.

10.1 A Brief Introduction to Gynocriticism

Towards a feminist poetics (1979) for an appropriate form of feminist criticism, namely, the type which is concerned with woman as writer with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women. There is no term existing in English for such a specialized discourse, so Showalter adapted the French term lagynocritique.

Task Why gynocriticism considered more positive if we compare it to feminism?

Gynocriticism is a criticism which concerns itself with developing a specifically female framework for dealing with works written by women, in all aspects of their production, motivation, analysis, and interpretation, and in all literary forms, including journals and letters. To be more specific, according to Elaine Showalter, it is aprogram which " to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new modelsbased on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories" (Showalter, Towards a feminist poetics, 1979). Notable books in this mode include Patricia Meyer Spacks' The female imagination (1975), on English and American novels of the past three hundred years; Ellen Moers' Literary women (1976), on major women novelists and poets in England, America, and France; Elaine Showalter's A literature of their own: British women novelists from Bronte to Lessing (1977); and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar' The madwoman in the attic (1979). Moers' Literary women (1976) was "a preliminary sketching in or 'mapping' of this kind" (Selden 1997, p. 135). In Showalter's A literature of their own (1977), she "outlines a literary history of women writers (many of whom had, indeed, been 'hidden from history'); produces a history which shows the configuration of their material, psychological and ideological determinant; and promotes both a feminist critique (concerned with women readers) and a 'gynocritics' (concerned with women writers)" (Selden, 1997, p. 135). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar 's The madwoman in the attic (1979) stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Its authors propose that the "anxiety of authorship," resulting from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively

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male prerogative, effected in women writers a psychologicalduplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the idealized heroine, typified by Bertha Rochester, the madwoman in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre ; such a figure is "usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). There are three main concerns of gynocriticism. One concern is to identify what are taken to be the distinctively feminine subject matters in literature written by women? the world of domesticity, for example, or the special experiences of gestation, giving birth, and nurturing, or mother-daughter and woman-woman relations? in which personal and affectional issues, and not external activism, are the primary interests. Another concern is to uncover in literary history a female tradition, incorporated in sub-communities of women writers who were aware of, emulated, and found support in earlier women writers who in turn provide models and emotional support to their own readers and successors. A third undertaking is to show that there is a distinctive feminine mode of experience, or "subjectivity," in thinking, feeling, valuing, and perceiving oneself and the outer world. Related to this is the attempt to specify the traits of a "woman's language," or distinctively feminine style of speech and writing, in sentence structure, types of relations between the elements of a discourse, and characteristic figures and imagery. Some feminists have turned their critical attention to the great number of women's domestic and "sentimental" novels, which are noted in derogatory fashion in standard literary histories, yet which dominated the market for fiction in the nineteenth century and produced most of the best-sellers of the time; instances of this last critical enterprise are Elaine Showalter's A literature of their own: British women novelists from Bronte to Lessing (1977) on British writers, and Nina Baym's Woman's fiction: A guide to novels by and about women in America, 1820-1870 (1978). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have described the later history of women's writings in No man's land: The place of the woman writer in the twentieth century. Just as Showalter said, "gynocritics is related to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized constructs of feminity, but also the occupations, interactions, and consciousness of women" (Showalter, 1979).

10.2. The Contribution of Gynocriticism

The main tasks of gynocritics are to reorder the list of literary canon and uncover some "silent" female writers; to analyze "female creativity" and the specificity of female literary tradition. Based on these tasks, the contribution of gynocriticism can be found in many areas in feminist criticism. We will discuss its contribution from three aspects: the object, theoretical achievement, and quality of its study.

The Object of Gynocriticism: Reordering of the Literary Canon

The goal of gynocriticism is to enlarge and reorder the literary canon that is, the set of works which by accumulative consensus, have come to be considered major and to serve as the chief subjects of literary history, criticism, scholarship, and teaching. In a literature of their own, Showalter uncovered a group of female writers. However, she neglected the black and lesbian female writers. But soon, the feminist critic discovered their careless omission, and they began to "excavate" the black and lesbian female writers and their works. All in all, in gynocriticism, feminist studies have served to raise the status of many female authors who aremore or less scanted by scholars and critics and to bring into purview other authors who have been largely or entirely overlooked as subjects for serious consideration. Some feminists even have devoted their critical attention especially to the literature written by lesbian writers, or that deals with lesbian relationships in a heterosexual culture. The discovery of the general female writers and their literary works makes the feminist criticism even the whole literary criticism more comprehensive.

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The Theoretical Achievement of Gynocriticism

Idea about "female subculture" Showalter finds that because of the phallic prejudice, the female writers are easily to be submerged in the river of literary history. Then she raised the assumption of "female subculture" which has its own subjects and images. Showalter emphasized, "Gynocritics is related to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized consciousness of women" (Showalter, 1979). Based on the development of female consciousness, Showalter "identified three historical phases of women's literary development: the 'feminine' phase (1840-1880), during which women writers imitated the dominant tradition; the 'feminist' phase (1880-1920), during which women advocated minority rights and protested; and the 'female' phase (1920), during which dependency on opposition —that is, on uncovering misogyny in male texts is being replaced by a rediscovery of women's texts and women" (Guerin, 2004, p. 198). This is also the track of the growth of female subculture. In the first phase, female writers imitated the traditional mode of mainstream culture; in the second phase, female writers began to oppugn these traditional value rules; the third phase is the self-discovering period, female writers began to search their own identity without relying on the opposition with male. The idea about "female subculture" apposes the long time oppression of the female consciousness in the phallic society. This idea also enlightens the later feminist critics to probe into the female aesthetic more comprehensively.

The Theory on “female creativity”.

The mad woman in the attic (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar rebuilt the visage of female literary in the 19th century, and also tried to find out the essence of female creativity—whether it is the female nature or the femininity which is constructed by the social culture. Though the comprehensive study of the brief female writers in the 19th century, Gilbert and Gubar found that the creativity was defined as masculine. Their concept "anxiety of authorship," used to describe nineteenth-century women writers like Harold Bloom's male-applied term "anxiety of influence"—derives from Freud's psychosexual paradigm of the Oedipus complex. If women follow a normative female resolution of the Oedipus complex, the father (the male literary tradition) becomes the object of female desire, and the pre-Oedipal desire for the mother (or her literature) is renounced. Twentieth-century women writers have the option of the "affiliation complex," which allows them to "adopt" literary mothers and to escape the male "belatedness," or the "anxiety of influence" theorized by Bloom, which is in effect a biological imperative forliterary descent from an originatory father. Normative resolution of the Oedipus complex may leave women anxious about the fragility of paternal power, worried about usurping paternal primacy, and fearful of malevengeance. The resulting "masculinist complex" grants autonomy, a new maternal relation, and the creative option of male mimicry—a departure from Freud's negative judgment. However, in 19th century, because of the patriarchal literary creativity, the right of creating female image of female writers' own has been deprived. Then, the female writers must create some "immutable" female images according with the patriarchal standard to meet the masculine yearning. On the contrary, the ideal women quality is hidden in the monstrous figures such as Bertha Rochester, the madwoman in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre.

This figure is a counter-figure to the idealized heroine, but it is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. Based on this, Gibert and Gubar answered the question about female creativity. They deepen the significance of these "madwomen," and treat them as the creative impetus of female writers in the 19th even 20th century. These madwoman or monster repeatedly created by women writers is the author's double, expressing her anxiety, rage, and "schizophrenia of authorship" (Gilbert & Guber, 1979, p. 78). They detect asymmetrical male and female responses to the rise of female literary power. Women have emerged from their liminal position in the attic to wage the battle between the two genders. The contribution of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar is mainly on theoretical level. Their novel way of theoretical research enlightens a lot of feminist critics. Their work stands on the first stage of the change of feminist criticism. At this time, feminist criticism began their real literary and textual analysis.

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10.3 The Quality of Gynocriticism

Compared with French feminist criticism, the gynocriticism was not so thoughtful. However, the quality of gynocritical study is also very significant. That is, their great attention to the real world. They always bear the intention of considering the historical and social elements in their study of literary works in mind. Though we emphasize that feminist criticism should raise their theoretical level, the feminist critics should still carry on this study quality. Only in this way, can feminist criticism develop in the right direction.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct options

1. The Chief pioneers of Gynocriticism is
   (*a*) Elain Showlater (*b*) Virginia Woolf
   (*c*) Simone de Behauvior (*d*) None of these
2. Sexual politics was written by
   (*a*) Kate Millet (*b*) Mary Ellmann (*c*) Juliet Mitchell (*d*) None of these
3. A Room of one's own published in
   (*a*) 1920 (*b*) 1929 (*c*) 1930 (*d*) 1935

10.4 Summary

- Gynocriticism is the transitional period of feminist criticism, especially the Anglo-American feminist criticism.
- This special status entrusts gynocriticism complex study method, object, and quality; also leads abundant theoretical achievement.
- The feminist critics of gynocriticism form their own peculiar study style, and a connecting link between the first phase led by Virginia Woolf and the third phase mixing with psychoanalysis and post-structuralism.
- It has great contribution to the developing of feminist criticism in many aspects. That is what we try to find out in this paper.

10.5 Key-Words

1. Feminist criticism : Feminist criticism seeks on the one hand to investigate and analyze the differing representations of women and men in literary texts and, on the other hand, to rethink literary history by exploring an often marginalized tradition of women's writing. Feminist criticism is concerned to question and challenge conventional notions of masculinity and femininity; to explore ways in which such conventions are inscribed in a largely patriarchal canon; and to consider the extent to which writing, language and even literary form itself are themselves bound up with issues of gender difference.

10.6 Review Questions

1. Discuss of the concept of Gynocriticism.
2. What are the contribution of Grynocriticism? Explain.
3. Explain the theoretical achievement of Gynocriticism.

Notes

Answers: Self–Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*a*) 3. (*b*)

10.7 Further Readings

Books

1. Abrams, M. H. 2004: A glossary of literary terms Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press
2. CHEN Xiao-lan. 1999: Feminist criticism and the interpretation of feminist literature. Lanzhou: Dunhuang Literature and Art Press.(in Chinese)
3. Donovan, Josephine. 1995: Toward women's poetry. CHEN Xiao-lan, trans. Theoretical studies in literature and art, (3). (in Chinese)
4. HU Jing-zhi. 2003: The classic writings of western literature theory. Beijing: Beijing University Press. (in Chinese)
5. Gilbert, Sandra M. & Gubar, Susan. 1979: The madwoman in the attic: The women writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination.New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
6. GU Hong-xi. 1997: Elaine Showalter's contribution to American feminist criticism: One of the reviews of famous Americanfeminists.ournal of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University , (3). (in Chinese) Guerin
7. Wilfred L. 2004: A handbook of critical approaches to literature. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
8. Millett, Kate. 1970: Sexual politics. New York: Ballatine Books.
9. Selden, Raman. 2004: A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.Showalter
10. Elaine. 1985: Towards a feminist poetics, the new feminist criticism: Essays on women, literature and theory. New York:Pantheon Books.

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Unit 11 : Elaine Showalter: Four Models of Feminism in 'Ferminist Criticism in the Wilderness'

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to :

- Analyse Elaine Showalter's 1981 essay, 'Feminine Criticism in the Wilderness' with reference to the position of women teachers and critics vis-a-vis the academy.

Introduction

American theorist Elaine Showalter, born in 1941 studied at Bryn Mawr College, an Ivy League institution and the University of California. As teacher and researcher in English and Women's Studies she has been at various American universities, including Rutgers and Princeton. She has worked on literary history, having published *A Literature of Their Own* : *Women Writers from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) and on the relationship between women's literatures and the women's movement in the United States.

In a 1979 essay, Showalter hijacks a stuffy patriarchal description by Leon Edel of the archetypal American feminist theorist'... an auburn-haired young woman, obviously American, who wore ear-rings and carried an armful of folders and an attache case' (Showalter, 125). Showalter's wry response I think suggests— underneath the comedy — the difficulties of her position.

I suppose we should be grateful that at least one woman ... makes an appearance in this [imaginary] gathering, even if she is not invited to join the debate. I imagine that she is a feminist critic — in fact, if I could afford to take taxis to the British Museum [the site of this gathering] I would think they had perhaps seen me — and it is pleasing to think that while the men stand gossiping in the sun, she is inside hard at work. But these are scant satisfactions when we realise that of all the approaches to English studies current in the 1970's, feminist criticism is the most isolated and the least understood.

First there is the problem of the woman scholar trying to position herself in the academy which is patriarchal in the assumptions it makes and the power-structures through which it deals. A woman-researcher can only seem a caricature to such an academy, a deviation from the norm or an absurd travesty. *Next* there is the way in which such a woman scholar creates space for herself. Showalter begins by inverting assumptions made by patriarchy. Patriarchy depends on the notion that what men do is important. Women either idle or gossip. Showalter stands this idea on its head. ***Then*** there is the problem of an American gate crashing the academy which so far—even as the prescribed

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theorists suggest — has been dominated by Europeans so far. ***Finally*** there is the isolation that suggests how problematic it is for feminist theories to relate to any other critical school (s). Is this isolation enabling or disabling ? It becomes increasingly problematic as feminist theories develop.

I will return to this early essay — 'Towards a Feminist Poetics' but just for now I'd like to make one quick point concerning Showalter. How far or how close do *you* think Showalter is from Woolf's original constituency ?. Perhaps a quick look at the context in which she writes will suggest an answer.

11.1 Social and Cultural Background

11.1.1 The Age

With the end of the Second World War, international political and economic influence had shifted away from Britain — whose Empire was declining. The new superpowers, the United States and the (then) Soviet Union were emerging. The period of the Cold War — the hostility between these two power blocs —followed. This period was punctuated by various crises such as the Berlin Blockade, the Cuban crisis, the Korean and Vietnam wars followed. During this time the American campus life tried to provide sites of alternative culture to the capitalism of the establishment. When the United States military intervened in Vietnam many American campuses became centres of the peace movement and were critical of the government. In 1968, the 'Paris Spring' or the young people's movement across Europe in favour of peace and liberation was echoed by similar movements in American campuses. The 1970's and 1980's saw an explosion in the field of critical theory in American campuses especially with reference to women's writing and to African-American literature. Outside the academy the Women's movement and the Black power movement had begun a long time before this. But within the academy, the theoretical bases of these movements were developed most extensively during the seventies and the eighties, in other words, during the time of a great deal of Showalter's work. This was also the time when the American academy consolidated its response to European challengers in the field of theory. What — if anything — is likely to have been the effect of these pressures on the women's movement and on the question of women's writing ?

11.1.2 Position of Women

Within the academy — and this is primarily Showalter's context — this is a fraught issue. Feminist theories by this time have formulated three central questions around which—by and large — the debate is structured. These are set out most clearly perhaps in Annette Kolodny's 1980 essay 'Dancing Through the Minefield : Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism. I will list the propositions as Kolodny does, and then offer a quick gloss of my own.

1. *Literary history (and with that, the historicity of literature) is a fiction*
2. *Insofar as we are taught to read, what we engage are not texts but paradigms.*
3. *Since the grounds upon which we assign aesthetic value to texts are never infallible, unchangeable, or universal, we must reexamine not only our aesthetics but, as well, the inherent biases and assumptions informing the critical methods which (in part) shape our aesthetic responses.*

In other words, by the time Showalter's prescribed essay is written, the three points established in the American academy concerning feminist theories on which there is general agreement are respectively : feminist theories are about the reconstruction of the canon so as to reclaim a stronghold of patriarchy , the sensitising of readers to paradigms or theoretical models — concealed within texts—based on gender-conditioning , and the role of theory in changing the way in which readers interpret texts. Moreover in terms of bread-and-butter positioning, Women's Studies had by this time become a recognised discipline at American universities. Conferences were being held, journals published, and syllabi framed on feminist theories. What could have been amiss ?

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11.2 The Text

11.2.1 Its Constituency

'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,' it seems to me addresses women and men within the academy — who are anxious about a specific problem. Should feminist theories concern themselves with constructing a common methodology or should they not ? The constituency then is a small specific one comprising literary theorists. Of course not all are feminists. Some are primarily Marxists who prioritise class over other factors when discussing the ways in which books are written. Others may be theorists either from amongst African-Americans or from the developing world who feel their cultural histories are excluded from theoretical work since hitherto this work has been carried out by Caucasian women from the developed world. All share an interest in theory of one kind or another. All are exercised by one central issue. Should feminist theories continue to remain open-ended and refuse to commit themselves to any ***one*** structural framework? The advantage of this ***methodicide*** or 'murder of method' is that it allows feminist theories to retain their ***pluralism*** or spirit of free interpretation which — theorists claim — is the characteristic strength of women's speech over men's. The disadvantage is that by remaining unstructured, feminist theories get marginalised or made unimportant by other, more organised schools of critical theory. The alternative to methodicide is ***methodolatry*** or worship of method. The constituency thus includes theorists whose preferences vary but can be grouped under either of these responses.

11.2.2 Its Thesis and Data

The thesis of this essay is one which Showalter formulates more discursively in the 1979 essay 'Toward a Feminist Poetics,' to which 5.1 alludes. Showalter argues that there are essentially *two* kinds of feminist theory. The *first* concerns itself with the ***woman as reader*** and may be called the ***feminist critique***.

... like other kinds of critique is a historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena. Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions of and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history. It is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience. (Showalter, 128)

The ***second*** concerns itself with the **woman as writer** and may be called ***gynocritics***. It deals with

... woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women. Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and of course, studies of particular writers and works, (ibid.)

Comparing the two modes of theory Showalter writes

The feminist critique is essentially political and polemical, with theoretical affiliations to Marxist sociology and aesthetics; gynocritics is more self-contained and experimental with connections to other modes of new feminist research ....[We may] compare the feminist critique to the Old Testament, 'looking for the sins and errors of the past,' and gynocritics to the New Testament, seeking ' the grace of the imagination.' Both kinds are necessary...for only the Jeremiahs of the feminist critique can lead us out of the 'Egypt of female servitude' to 'the promised land of the feminist vision' (ibid.,129)

Let me suggest an example of these two kinds of writing. Suppose I write an essay 'Stereotypes of women in *Middle march*.' I might discuss Dorothea as a failed theorist, Rosamond as a dumb blonde and Mary Garth as a wise governess. I might go on to speak of them as being prisoners of both class and gender due to the constraints of Victorian society. The essay would be primarily a feminist critique that analysed cultural and aesthetic stereotypes in class-based terms borrowed probably from Marxist theory. Supposed instead my essay were to be titled 'The silencing of George Eliot in *Middlemarch*' I might look at the constraints placed on Eliot by patriarchy : her thwarted attempts to shape a sentence suitable to her needs and so on. I would probably need to

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rely on work done in biological and linguistic criticism. This essay would be closer to ***gynocritics*** which examines the characteristic of a distinctively woman's practice of writing, and would perhaps be called ***gynocentric*** (or woman-centred) as opposed to ***androcentric*** (or male-centred).

The data Showalter uses to support her theory of gynocritics is based on four models. ***Organic or biological*** criticism believes that biological differentiation is fundamental to understanding how women see themselves in relation to society and hence to understanding how they represent themselves in writing. Its strength is its reliance on personal experience, that verges on the confessional. Its weakness is that it promotes exclusionism based on biological difference. ***Linguistic*** criticism examines possible differences in the ways women and men use language, explores reasons for these differences. Its strength is the powerful emotional appeal of the notion of a women's language. Its weakness is that it does not examine whether women and men have equality of opportunity and access to a common language. Thus inadvertently it may perpetuate repression instead of obtaining freedom by examining it. ***Psychoanalytical feminist*** criticism is a model of difference based on the relationship between gender and the creative process. It has a high degree of sensitivity when applied to specific texts, authors and groups of cultures. Its limitation as a theoretical model arises from its inability to explain social, economic or historical processes of change. Showalter therefore vests her faith in a model based on a theory of ***women's culture.*** Theories of biology, language and psyche inform such a theory of culture by suggesting a range of social contexts. Showalter borrows a diagrammatic representation from anthropology to explain the theory of women's culture. Women's culture and men's culture are represented by two intersecting circles with a large area of common experience and two slight crescent-shaped areas of experience. One of these is specific to women and the other is specific to men. Historically women have been the muted (or silenced) group and men the dominant group. Feminist theories (according to Showalter) need to articulate the area specific to women and put this at the centre of women's writing. The consequences promised are (a) a rewriting of cultural and literary history so as to include women, (b) a recreation of the canon and (c) an overhauling of literary classifications based on era and genre.

11.3 Its Contribution

11.3.1 Immediately

Showalter's earlier work had attracted criticism on account of its refusal to take African-American writing into account. Barbara Smith's 'Toward a Black Feminst Criticism' complains about Showalter's persistent ignoring of any non-white female writing. Smith begins by quoting Showalter's sole mention of such writing : 'Furthermore, there are other literary subcultures (African-American novelists, for example) whose history offers a precedent for feminist scholarship to use (Showalter, 172) and goes on to point out that such appropriation — even in the cause of feminist theory — is racist. "The idea of critics like Showalter ***using*** Black literature is chilling, a case of barely disguised cultural imperialism'. In contrast 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' tries to work toward cultural open-endedness in two ways. ***First*** she speaks of two cultures : women and men — as being muted and dominant respectively and thus deliberately avoids the concept of a subculture. In a sense ***all*** women — regardless of race and class comprised the marginalised culture and this common repression makes all women one, in Showalter's cultural model. ***Secondly*** Showalter emphasises that such a gynocentric cultural model must — if it is to work — be able to take into account all the forces — ethnic, academic or economic — so as to 'plot the precise cultural locus of female literary identity'. This gain in cultural sensitivity is, I think, the most apparent impact of Showalter's essay. It makes gynocritics seem to offer a model that can take on board cultural variables and say, it can have a receptivity to feminist theories in the developing world. Nonetheless [see 6.2] it is a claim contested by Indian feminist theorists who feel that gynocritics is too obviously limited by its inheritance of Western cultural imperialism.

11.3.2 Subsequently

How well has gynocritics worn ? Look at the following comment and see what you make of it ...there is a danger that a 'gynocriticism' that emphasises the pathology of women writers' interaction

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with a patriarchal canon (or even a maternal one .... becomes a poetics of suffering and victimisation. We also need to ask ourselves whether there are other more positive ways in which women writers may respond to an intimidating male tradition of misogynistic myths and monstrous women that threatens the creative fire in their heads ? Is there hidden laughter as well as anger, a subversive spirit of feminine mischief able to parody or appropriate or reshape male stories, masculine modes and forms?

The ***problem*** with gynocriticism — as suggested here — is that it can see only one relationship between women's writing and men's writing : that which is adversarial or hostile. **Therefore** gynocriticism is restricted to offering a narrative of suffering in which women are seen always and only as victims. In the process gynocriticism loses the weapon it could have had to hijack the agenda of patriarchy : the weapon of laughter. Think back now to the one of Woolf's essay, from which the element of fun — a woman speaking ***about*** and ***to*** women in a primarily male academy — is never lost. Does Woolf gain or lose, do you think, by putting across theory with a sense of fun? And as a corollary, do you think Showalter's essay becomes more or less profound because it shuts out humour ?

11.4 Possible Application

Keeping these pros and cons in mind, please turn yet again to 'An Introduction' and give it another read. At the centre of the poem is an experience that — biologically and psychologically — is a part of the 'wilderness.' In other words it is part of that crescent-shaped area peculiar to the silenced culture of women. 'When/ I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask ? For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the /Bedroom, and closed the door He did not beat me/ But my sad woman-body felt so beaten./ The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I shrank/ Pitifully.' How much of this central experience can gynocriticism recover ? The notion of woman as sufferer, perhaps can be restored to the articulate world. I should imagine though that a great deal of work on the interplay of ethnic, sexual and economic factors will need to be done, and I wonder how far gynocritics will offer a culturally-sensitive model. What do ***you*** think ?

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct options

1. Elain was born in
   (*a*) 1940 (*b*) 1941 (*c*) 1950 (*d*) 1943
2. Showalter hizacks a stuffy patriarchal description by Leen Edel in
   (*a*) 1979 (*b*) 1965 (*c*) 1985 (*d*) 1980
3. The 'Paris spring' across Europe in favour of peace and liberation was echoed in
   (*a*) 1968 (*b*) 1971 (*c*) 1972 (*d*) 1975
4. Elain Showalter was
   (*a*) German theorist (*b*) American theorist (*c*) French theorist (*d*) Russian theorist

11.5 Summary

- 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' is written at a time when the American campus — a site for alternative or fringe thinking — is increasingly concerned (to all appearances) with Women's Studies. The essay highlights the need for feminist theories to work out a framework they can share. Showalter suggests gynocritics — theories which are centred on the experience of women as writers — as a common factor. She explores biological, linguistic and psychoanalytical models of difference in women's writing and sets them aside in favour of a theory based on a model of women's culture. Arguing that women constitute the muted culture and men the dominant culture, Showalter reminds feminist theorists of the need to keep all cultural phenomena —race, class, the academy and the market in mind — to produce a 'thick' or multi-layered analysis of women's writing. This will enable feminist theorists to sensitively map the wilderness.

Notes

11.6 Key-Words

1. The Old Testament : The Old Testament is associated in this essay with the restrictive practice of the feminist critique. The New Testament is associated in this essay with the more liberating practice of gynocritics. The excitement of the wilderness is due to the excitement of the challenges and 'difference' of women's writing. It is preferred in this essay to the serenity of the Promised Land which is that of the unchallenged, stable canon.

   The body of writings in the Bible about the cultural and spiritual development of Israel before the birth of Jesus. They were guided by a stern and punishing God, the Ten Commandments and the prophets.
2. The wilderness : The desert area in which the Israelites wandered when they were led by Moses from Egypt.
3. Egypt : where they had been slaves to the Egyptians, to...
4. The Promised Land : of Canaan which God gave them for their own country.
5. Jeremiah : A prophet who led Israel and warned them about the birth and ministry of Jesus and the development of the Church. It has a vision of a Loving, compassionate God who is there for all people not only the Israelites.

Answers: Self–Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*a*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*b*)

11.7 Review Questions

1. Analyse the constituency of 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness' and suggest possible ways in which it might have shaped the essay.
2. Evaluate gynocriticism against any one other critical model (discussed by Showalter in this essay) using 'An Introduction' to make the comparison.

11.8 Further Readings

Books

1. Showalter, Elaine (ed.) *The New Feminist Criticism; Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. 1984, repr. London : Virago, 1985.

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Unit 12: Elaine Showalter: Four Models of Feminism in "Feminist Criticism in Wilderness"—Biological and Linguistic Difference

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Examine four models of Feminism.
- Discuss Elaine approach to Feminism.

Introduction

Elaine Showalter is an American literary critic, feminist, and writer on cultural and social issues. She is one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in United States academia, developing the concept and practice of gynocritics.

Best known in academic and popular cultural fields, she has written and edited numerous books and articles focused on a variety of subjects, from feminist literary criticism to fashion, sometimes sparking widespread controversy, especially with her work on illnesses. Showalter has been a television critic for People magazine and a commentator on BBC radio and television.

Showalter is a specialist in Victorian literature and the Fin-de-Siecle (turn of the 19th century). Her most innovative work in this field is in madness and hysteria in literature, specifically in women's writing and in the portrayal of female characters.

She is the Avalon Foundation Professor Emerita. Her academic honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship (1977-78) and a Rockefeller Humanities fellowship (1981-82). She is also the past-president of the Modern Language Association (MLA).

Showalter's best known works are Toward a Feminist Poetics (1979), The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture (1830-1980) (1985), Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle (1990), Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media (1997), and Inventing Herself: Claiming a Feminist Intellectual Heritage (2001). In 2007 Showalter was chair of the judges for the prestigious British literary award, the Man Booker International Prize.

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12.1 Critical Importance

Showalter's book Inventing Herself (2001), a survey of feminist icons, was the culmination of a lengthy interest in communicating the importance of understanding feminist tradition. Showalter's early essays and editorial work in the late 1970s and the 1980s survey the history of the feminist tradition within the "wilderness" of literary theory and criticism. Working in the field of feminist literary theory and criticism, which was just emerging as a serious scholarly pursuit in universities in the 1970s, Showalter's writing reflects a conscious effort to convey the importance of mapping her discipline's past in order to both ground it in substantive theory, and amass a knowledge base that will be able to inform a path for future feminist academic pursuit.

In Toward a Feminist Poetics Showalter traces the history of women's literature, suggesting that it can be divided into three phases:

1. Feminine: In the Feminine phase (1840-1880), "women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female nature" (New, 137).
2. Feminist: The Feminist phase (1880-1920) was characterized by women's writing that protested against male standards and values, and advocated women's rights and values, including a demand for autonomy.
3. Female: The Female phase (1920-) is one of self-discovery. Showalter says, "women reject both imitation and protest-two forms of dependency-and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature" (New, 139).

Rejecting both imitation and protest, Showalter advocated approaching feminist criticism from a cultural perspective in the current Female phase, rather than from perspectives that traditionally come from an androcentric perspective like psychoanalytic and biological theories, for example. Feminists in the past have worked within these traditions by revising and criticizing female representations, or lack thereof, in the male traditions (that is, in the Feminine and Feminist phases). In her essay Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness (1981), Showalter says, "A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space" (New, 260).

Showalter does not advocate replacing psychoanalysis, for example, with cultural anthropology; rather, she suggests that approaching women's writing from a cultural perspective is one among many valid perspectives that will uncover female traditions. However, cultural anthropology and social history are especially fruitful because they "can perhaps offer us a terminology and a diagram of women's cultural situation" (New, 266). Showalter's caveat is that feminist critics must use cultural analyses as ways to understand what women write, rather than to dictate what they ought to write (New, 266).

However isolationist-like Showalter's perspective may sound at first, she does not advocate a separation of the female tradition from the male tradition. She argues that women must work both inside and outside the male tradition simultaneously (New, 264). Showalter says the most constructive approach to future feminist theory and criticism lies in a focus on nurturing a new feminine cultural perspective within a feminist tradition that at the same time exists within the male tradition, but on which it is not dependent and to which it is not answerable.

12.2 Gynocritics

Showalter coined the term 'gynocritics' to describe literary criticism based in a feminine perspective. Probably the best description Showalter gives of gynocritics is in Toward a Feminist Poetics:

In contrast to [an] angry or loving fixation on male literature, the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based

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on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture.

This does not mean that the goal of gynocritics is to erase the differences between male and female writing; gynocritics is not "on a pilgrimage to the promised land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels" (New, 266). Rather gynocritics aims to understand the specificity of women's writing not as a product of sexism but as a fundamental aspect of female reality.

Showalter acknowledges the difficulty of "[d]efining the unique difference of women's writing" which she says is "a slippery and demanding task" in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (New, 249). She says that gynocritics may never succeed in understanding the special differences of women's writing, or realize a distinct female literary tradition. But, with grounding in theory and historical research, Showalter sees gynocriticism as a way to "learn something solid, enduring, and real about the relation of women to literary culture" (New, 249). She stresses heavily the need to free "ourselves from the lineal absolute of male literary history". That is going to be the point where gynocritics make a beginning.

12.3 Criticism and Controversy

Feminist Theory and Criticism

Duke-University based Toril Moi, in her 1985 book Sexual/Textual Politics, accused Showalter of having a limited, essentialist view of women. Moi particularly criticized Showalter's ideas regarding the Female phase, and its notions of a woman's singular autonomy and necessary search inward for a female identity. In a predominantly poststructuralist era that proposes that meaning is contextual and historical, and that identity is socially and linguistically constructed, Moi claimed that there is no fundamental female self.

According to Moi, the problem of equality in literary theory does not lie in the fact that the literary canon is fundamentally male and unrepresentative of female tradition, rather the problem lies in the fact that a canon exists at all. Moi argues that a feminine literary canon would be no less oppressive than the male canon because it would necessarily represent a particular socio demographic class of woman; it could not possibly represent all women because female tradition is drastically different depending on class, ethnicity, social values, sexuality, etc. A female consciousness cannot exist for the same reasons. Moi objects to what she sees as an essentialist position - that is, she objects to any determination of identity based on gender. Moi's criticism was influential as part of a larger debate between essentialist and postmodern feminist theorists at the time.

Hysteria and "Modern" Illnessess

Showalter's controversial take on illnesses such as dissociative identity disorder (formerly called multiple personality disorder), Gulf War syndrome and chronic fatigue syndrome in her book Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media (1997) has angered some in the health profession and many who suffer from these illnesses. Writing in the New York Times, psychologist Carol Tavris commented that "In the absence of medical certainty, the belief that all such symptoms are psychological in origin is no improvement over the belief that none of them are."[2] Showalter (who has no formal medical training) admits to receiving hate mail, but has not been deterred from her position that these conditions are contemporary manifestations of hysteria. [1]

Popular Culture

Showalter also came up against criticism in the late 1990s for some of her writing on popular culture that appeared in magazines like People and Vogue. Deirdre English, in the American magazine The Nation, wrote:

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As the post structuralist critique of identity politics took hold over the following decade and more, it became unfashionable, in ideas and in dress, it seemed, for the avant-garde of the female professoriate to identify with either men or women.

English quotes Showalter's controversial 1997 Vogue article:

"From Mary Wollstonecraft to Naomi Wolf, feminism has often taken a hard line on fashion, shopping, and the whole beauty Monty.... But for those of us sisters hiding Welcome to Your Facelift inside The Second Sex, a passion for fashion can sometimes seem a shameful secret life.... I think it's time I came out of the closet."

Showalter was reportedly severely criticized by her academic colleagues for her stance in favour of patriarchal symbols of consumer capitalism and traditional femininity. Showalter's rejoinder was: "We needn't fall into postmodern apocalyptic despair about the futility of political action or the impossibility of theoretical correctness as a pre-condition for action" (English).

Academic Teaching

Teaching Literature (2006) was widely and positively reviewed, especially in the American journal Pedagogy, which gave it three review-essays and called it "the book we wish we had in our backpacks when we started teaching." It was also harshly criticized by John Rouse in his review of the book. Rouse lambasted Showalter for what he sees as her "banal" suggestions and mocks that she describes her revelation that literature should be taught as performance, as a "discovery." Rouse nevertheless gives her credit, albeit condescendingly, for attempting to make literature "more attractive to undergraduates." Ultimately Rouse criticizes Showalter's approach to teaching literature: "the work will be flayed, filleted, and displayed as another specimen of the genre."

12.4 Summaries of Major Works

Showalter's Ph.D. thesis is called The Double Critical Standard: Criticism of Women Writers in England, 1845-1880 (1969) and was later turned into the book A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (1978), which contains a lengthy and much-discussed chapter on Virginia Woolf.

The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980 (1985) discusses hysteria, which was once known as the "female malady" and according to Showalter, is called depression today. Showalter demonstrates how cultural ideas about proper feminine behaviour have shaped the definition and treatment of female insanity from the Victorian era to the present.

Sexual Anarchy: Gender at Culture at the Fin de Siecle (1990) outlines a history of the sexes and the crises, themes, and problems associated with the battle for sexual supremacy and identity.

In the 1990s, Showalter began writing for popular magazines, bringing her work further into the public sphere than it ever had been during her academic career. Showalter was the television critic for People magazine in 1996. She explains her impetus to do popular cultural work: "I've always really loved popular culture, but it wasn't something serious intellectuals were supposed to be concerned about. … I would like to be able to bring my background and my skills to subjects that do reach a wide audience" (Plett).

In Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media (1997) Showalter argues that hysteria, a medical condition traditionally seen as feminine, has persisted for centuries and is now manifesting itself in cultural phenomena in the forms of socially and medically accepted maladies. Psychological and physical effects of unhappy lives become "hysterical epidemics" when popular media saturate the public with paranoid reports and findings, essentially legitimizing, as Showalter calls them, "imaginary illnesses" (Hystories, cover). Showalter says "Hysteria is part of everyday life. It not only survives in the 1990s, but it is more contagious than in the past. Newspapers, magazines, talk shows, self-help books, and of course the Internet ensure that ideas, once planted, manifest themselves internationally as symptoms" (Plett). This view has caused Showalter to be criticized by patient's rights groups and medical practitioners, who argue that Showalter, with no formal medical training, is not qualified to make this determination.

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Inventing Herself: Claiming a Feminist Intellectual Heritage (2001) surveys feminist icons since the 18th century, situated mostly in the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Showalter covers the contributions of predominately intellectuals like Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Camille Paglia. Noting popular media's importance to the perception of women and feminism today, Showalter also discusses the contributions of popular personalities like Oprah Winfrey and Princess Diana.

Teaching Literature (2003) is essentially a guide to teaching English literature to undergraduate students in university. Showalter covers approaches to teaching theory, preparing syllabi and talking about taboo subjects among many other practical topics. Showalter says that teaching should be taken as seriously and given as much intellectual consideration as scholarship.

Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents (2005) is a study of the Anglo-American academic novel from the 1950s to the present.

A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx (2009) makes a claim for a literary tradition of American women writers.

12.5 Showalter's Feminist Critique and Gynocriticism

Reading Showalter's essay "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" for the second time was really very useful and enjoyable for me. It enabled me to understand the core ideas of this essay more comprehensively. Not only this essay, but also Showalter's preceding essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics" (1979). I like Showalter, she is my favorite American feminist critic. I enjoy her writings about theory and pedagogy. Most of times I found her writings clear, persuasive, informative and creative. While I was rereading the essay, I started to recall many thoughts about Showalter's gynocriticism. I said what about developing these thoughts into a reading response, and I hope this will work.

First, let start with defining Showalter's gynocriticism: it's a term adapted by Showalter for the first time in her essay "Toward a Feminist poetics". This term stands for the study of female literary texts by female critics. It's the study of the themes, language, styles, historical backgrounds, and structures of literature by women. Gynocriticism has two important aims: the first, is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, the second, is to develop new models which depend on the study of the female experience, rather than to apply male models, texts and theories. According to Showalter, the departure point of gynocriticism is feminists' freedom from the impact of male literary history.

But before defining gynocrtiticism Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct types: feminist critique and gynocriticism. She defines feminist critique as this sort of literary criticism which is concerned with women as readers and consumers of male literature. The main aim of this criticism is to depict how women were presented in male-produced literature. From here, we can safely say that feminist critique and the Image of Women criticism are the same. But this sort of criticism does not satisfy Showalter's hopes and ambitions about feminist criticism, simply because she believes that feminist criticism should move towards the establishment of an especially female tradition of writing . Feminists should stop searching for how women were depicted in male-produced literature because by doing this feminists are just knowing how men want women to be, not how women want themselves to be. Showlater is calling for a female autonomy which depicts women's own experiences and feelings. After proving that women have a literature of their own, to recall Showalter's sentence, through the process of rediscovering lost or neglected texts written by women, it became a must for feminists to start constructing a female-oriented literary criticism. So that, and as a natural result, comes Showalter's call for applying the second type of feminist criticism which is gynocriticism. It's the criticism which is concerned with woman as a writer and producer of literary texts. Showalter calls for applying gynocriticism because she believes that it stands in contrast to the feminist critique's loyalty and celebration of male texts. She emphasizes gynocriticism as a more useful approach to feminist criticism than feminist critique.

Let us move to what some other feminist critics think about gynocriticism. Some of them consider practicing gynocriticism to be more influential not only because it concentrates on female-produced

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literature, but also because it heirs them avoid the problem of tension between their interpretative approach and the question of aesthetics. When dealing with a male writer feminists face a problem of resolving the tension of the ethics of his literary text. In fact, this tension between the aesthetic and moral or political dimensions of texts has been a central problem to the practitioners of the school of Image of Women criticism. Let us take Josephine Donovan as an example. When discussing Faulkner's Light in August, Donovan states that she appreciates the formal elements of this text. She asserts that the work is really magnificent, but she can not bear the huge rank of misogynism and racism in this text. This made it impossible for her, as a feminist, to accept the ethics of this text. From Donovan's view we came to know that any literary work written by males which carries any sort of misogynism or racism should not be treated by feminists; simply because if they did this would be an undeclared approval of these themes which are against feminism.

But the existence of problems should not prevent us from declaring the importance of Images of Women criticism. Its major importance reveals itself when reading Kate Millett's Sexual Politics, Mary Ellmann's Thinking about Women, among others. Those feminists tried seriously to deconstruct androcentrism, and made both women and men think of literature in different terms through establishing a feminist interpretation for the first time. This interpretation became the basis for feminist criticism.

I agree with Showalter that gynocriticism is more influential than feminist critique, but I do not agree that the second is less important than the first. Because the importance of both gynocriticism and feminist critique, or the Image of Woman critique, relates much to the stage where each activity should be used and applied. For example, the initial stage of feminist criticism needs a sort of deconstructing any kind of misogyny against women in literary work by men. Once feminists deconstructed it, they need to move on to a new stage, a stage which becomes a must especially after the rediscovery of many women writings.

Through reading Showalter's two complementary essays: "Toward a Feminist Poetics" (1979), and "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (1981), it's important to know that practicing gynocriticism, through celebrating women writings, does not mean to abandon men's forever, or to stop reading men's writings. We know, very well, how feminists fought to include women writings into the literary canon. But is the process of including enough? Or do feminists need to analyze these texts, exactly as they did with men's writings.

12.6 Biological and Linguistic Difference

Pluralism and the Feminist Critique

In a splendidly witty dialogue of 1975, Carolyn Heilbrun and Catharine Stimpson identified two poles of feminist literary criticism. The first of these modes, righteous, angry, and admonitory, they compared to the Old Testament, "looking for the sins and errors of the past." The second mode, disinterested and seeking "the grace of imagination," they compared to the New Testament. Both are necessary, they concluded, for only the Jeremiahs of ideology can lead us out of the "Egypt of female servitude" to the promised land of humanism. Matthew Arnold also thought that literary critics might perish in the wilderness before they reached the promised land of disinterestedness; Heilbrun and Stimpson were neo-Arnoldian as befitted members of the Columbia and Barnard faculties. But if, in 1981, feminist literary critics are still wandering in the wilderness, we are in good company; for, as Geoffrey Hartman tells us, all criticism is in the wilderness. Feminist critics may be startled to find ourselves in this band of theoretical pioneers, since in the American literary tradition the wilderness has been an exclusively masculine domain. Yet between feminist ideology and the liberal ideal of disinterestedness lies the wilderness of theory, which we too must make our home.

Women have no wilderness in them, they are provident instead content in the tight not cell of their hearts. To eat dusty bread. **—Louise Bogan, "Women"**

Until very recently, feminist criticism has not had a theoretical basis; it has been an empirical orphan in the theoretical storm. In 1975, I was persuaded that no theoretical manifesto could adequately account for the varied methodologies and ideologies which called themselves feminist reading or writing. By the next year, Annette Kolodny had added her observation that feminist

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literary criticism appeared "more like a set of interchangeable strategies than any coherent school or shared goal orientation." Since then, the expressed goals have not been notably unified. Black critics protest the "massive silence" of feminist criticism about black and Third-World women writers and call for a black feminist aesthetic that would deal with both racial and sexual politics. Marxist feminists wish to focus on class along with gender as a crucial determinant of literary production. Literary historians want to uncover a lost tradition. Critics trained in deconstructionist methodologies wish to "synthesize a literary criticism that is both textual and feminist." Freudian and Lacanian critics want to theorize about women's relationship to language and signification.

An early obstacle to constructing a theoretical framework for feminist criticism was the unwillingness of many women to limit or bound an expressive and dynamic enterprise. The openness of feminist criticism appealed particularly to Americans who perceived the structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist debates of the 1970s as arid and falsely objective, the epitome of a pernicious masculine discourse from which many feminists wished to escape. Recalling in A Room of One's Own how she had been prohibited from entering the university library, the symbolic sanctuary of the male *logos*, Virginia Woolf wisely observed that while it is "unpleasant to be locked out ... it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in." Advocates of the antitheoretical position traced their descent from Woolf and from other feminist visionaries, such as Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich, and Marguerite Duras, who had satirized the sterile narcissism of male scholarship and celebrated women's fortunate exclusion from its patriarchal methodolatry. Thus for some, feminist criticism was an act of resistance to theory, a confrontation with existing canons and judgments, what Josephine Donovan calls "a mode of negation within a fundamental dialectic." As Judith Fetterley declared in her book, *The Resisting Reader*, feminist criticism has been characterized by "a resistance to codification and a refusal to have its parameters prematurely set." I have discussed elsewhere, with considerable sympathy, the suspicion of monolithic systems and the rejection of scientism in literary study that many feminist critics have voiced. While scientific criticism struggled to purge itself of the subjective, feminist criticism reasserted the authority of experience.

Yet it now appears that what looked like a theoretical impasse was actually an evolutionary phase. The ethics of awakening have been succeeded, at least in the universities, by a second stage characterized by anxiety about the isolation of feminist criticism from a critical community increasingly theoretical in its interests and indifferent to women's writing. The question of how feminist criticism should define itself with relation to the new critical theories and theorists has occasioned sharp debate in Europe and the United States. Nina Auerbach has noted the absence of dialogue and asks whether feminist criticism itself must accept responsibility:

> Feminist critics seem particularly reluctant to define themselves to the uninitiated. There is a sense in which our sisterhood has become too powerful; as a school, our belief in ourself is so potent that we decline communication with the networks of power and respectability we say we want to change.

But rather than declining communication with these networks, feminist criticism has indeed spoken directly to them, in their own media: PMLA, Diacritics, Glyph, Tel Quel, New Literary History, and Critical Inquiry. For the feminist critic seeking clarification, the proliferation of communiques may itself prove confusing.

There are two distinct modes of feminist criticism, and to conflate them (as most commentators do) is to remain permanently bemused by their theoretical potentialities. The first mode is ideological; it is concerned with the feminist as reader, and it offers feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-assign in semiotic systems. This is not all feminist reading can do; it can be a liberating intellectual act, as Adrienne Rich proposes:

> A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh.

This invigorating encounter with literature, which I will call feminist reading or the feminist critique, is in essence a mode of interpretation, one of many which any complex text will

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accommodate and permit. It is very difficult to propose theoretical coherence in an activity which by its nature is so eclectic and wide-ranging, although as a critical practice feminist reading has certainly been very influential. But in the free play of the interpretive field, the feminist critique can only compete with alternative readings, all of which have the built-in obsolescence of Buicks, cast away as newer readings take their place. As Kolodny, the most sophisticated theorist of feminist interpretation, has conceded:

> All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts; and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it. In the process, she claims neither definitiveness nor structural completeness for her different readings and reading systems, but only their usefulness in recognizing the particular achievements of woman-as-author and their applicability in conscientiously decoding woman-as-sign.

Rather than being discouraged by these limited objectives, Kolodny found them the happy cause of the "playful pluralism" of feminist critical theory, a pluralism which she believes to be "the only critical stance consistent with the current status of the larger women's movement." Her feminist critic dances adroitly through the theoretical minefield.

Keenly aware of the political issues involved and presenting brilliant arguments, Kolodny nonetheless fails to convince me that feminist criticism must altogether abandon its hope "of establishing some basic conceptual model." If we see our critical job as interpretation and reinterpretation, we must be content with pluralism as our critical stance. But if we wish to ask questions about the process and the contexts of writing, if we genuinely wish to define ourselves to the uninitiated, we cannot rule out the prospect of theoretical consensus at this early stage.

All feminist criticism is in some sense revisionist, questioning the adequacy of accepted conceptual structures, and indeed most contemporary American criticism claims to be revisionist too. The most exciting and comprehensive case for this "revisionary imperative" is made by Sandra Gilbert: at its most ambitious, she asserts, feminist criticism "wants to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connections between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychosexual identity and cultural authority."" But in practice, the revisionary feminist critique is redressing a grievance and is built upon existing models. No one would deny that feminist criticism has affinities to other contemporary critical practices and methodologies and that the best work is also the most fully informed. Nonetheless, the feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing, or even attacking male critical theory keeps us dependent upon it and retards our progress in solving our own theoretical problems. What I mean here by "male critical theory" is a concept of creativity, literary history, or literary interpretation based entirely on male experience and put forward as universal. So long as we look to androcentric models for our most basic principles—even if we revise them by adding the feminist frame of reference-we are learning nothing new. And when the process is so one-sided, when male critics boast of their ignorance of feminist criticism, it is disheartening to find feminist critics still anxious for approval from the "white fathers" who will not listen or reply. Some feminist critics have taken upon themselves a revisionism which becomes a kind of homage; they have made Lacan the ladies' man of Diacritics and have forced Pierre Macherey into those dark alleys of the psyche where Engels feared to tread. According to Christiane Makward, the problem is even more serious in France than in the United States: "If neofeminist thought in France seems to have ground to a halt," she writes, "it is because it has continued to feed on the discourse of the masters."

It is time for feminist criticism to decide whether between religion and revision we can claim any firm theoretical ground of our own. In calling for a feminist criticism that is genuinely women centered, independent, and intellectually coherent, I do not mean to endorse the separatist fantasies of radical feminist visionaries or to exlude from our critical practice a variety of intellectual tools. But we need to ask much more searchingly what we want to know and how we can find answers to the questions that come from our experience. I do not think that feminist criticism can find a usable past in the androcentric critical tradition. It has more to learn from women's studies than from English studies, more to learn from international feminist theory than from another seminar

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on the masters. It must find its own subject, its own system, its own theory, and its own voice. As Rich writes of Emily Dickinson, in her poem "I Am in Danger-Sir-," we must choose to have the argument out at last on our own premises.

Defining the Feminine: Gynocritics and the Woman's Text

A woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine. **—Virginia Woolf**

It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice will never be theorized, enclosed, encoded-which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

—Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"

In the past decade, I believe, this process of defining the feminine has started to take place. Feminist criticism has gradually shifted its center from revisionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as *writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialized critical discourse, and so I have invented the term "gynocritics." Unlike the feminist critique, gynocritics offers many theoretical opportunities. To see women's writing as our primary subject forces us to make the leap to a new conceptual vantage point and to redefine the nature of the theoretical problem before us. It is no longer the ideological dilemma of reconciling revisionary pluralisms but the essential question of difference. How can we constitute women as a distinct literary group? What is *the difference* of women's writing?

Patricia Meyer Spacks, I think, was the first academic critic to notice this shift from an androcentric to a gynocentric feminist criticism. In *The Female Imagination* (1975), she pointed out that few feminist theorists had concerned themselves with women's writing. Simone de Beauvoir's treatment of women writers in *The Second Sex* "always suggests an a priori tendency to take them less seriously than their masculine counterparts"; Mary Ellmann, in *Thinking about Women*, characterized women's literary success as escape from the categories of womanhood; and, according to Spacks, Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics*, "has little interest in woman imaginative writers."[3] Spacks' wide-ranging study inaugurated a new period of feminist literary history and criticism which asked, again and again, how women's writing had been different, how womanhood itself shaped women's creative expression. In such books as Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976), my own A *Literature of Their Own* (1977), Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction* (1978), Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and Margaret Homans' *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (1980), and in hundreds of essays and papers, women's writing asserted itself as the central project of feminist literary study.

This shift in emphasis has also taken place in European feminist criticism. To date, most commentary on French feminist critical discourse has stressed its fundamental dissimilarity from the empirical American orientation, its unfamiliar intellectual grounding in linguistics, Marxism, neo-Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Derridean deconstruction. Despite these differences, however, the new French feminisms have much in common with radical American feminist theories in terms of intellectual affiliations and rhetorical energies. The concept of *ecriturefeminine*, the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text, is a significant theoretical formulation in French feminist criticism, although it describes a Utopian possibility rather than a literary practice. Helene Cixous, one of the leading advocates of ecriture feminine, has admitted that, with only a few exceptions, "there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity," and Nancy Miller explains that *ecriture feminine* "privileges a textuality of the avantgarde, a literary production of the late twentieth century, and it is therefore fundamentally a hope, if not a blueprint, for the future."' Nonetheless, the concept of *ecriture feminine* provides a way of talking about women's writing which reasserts the value of the feminine and identifies the theoretical project of feminist criticism as the analysis of difference. In recent years, the translations of important work by Julia Kristeva, Cixous, and Luce Irigaray and the excellent collection *New French Feminisms* have made French criticism much more accessible to American feminist scholars.

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English feminist criticism, which incorporates French feminist and Marxist theory but is more traditionally oriented to textual interpretation, is also moving toward a focus on women's writing. The emphasis in each country falls somewhat differently: English feminist criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression; French feminist criticism, essentially psychoanalytic, stresses repression; American feminist criticism, essentially textual, stresses expression. All, however, have become gynocentric. All are struggling to find a terminology that can rescue the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority.

Defining the unique difference of women's writing, as Woolf and Cixous have warned, must present a slippery and demanding task. Is difference a matter of style? Genre? Experience? Or is it produced by the reading process, as some textual critics would maintain? Spacks calls the difference of women's writing a "delicate divergency," testifying to the subtle and elusive nature of the feminine practice of writing. Yet the delicate divergency of the woman's text challenges us to respond with equal delicacy and precision to the small but crucial deviations, the cumulative weightings of experience and exclusion, that have marked the history of women's writing. Before we can chart this history, we must uncover it, patiently and scrupulously; our theories must be firmly grounded in reading and research. But we have the opportunity, through gynocritics, to learn something solid, enduring, and real about the relation of women to literary culture.

Theories of women's writing presently make use of four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural. Each is an effort to define and differentiate the qualities of the woman writer and the woman's text; each model also represents a school of gynocentric feminist criticism with its own favorite texts, styles, and methods. They overlap but are roughly sequential in that each incorporates the one before. I shall try now to sort out the various terminologies and assumptions of these four models of difference and evaluate their usefulness.

Women's Writing and Woman's Body

Organic or biological criticism is the most extreme statement of gender difference, of a text indelibly marked by the body: anatomy is textuality. Biological criticism is also one of the most sibylline and perplexing theoretical formulations of feminist criticism. Simply to invoke anatomy risks a return to the crude essentialism, the phallic and ovarian theories of art, that oppressed women in the past. Victorian physicians believed that women's physiological functions diverted about twenty percent of their creative energy from brain activity. Victorian anthropologists believed that the frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus that women were inferior in intelligence.

> More body, hence more writing. **—Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"**

While feminist criticism rejects the attribution of literal biological inferiority, some theorists seem to have accepted the metaphorical implications of female biological difference in writing. In The Madwoman in the Attic, for example, Gilbert and Gubar structure their analysis of women's writing around metaphors of literary paternity. "In patriarchal western culture," they maintain, ". .. the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis." Lacking phallic authority, they go on to suggest, women's writing is profoundly marked by the anxieties of this difference: "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, from what organ can females generate texts?"

To this rhetorical question Gilbert and Gubar offer no reply; but it is a serious question of much feminist theoretical discourse. Those critics who, like myself, would protest the fundamental analogy might reply that women generate texts from the brain or that the word-processor of the near future, with its compactly coded microchips, its inputs and outputs, is a metaphorical womb. The metaphor of literary paternity, as Auerbach has pointed out in her review of *The Madwoman*, ignores "an equally timeless and, for me, even more oppressive metaphorical equation between literary creativity and childbirth." Certainly metaphors of literary *maternity* predominated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the process of literary creation is analogically much more similar to gestation, labor, and delivery than it is to insemination. Describing Thackeray's plan for

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Henry Esmond, for example, Douglas Jerrold jovially remarked, "You have heard, I suppose, that Thackeray is big with twenty parts, and unless he is wrong in his time, expects the first installment at Christmas." (If to write is metaphorically to give birth, from what organ can males generate texts?)

Some radical feminist critics, primarily in France but also in the United States, insist that we must read these metaphors as more than playful; that we must seriously rethink and redefine biological differentiation and its relation to women's unity. They argue that "women's writing proceeds from the body, that our sexual differentiation is also our source." In Of *Woman Born*, Rich explains her belief that

> female biology . . . has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its own narrow specifications. The feminist vision has recoiled from female biology for these reasons; it will, I believe, come to view our physicality as a resource rather than a destiny. In order to live a fully human life, we require not only *control* of our bodies... we must touch the unity and resonance of our physicality, the corporeal ground of our intelligence.

Feminist criticism written in the biological perspective generally stresses the importance of the body as a source of imagery. Alicia Ostriker, for example, argues that contemporary American women poets use a franker, more pervasive anatomical imagery than their male counterparts and that this insistent body language refuses the spurious transcendence that comes at the price of denying the flesh. In a fascinating essay on Whitman and Dickinson, Terence Diggory shows that physical nakedness, so potent a poetic symbol of authenticity for Whitman and other male poets, had very different connotations for Dickinson and her successors, who associated nakedness with the objectified or sexually exploited female nude and who chose instead protective images of the armored self.

Feminist criticism which itself tries to be biological, to write from the critic's body, has been intimate, confessional, often innovative in style and form. Rachel Blau DuPlessis' "Washing Blood," the introduction to a special issue of *Feminist Studies* on the subject of motherhood, proceeds, in short lyrical paragraphs, to describe her own experience in adopting a child, to recount her dreams and nightmares, and to meditate upon the "healing unification of body and mind based not only on the lived experiences of motherhood as a social institution ... but also on a biological power speaking through us." Such criticism makes itself defiantly vulnerable, virtually bares its throat to the knife, since our professional taboos against self-revelation are so strong. When it succeeds, however, it achieves the power and the dignity of art. Its existence is an implicit rebuke to women critics who continue to write, according to Rich, "from somewhere outside their female bodies." In comparison to this flowing confessional criticism, the tight-lipped Olympian intelligence of such texts as Elizabeth Hardwick's *Seduction and Betrayal* or Susan Sontag's Illness as Metaphor can seem arid and strained.

Yet in its obsessions with the "corporeal ground of our intelligence," feminist biocriticism can also become cruelly prescriptive. There is a sense in which the exhibition of bloody wounds becomes an initiation ritual quite separate and disconnected from critical insight. And as the editors of the journal *Questions feministes* point out, "it is ... dangerous to place the body at the center of a search for female identity .... The themes of otherness and of the Body merge together, because the most visible difference between men and women, and the only one we know for sure to be permanent . . . is indeed the difference in body. This difference has been used as a pretext to 'justify' full power of one sex over the other" (trans. Yvonne Rochette-Ozzello, NFF). The study of biological imagery in women's writing is useful and important as long as we understand that factors other than anatomy are involved in it. Ideas about the body are fundamental to understanding how women conceptualize their situation in society; but there can be no expression of the body which is unmediated by linguistic, social, and literary structures. The difference of woman's literary practice, therefore, must be sought (in Miller's words) in "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body."

Women's Writing and Women's Language

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> The women say, the language you speak poisons your glottis tongue palate lips. They say, the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you. They say, the language you speak is made up of signs that rightly speaking designate what men have appropriated.
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> **—Monique Wittig, Les Guerilleres**

Linguistic and textual theories of women's writing ask whether men and women use language differently; whether sex differences in language use can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization, or culture; whether women can create new languages of their own; and whether speaking, reading, and writing are all gender marked. American, French, and British feminist critics have all drawn attention to the philosophical, linguistic, and practical problems of women's use of language, and the debate over language is one of the most exciting areas in gynocritics. Poets and writers have led the attack on what Rich calls "the oppressor's language," a language sometimes criticized as sexist, sometimes as abstract. But the problem goes well beyond reformist efforts to purge language of its sexist aspects. As Nelly Furman explains, "It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity, which in turn allow us to comprehend the world around us. Male-centered categorizations predominate in American English and subtly shape our understanding and perception of reality; this is why attention is increasingly directed to the inherently oppressive aspects for women of a male-constructed language system." According to Carolyn Burke, the language system is at the center of French feminist theory:

> The central issue in much recent women's writing in France is to find and use an appropriate female language. Language is the place to begin: a prise de conscience must be followed by a prise de la parole.... In this view, the very forms of the dominant mode of discourse show the mark of the dominant masculine ideology. Hence, when a woman writes or speaks herself into existence, she is forced to speak in something like a foreign tongue, a language with which she may be personally uncomfortable.

Many French feminists advocate a revolutionary linguism, an oral break from the dictatorship of patriarchal speech. Annie Leclerc, in *Parole de femme*, calls on women "to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue" (trans. Courtivron, NFF, p. 179). Chantal Chawaf, in an essay on "La chair linguistique," connects biofeminism and linguism in the view that women's language and a genuinely feminine practice of writing will articulate the body:

In order to reconnect the book with the body and with pleasure, we must disintellectualize writing.... And this language, as it develops, will not degenerate and dry up, will not go back to the fleshless academicism, the stereotypical and servile discourses that we reject. . . Feminine language must, by its very nature, work on life passionately, scientifically, poetically, politically in order to make it invulnerable.

But scholars who want a women's language that is intellectual and theoretical, that works inside the academy, are faced with what seems like an impossible paradox, as Xaviere Gauthier has lamented: "As long as women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process. But, if they begin to speak and write as *men do*, they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt" (trans. Marilyn A. August, NFF, pp. 162-63). What we need, Mary Jacobus has proposed, is a women's writing that works within "male" discourse but works "ceaselessly to deconstruct it: to write what cannot be written," and according to Shoshana Felman, "the challenge facing the woman today is nothing less than to 'reinvent' language,... to speak not only against, but outside of the specular phallogocentric structure, to establish a discourse the status of which would no longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning."

Beyond rhetoric, what can linguistic, historical, and anthropological research tell us about the prospects for a women's language? First of all, the concept of a women's language is not original

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with feminist criticism; it is very ancient and appears frequently in folklore and myth. In such myths, the essence of women's language is its secrecy; what is really being described is the male fantasy of the enigmatic nature of the feminine. Herodotus, for example, reported that the Amazons were able linguists who easily mastered the languages of their male antagonists, although men could never learn the women's tongue. In The White Goddess, Robert Graves romantically argues that a women's language existed in a matriarchal stage of prehistory; after a great battle of the sexes, the matriarchy was overthrown and the women's language went underground, to survive in the mysterious cults of Eleusis and Corinth and the witch covens of Western Europe. Travelers and missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought back accounts of "women's languages" among American Indians, Africans, and Asians (the differences in linguistic structure they reported were usually superficial). There is some ethnographic evidence that in certain cultures women have evolved a private form of communication out of their need to resist the silence imposed upon them in public life. In ecstatic religions, for example, women, more frequently than men, speak in tongues, a phenomenon attributed by anthropologists to their relative inarticulateness in formal religious discourse. But such ritualized and unintelligible female "languages" are scarcely cause for rejoicing; indeed, it was because witches were suspected of esoteric knowledge and possessed speech that they were burned.

From a political perspective, there are interesting parallels between the feminist problem of a women's language and the recurring "language issue" in the general history of decolonization. After a revolution, a new state must decide which language to make official: the language that is "psychologically immediate," that allows "the kind of force that speaking one's mother tongue permits"; or the language that "is an avenue to the wider community of modern culture," a community to whose movements of thought only "foreign" languages can give access. The language issue in feminist criticism has emerged, in a sense, after our revolution, and it reveals the tensions in the women's movement between those who would stay outside the academic establishments and the institutions of criticism and those who would enter and even conquer them.

The advocacy of a women's language is thus a political gesture that also carries tremendous emotional force. But despite its unifying appeal, the concept of a women's language is riddled with difficulties. Unlike Welsh, Breton, Swahili, or Amharic, that is, languages of minority or colonized groups, there is no mother tongue, no genderlect spoken by the female population in a society, which differs significantly from the dominant language. English and American linguists agree that "there is absolutely no evidence that would suggest the sexes are pre-programmed to develop structurally different linguistic systems." Furthermore, the many specific differences in male and female speech, intonation, and language use that have been identified cannot be explained in terms of "two separate sex-specific languages" but need to be considered instead in terms of styles, strategies, and contexts of linguistic performance. Efforts at quantitative analysis of language in texts by men or women, such as Mary Hiatt's computerized study of contemporary fiction, *The Way Women Write* (1977), can easily be attacked for treating words apart from their meanings and purposes. At a higher level, analyses which look for "feminine style" in the repetition of stylistic devices, image patterns, and syntax in women's writing tend to confuse innate forms with the overdetermined results of literary choice. Language and style are never raw and instinctual but are always the products of innumerable factors, of genre, tradition, memory, and context.

The appropriate task for feminist criticism, I believe, is to concentrate on women's access to language, on the available lexical range from which words can be selected, on the ideological and cultural determinants of expression. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution. In a series of drafts for a lecture on women's writing (drafts which she discarded or suppressed), Woolf protested against the censorship which cut off female access to language. Comparing herself to Joyce, Woolf noted the differences between their verbal territories: "Now men are shocked if a woman says what she feels (as Joyce does). Yet literature which is always pulling down blinds is not literature. All that we have ought to be expressed-mind and body-a process of incredible difficulty and danger."

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"All that we have ought to be expressed—mind and body." Rather than wishing to limit women's linguistic range, we must fight to open and extend it. The holes in discourse, the blanks and gaps and silences, are not the spaces where female consciousness reveals itself but the blinds of a "prison-house of language." Women's literature is still haunted by the ghosts of repressed language, and until we have exorcised those ghosts, it ought not to be in language that we base our theory of difference.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

(*i*) 'Toward a Feminist Poetics was published' in ..... .

(*a*) 1979 (*b*) 1980

(*c*) 1975 (*d*) 1978

(*ii*) The term 'Gynocritics' coined by ..... .

(*a*) Woff (*b*) Showalter

(*c*) Perkins (*d*) none of these

(*iii*) Feminist criticism in the Wilderness was published in ..... .

(*a*) 1981 (*b*) 1979

(*c*) 1980 (*d*) 1982

12.7 Summary

- Until very recently, feminist criticism has not had a theoretical basis; it has been an empirical orphan in the theoretical storm. In 1975, I was persuaded that no theoretical manifesto could adequately account for the varied methodologies and ideologies which called themselves feminist reading or writing. By the next year, Annette Kolodny had added her observation that feminist literary criticism appeared "more like a set of interchangeable strategies than any coherent school or shared goal orientation."
- There are two distinct modes of feminist criticism, and to conflate them (as most commentators do) is to remain permanently bemused by their theoretical potentialities. The first mode is ideological; it is concerned with the feminist as reader, and it offers feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-assign in semiotic systems.
- It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice will never be theorized, enclosed, encoded which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.
- Feminist criticism has gradually sifted its center from revisionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women. Showalter starts her essay with the poem of Louise Bogan, "Women" which opens with the lines:

"Women have no wilderness in them,
They are provident instead,
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts
To eat dusty bread."

- With the publication of Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1920) a step in the direction of inspiring women to become writers was taken. This way is called Feminst Bible that upholds women as creative artist. In the very first paragraph of the essay Woolf emphatically remarks:

"—a woman must have money and
a room of her own if she is to write fiction."

- Woolf thinks "A woman's writing is always Feminine; it cannot help being Feminine; at its best it is most Feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by Feminine."

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- Elan Showalter, in her essay Feminist Criticism in Wilderness (1985) defines and explores the development of women centered criticism which chiefly evaluated the women's writing as expression of women's experience. She says that "If in 1981, Feminist literary critics are still wandering in the wilderness, we are in good company; for, as Geoffrey Hartman tells us, all criticism is in the wilderness" but quoting Geoffrey she says all criticism is in wilderness today. She says, in Feminine Criticism had been no theoretical basis and it has been "an empirical orphn in the theoretical models that explore the difference between the androcentric and gynocentric criticism. These models are biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. The cultural model provides a more complete and satisfying way to talk about the specificity and difference of women's writing than theories based in biology, linguistics, or psychoanalysis..."
- There are two distinct modes of Feminist Criticism, and to conflate them (as most commentators do) is to remain permanently bemused by their theoretical potentialities. The first mode is ideological; it is concerned with the feminist as reader, and it offers Feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems. This is not all Feminist reading can do; it can be a liberating intellectual act, as Adrienne Rich proposes: A radical critique of literature, Feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and howwe can begin to see and name and therefore live-afresh.
- The second mode of Feminist Criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as writers, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. English Feminist Criticism, which incorporates French Feminist and Marxist theory but is more traditionally oriented to textual interpretation, is also moving toward a focus on women's writing. Third mode is Organic or biological Criticism is the most extreme statement of gender difference, of a text indelibly marked by the body: anatomy is textually. Biological criticism is also one of the most sibylling and perplexing theoretical formulations of Feminst Criticism. Simply to invoke anatomy risks a return to the crude essentialism, the phallic and ovarian theories of art, that oppressed women in the past. Some redical Feminist Critics, primarily in France but also in the United States, insist that we must read these metaphors as more than playful, that we must serioudly rethink and redifine biological differentiation and its relation to women's unity. They argue that "women's writing proceeds from the body, that our sexual differentiation is also our source." The difference of woman's literary practice, therefore, must be sought (in Miller's words) in "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body."
- Last mode is Linguistic and textual theories of women's writing ask whether men and women use language differently; whether sex differences in language use can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization, or culture; whether women can create new languages of their own; and whether speaking, reading, and writing are all gender marked. The question of how Feminist Criticism should define itself with relation to the new critical theories and theorists has occasioned sharp debate in Europe and the United States. Nina Auerbach has notes the absence of dialogue and asks whether Feminist Criticism itself must accept responsibility. Feminist Critics seem particularly reluctant to define themselves to the uninitiated. There is a sense in which our sisterhood has become too powerful; as a school, our belief in ourself is so potent that we decline communication with the networks of power and respectability we say we want to change.
- All Feminist Criticism is in some sense revisionist, questioning the adequacy of accepted concetual structures, and indeed most contemporary American criticism claims to be revisionist too. The most exciting and comprehensive case for this "revisionary imperative" is made by

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Sandra Gilbert: at its most ambitious, she asserts, Feminist Criticism:

> "wants to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connections between textuality and sexually, genre and gender, psychosexual identify and cultural authority."

- What Showalter mean here by "male critical theory" is a concept of creativity, literary history, or literary interpretation based entirely on male experience and put forward as universal.
- Perhaps more than any other mode of criticism, Feminist theory has cut across and drawn on multiple and contradictory traditions which by presenting what is arguably one of the most fundamental challenges to previous critical orthodoxies in its revolution of subjectively and the category of experience. Like Marxism, Feminism is rooted in the political discourses of modernity. Not only Marxism, but also psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan and post structuralist views, especially deconstruction of Jacques Derrida are considered crucial in Feminism. Feminist Criticism as a self aware and concerted approach to literature was not inaugurated until late in the 1900's. Mary Wolls Tonecraft's A vindication of the Rights of women (1792), John Stuart Mill's, the subjection of women (1869) and Margaret Fuller's women in Nineteenth century are such texts, which are indubitably the landmark in the history of Feminist movement. But what is most important to note that Virginia Woolf was an outstanding precursson of Feminist Criticism. In her fictions and essays, most notably in A Room of one's own, she attack the patriarchal bias which prohibited women's creative possibility, A seminal text is indeed, Simonede Beuvior. The second sex, which identifies women as cultural construct and reveals the fact that women are regarded as merely negative object or 'other', while men are defined as dominating subject. Similarly, Mary Ellaman's Thinking doubt women-with which Feminist Criticism began in America shows the derogatory stereotypes of women in literature written by women. Another important text which attacks the sexual bias in Freud's psycho analytical theory is Kota Millet's sexual politics.
- Although early second time Feminist Criticism drew extensively on de Deauviars works and on kate Millet's "sexual politics" and concentrated its analysis on the images of women represented in and constructed through cultural forms such as literature, it has been viewed by later Feminist as often failing to offer an adequate analysis of the relationship between ideology and representation. But in spite of the difference in their pointsof view and procedures some assumptions and concerts are quite basic in this critical mode, western civilization is patriarchal. Just as logo centricism emphasis the extent to which metaphysical assumption about the superiority of speech over writing are built into language itself, phantasmagorical implies that masculine biases are profoundly related to the structures of meta physics. Even the patriarchal ideology is dominant in those writings which we consider great literature. For example, Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Captain Ahab - some well known male protagonists in some highly regarded literary works - embody masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine fields of action. As Simone de Beauvoir remarked, 'one is not barn but rather becomes, a woman....'. While male is identified as active, dominative and rational Feminine is identified as passive, submissive and emotional. If Kate Mallet attack D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer etc., by analyzing some selected passages of their works for degarding women as submissive sexual objects, most of Feminists praise Chaucer, Shakespeare and G.B. Shaw who rise above sexual prejudice.
- A great impetus is given to their critical approach when Flaine Showalter proposes gynocriticism which is mare self contained and experimental and which is concerned with developing and specifically female frame work for dealing with works written by men, and with Feminine subject matters in literature written by woman and also with an attempt to specify the traits of a woman's language. Elaine showalter, however, led much emphasis on woman as a writer rather than woman as a reader. Elaine showalter's A Literature of their own: British women Novelist from Brontel to lessing, patricia Meyer spacks's The Female imagination Ellen Moers's Literary women, Sandra Gillert and Susan Gular's The Madowomen in the Attic are some notable works in their made. To evade the dilemma, namely women's

language, Helene Cixous posits ecriture Feminine (Feminine writing) and Julia Kristeva posits a Chora, or pre-linguistic signifying system that she labels 'semiotics'.

- Thus, Feminist literary criticism was influenced by multiple literary theories and criticism and congregate them into an organic whole so as to expose objective reality. As Elaine Showalter has observed, "English Feminist Criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression, French Feminist Criticism, essentially psychoanalytic, stresses represession; American Feminist Criticism, essentually textual, stresses expressions".

12.8 Key-Words

1. Essentialism : Refers to ways of conceiving people, cultures, etc. as having certain innate, natural or universal characteristics. Essentialism is strongly contested in most contemporary literary theory. The following three statements are all examples of essentialist thinking:
   (*i*) 'I have a personality and individuality which is com-letely unaffected by anything out there in the "real" world, such as language, economics, education, nationality, etc.';
   (*ii*) 'Women are more intelligent, caring and sensitive than men';
   (*iii*) 'At bottom, you are either white or black, and that's all there is to it'.

12.9 Review Questions

1. Discuss the critical importance of Feminist Criticism in wildernesses.
2. What do you mean by Gynocritics?
3. Explain the major works of Showalter.
4. British examine Feminist Criticism in wildernesses.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*b*) (*iii*) (*a*)

12.10 Further Readings

Books

1. Hutcheon, Linda A poetics of postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1988.
2. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory, 1st edition, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.
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6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 13: Elaine Showalter: Four Models of Feminism in "Feminist Criticism in Wilderness"—Psychological and Cultural Difference

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand Feminist Criticism in Wildersses.
- Discuss Psychological and Cultural Difference.

Introduction

One of America's foremost academic literary scholars, Showalter is renowned for her pioneering feminist studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century female authors and her provocative cultural analysis of women's oppression in the history of psychiatry. In her influential book A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (1977), Showalter advanced a new form of feminist literary theory under the term "gynocriticism," offering an alternative framework for the interpretation of women's literary history. Likewise, in works such as The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980 (1985) and Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture (1997), Showalter forged the branch of feminist criticism known as "history," an attempt to reinterpret and redefine the pejorative notion of women's hysteria as embodied in literary and social history. Showalter's contributions to feminist criticism and women's studies have helped influence the canon of British and American literature, bringing new visibility and legitimacy to often forgotten or under-appreciated female authors.

Showalter was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1941 to parents Paul Cottler and Violet Rottenberg Cottler. Though he never finished grammar school, Showalter's immigrant father was a successful wool merchant. Showalter's mother completed high school but remained at home in the role of housewife. Showalter chose to attend Bryn Mawr College against the wishes of her parents who both disapproved of their daughter's intellectual leanings and educational ambitions.

Showalter has been widely appreciated by critics for her prodigious knowledge, insightful analysis, and accessible prose. Most feminist literary scholars have lauded her achievement in helping to legitimize and further develop feminist critique, particularly by reevaluating the social and historical context within which women's writing is studied. However, some critics have contended that Showalter's reach often exceeds her grasp, faulting her for raising provocative questions and presenting a wealth of material without analyzing it, or trying unsuccessfully to force-fit her usually expansive subject matter into a rigid critical context. Others have criticized Showalter for omitting or glossing over women writers who do not fit neatly into her thesis or analytical construct. In addition, some reviewers have objected to Showalter's literary biases, especially in regards to

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the Victorian era, and her dubious psychoanalytic assumptions. Showalter's works of cultural history, particularly The Female Malady and Sexual Anarchy, have received mixed reviews, but have been generally praised for their broad, interdisciplinary approach to literary, cultural, and social trends. Showalter's feminist history of psychiatry in The Female Malady has been commended for raising disturbing and important questions about the politics of interpretation and the power of gender as a determining factor in psychiatric treatment. Her focus on the psychiatric patient-rather than the history of the psychiatric profession-has also been viewed as a valuable contribution to the subject. However, some reviewers have faulted Showalter for her selective use of data and statistics, and her imprecise use of key terms, such as "hysteria." In later works such as Hystories and Inventing Herself, critics have hailed Showalter's impressive synthesis of evidence, though some have found her arguments less substantial and convincing than in previous works. Despite such shortcomings, Showalter has been highly regarded for calling attention to complex issues surrounding gender and sexual politics. Many of her works, most notably A Literature of Their Own and The Female Malady, have endured as staples of feminist literary criticism in university curricula.

13.1 Women's Writing and Woman's Psyche

Psychoanalytically oriented feminist criticism locates the difference of women's writing in the author's psyche and in the relation of gender to the creative process. It incorporates the biological and linguistic models of gender difference in a theory of the female psyche or self, shaped by the body, by the development of language, and by sex-role socialization. Here too there are many difficulties to overcome; the Freudian model requires constant revision to make it gynocentric. In one grotesque early example of Freudian reductivism, Theodor Reik suggested that women have fewer writing blocks than men because their bodies are constructed to facilitate release: "Writing, as Freud told us at the end of his life, is connected with urinating, which physiologically is easier for a woman-they have a wider bladder." Generally, however, psychoanalytic criticism has focused not on the capacious bladder (could this be the organ from which females generate texts?) but on the absent phallus. Penis envy, the castration complex, and the Oedipal phase have become the Freudian coordinates defining women's relationship to language, fantasy, and culture. Currently the French psychoanalytic school dominated by Lacan has extended castration into a total metaphor for female literary and linguistic disadvantage. Lacan theorizes that the acquisition of language and the entry into its symbolic order occurs at the Oedipal phase in which the child accepts his or her gender identity. This stage requires an acceptance of the phallus as a privileged signification and a consequent female displacement, as Cora Kaplan has explained:

> The phallus as a signifier has a central, crucial position in language, for if language embodies the patriarchal law of the culture, its basic meanings refer to the recurring process by which sexual difference and subjectivity are acquired.... Thus the little girl's access to the Symbolic, i.e., to language and its laws, is always negative and/or mediated by intro-subjective relation to a third term, for it is characterized by an identification with lack.

In psychoanalytic terms, "lack" has traditionally been associated with the feminine, although Lac(k)anian critics can now make their statements linguistically. Many feminists believe that psychoanalysis could become a powerful tool for literary criticism, and recently there has been a renewed interest in Freudian theory. But feminist criticism based in Freudian or post-Freudian psychoanalysis must continually struggle with the problem of feminine disadvantage and lack. In The Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar carry out a feminist revision of Harold Bloom's Oedipal model of literary history as a conflict between fathers and sons and accept the essential psychoanalytic definition of the woman artist as displaced, disinherited, and excluded. In their view, the nature and "difference" of women's writing lies in its troubled and even tormented relationship to female identity; the woman writer experiences her own gender as "a painful obstacle or even a debilitating inadequacy." The nineteenth-century woman writer inscribed her own sickness, her madness, her anorexia, her agoraphobia, and her paralysis in her texts; and although Gilbert and Gubar are dealing specifically with the nineteenth century, the range of their allusion and quotation suggests a more general thesis:

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Thus the loneliness of the female artist, her feelings of alienation from male predecessors coupled with her need for sisterly precursors and successors, her urgent sense of her need for a female audience together with her fear of the antagonism of male readers, her culturally conditioned timidity about self-dramatization, her dread of the patriarchal authority of art, her anxiety about the impropriety of female invention-all these phenomena of "inferiorization" mark the woman writer's struggle for artistic selfdefinition and differentiate her efforts at self-creation from those of her male counterpart.

In "Emphasis Added," Miller takes another approach to the problem of negativity in psychoanalytic criticism. Her strategy is to expand Freud's view of female creativity and to show how criticism of women's texts has frequently been unfair because it has been based in Freudian expectations. In his essay "The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming" (1908), Freud maintained that the unsatisfied dreams and desires of women are chiefly erotic; these are the desires that shape the plots of women's fiction. In contrast, the dominant fantasies behind men's plots are egoistic and ambitious as well as erotic. Miller shows how women's plots have been granted or denied credibility in terms of their conformity to this phallocentric model and that a gynocentric reading reveals a repressed egoistic/ambitious fantasy in women's writing as well as in men's. Women's novels which are centrally concerned with fantasies of romantic love belong to the category disdained by George Eliot and other serious women writers as "silly novels"; the smaller number of women's novels which inscribe a fantasy of power imagine a world for women outside of love, a world, however, made impossible by social boundaries.

There has also been some interesting feminist literary criticism based on alternatives to Freudian psychoanalytic theory: Annis Pratt's Jungian history of female archetypes, Barbara Rigney's Laingian study of the divided self in women's fiction, and Ann Douglas' Eriksonian analysis of inner space in nineteenth-century women's writing. And for the past few years, critics have been thinking about the possibilities of a new feminist psychoanalysis that does not revise Freud but instead emphasizes the development and construction of gender identities.

The most dramatic and promising new work in feminist psychoanalysis looks at the pre-Oedipal phase and at the process of psychosexual differentiation. Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (1978) has had an enormous influence on women's studies. Chodorow revises traditional psychoanalytic concepts of differentiation, the process by which the child comes to perceive the self as separate and to develop ego and body boundaries. Since differentiation takes place in relation to the mother (the primary caretaker), attitudes toward the mother "emerge in the earliest differentiation of the self"; "the mother, who is a woman, becomes and remains for children of both genders the other, or object." The child develops core gender identity concomitantly with differentiation, but the process is not the same for boys and girls. A boy must learn his gender identity negatively as being not-female, and this difference requires continual reinforcement. In contrast, a girl's core gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity, and identification with the mother. Women's difficulties with feminine identity come after the Oedipal phase, in which male power and cultural hegemony give sex differences a transformed value. Chodorow's work suggests that shared parenting, the involvement of men as primary caretakers of children, will have a profound effect on our sense of sex difference, gender identity, and sexual preference.

But what is the significance of feminist psychoanalysis for literary criticism? One thematic carry-over has been a critical interest in the mother-daughter configuration as a source of female creativity. Elizabeth Abel's bold investigation of female friendship in contemporary women's novels uses Chodorow's theory to show how not only the relationships of women characters but also the relationship of women writers to each other are determined by the psychodynamics of female bonding. Abel too confronts Bloom's paradigm of literary history, but unlike Gilbert and Gubar she sees a "triadic female pattern" in which the Oedipal relation to the male tradition is balanced by the woman writer's pre-Oedipal relation to the female tradition. "As the dynamics of female friendship differ from those of male," Abel concludes, "the dynamics of female literary influence also diverge and deserve a theory of influence attuned to female psychology and to women's dual position in literary history."

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Like Gilbert, Gubar, and Miller, Abel brings together women's texts from a variety of national literatures, choosing to emphasize "the constancy of certain emotional dynamics depicted in diverse cultural situations." Yet the privileging of gender implies not only the constancy but also the immutability of these dynamics. Although psychoanalytically based models of feminist criticism can now offer us remarkable and persuasive readings of individual texts and can highlight extraordinary similarities between women writing in a variety of cultural circumstances, they cannot explain historical change, ethnic difference, or the shaping force of generic and economic factors. To consider these issues, we must go beyond psychoanalysis to a more flexible and comprehensive model of women's writing which places it in the maximum context of culture.

13.2 Women's Writing and Women's Culture

> I consider women's literature as a specific category, not because of biology, but because it is, in a sense, the literature of the colonized.
>
> **—Christiane Rochefort, "The Privilege of Consciousness"**

A theory based on a model of women's culture can provide, I believe, a more complete and satisfying way to talk about the specificity and difference of women's writing than theories based in biology, linguistics, or psychoanalysis. Indeed, a theory of culture incorporates ideas about woman's body, language, and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The ways in which women conceptualize their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environments. The female psyche can be studied as the product or construction of cultural forces. Language, too, comes back into the picture, as we consider the social dimensions and determinants of language use, the shaping of linguistic behavior by cultural ideals. A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space. It is in the emphasis on the binding force of women's culture that this approach differs from Marxist theories of cultural hegemony.

Hypotheses of women's culture have been developed over the last decade primarily by anthropologists, sociologists, and social historians in order to get away from masculine systems, hierarchies, and values and to get at the primary and self-defined nature of female cultural experience. In the field of women's history, the concept of women's culture is still controversial, although there is agreement on its significance as a theoretical formulation. Gerda Lerner explains the importance of examining women's experience in its own terms:

> Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only in male-centered terms. We have missed women and their activities, because we have asked questions of history which are inappropriate to women. To rectify this, and to light up areas of historical darkness we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centeredin quiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women. History must include an account of the female experience over time and should include the development of feminist consciousness as an essential aspect of women's past. This is the primary task of women's history. The central question it raises is: What would history be like if it were seen through the eyes of women and ordered by values they define?

In defining female culture, historians distinguish between the roles, activities, tastes, and behaviors prescribed and considered appropriate for women and those activities, behaviors, and functions

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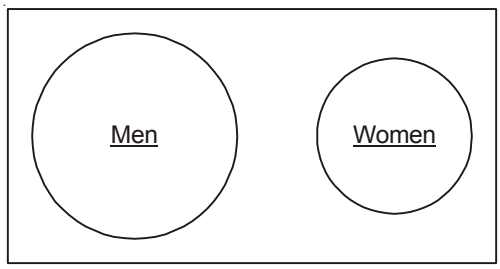
actually generated out of women's lives. In the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term "woman's sphere" expressed the Victorian and Jacksonian vision of separate roles for men and women, with little or no overlap and with women subordinate. If we were to diagram it, the Victorian model would look like this:



Woman's sphere was defined and maintained by men, but women frequently internalized its precepts in the American "cult of true womanhood" and the English "feminine ideal." Women's culture, however, redefines women's "activities and goals from a woman-centered point of view.... The term implies an assertion of equality and an awareness of sisterhood, the communality of women." Women's culture refers to "the broad-based communality of values, institutions, relationships, and methods of communication" unifying nineteenth-century female experience, a culture nonetheless with significant variants by class and ethnic group (MFP, pp. 52, 54).

Some feminist historians have accepted the model of separate spheres and have seen the movement from woman's sphere to women's culture to women's-rights activism as the consecutive stages of an evolutionary political process. Others see a more complex and perpetual negotiation taking place between women's culture and the general culture. As Lerner has argued:

> It is important to understand that "woman's culture" is not and should not be seen as a subculture. It is hardly possible for the majority to live in a subculture.... Women live their social existence within the general culture and, whenever they are confined by patriarchal restraint or segregation into separateness (which always has subordination as its purpose), they transform this restraint into complementarity (asserting the importance of woman's function, even its "superiority") and redefine it. Thus, women live a duality-as members of the general culture and as partakers of women's culture. [MFP, p. 52]

Lerner's views are similar to those of some cultural anthropologists. A particularly stimulating analysis of female culture has been carried out by two Oxford anthropologists, Shirley and Edwin Ardener. The Ardeners have tried to outline a model of women's culture which is not historically limited and to provide a terminology for its characteristics. Two essays by Edwin Ardener, "Belief and the Problem of Women" (1972) and "The 'Problem' Revisited" (1975), suggest that women constitute a muted group, the boundaries of whose culture and reality overlap, but are not wholly contained by, the dominant (male) group. A model of the cultural situation of women is crucial to understanding both how they are perceived by the dominant group and how they perceive themselves and others. Both historians and anthropologists emphasize the incompleteness of androcentric models of history and culture and the inadequacy of such models for the analysis of female experience. In the past, female experience which could not be accommodated by androcentric models was treated as deviant or simply ignored. Observation from an exterior point of view could never be the same as comprehension from within. Ardener's model also has many connections to and implications for current feminist literary theory, since the concepts of perception, silence, and silencing are so central to discussions of women's participation in literary culture.

By the term "muted," Ardener suggests problems both of language and of power. Both muted and dominant groups generate beliefs or ordering ideas of social reality at the unconscious level, but dominant groups control the forms or structures in which consciousness can be articulated. Thus muted groups must mediate their beliefs through the allowable forms of dominant structures. Another way of putting this would be to say that all language is the language of the dominant

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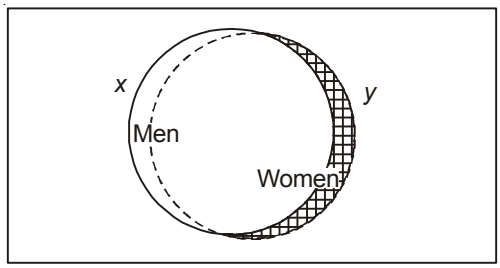
order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it. How then, Ardener asks, "does the symbolic weight of that other mass of persons express itself?" In his view, women's beliefs find expression through ritual and art, expressions which can be deciphered by the ethnographer, either female or male, who is willing to make the effort to perceive beyond the screens of the dominant structure.

Let us now look at Ardener's diagram of the relationship of the dominant and the muted group:



Unlike the Victorian model of complementary spheres, Ardener's groups are represented by intersecting circles. Much of muted circle Y falls within the boundaries of dominant circle X; there is also a crescent of Y which is outside the dominant boundary and therefore (in Ardener's terminology) "wild." We can think of the "wild zone" of women's culture spatially, experientially, or metaphysically. Spatially it stands for an area which is literally no-man's-land, a place forbidden to men, which corresponds to the zone in X which is off limits to women. Experientially it stands for the aspects of the female life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men; again, there is a corresponding zone of male experience alien to women. But if we think of the wild zone metaphysically, or in terms of consciousness, it has no corresponding male space since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language. In this sense, the "wild" is always imaginary; from the male point of view, it may simply be the projection of the unconscious. In terms of cultural anthropology, women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it, because it becomes the subject of legend (like the wilderness). But men do not know what is in the wild.

For some feminist critics, the wild zone, or "female space," must be the address of a genuinely women-centered criticism, theory, and art, whose shared project is to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak. French feminist critics would like to make the wild zone the theoretical base of women's difference. In their texts, the wild zone becomes the place for the revolutionary women's language, the language of everything that is repressed, and for the revolutionary women's writing in "white ink." It is the Dark Continent in which Cixous' laughing Medusa and Wittig's *guerilleres* reside. Through voluntary entry into the wild zone, other feminist critics tell us, a woman can write her way out of the "cramped confines of patriarchal space."41 The images of this journey are now familiar in feminist quest fictions and in essays about them. The writer/heroine, often guided by another woman, travels to the "mother country" of liberated desire and female authenticity; crossing to the other side of the mirror, like Alice in Wonderland, is often a symbol of the passage.

Many forms of American radical feminism also romantically assert that women are closer to nature, to the environment, to a matriarchal principle at once biological and ecological. Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* and Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* are texts which create this feminist mythology. In English and American literature, women writers have often imagined Amazon Utopias, cities or countries situated in the wild zone or on its border: Elizabeth Gaskell's gentle *Cranford* is probably an Amazon Utopia; so is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland or, to take a recent example, Joanna Russ' *Whileaway*. A few years ago, the feminist publishing house Daughters, Inc. tried to create a business version of the Amazon Utopia; as Lois Gould reported in the *New York Times Magazine* (2 January 1977), "They believe they are building the working models for the critical next stage of feminism: full independence from the control and influence of "male-dominated"

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institutions-the news media, the health, education, and legal systems, the art, theater, and literary worlds, the banks."

These fantasies of an idyllic enclave represent a phenomenon which feminist criticism must recognize in the history of women's writing. But we must also understand that there can be no writing or criticism totally outside of the dominant structure; no publication is fully independent from the economic and political pressures of the male-dominated society. The concept of a woman's text in the wild zone is a playful abstraction: in the reality to which we must address ourselves as critics, women's writing is a "double-voiced discourse" that always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant. And insofar as most feminist critics are also women writing, this precarious heritage is one we share; every step that feminist criticism takes toward defining women's writing is a step toward self-understanding as well; every account of a female literary culture and a female literary tradition has parallel significance for our own place in critical history and critical tradition. Women writing are not, then, inside and outside of the male tradition; they are inside two traditions simultaneously, "undercurrents," in Ellen Moers' metaphor, of the mainstream. To mix metaphors again, the literary estate of women, as Myra Jehlen says, "suggests . . . a more fluid imagery of interacting juxtapositions, the point of which would be to represent not so much the territory, as its defining borders. Indeed, the female territory might well be envisioned as one long border, and independence for women, not as a separate country, but as open access to the sea." As Jehlen goes on to explain, an aggressive feminist criticism must poise itself on this border and must see women's writing in its changing historical and cultural relation to that other body of texts identified by feminist criticism not simply as literature but as "men's writing."

The difference of women's writing, then, can only be understood in terms of this complex and historically grounded cultural relation. An important aspect of Ardener's model is that there are muted groups other than women; a dominant structure may determine many muted structures. A black American woman poet, for example, would have her literary identity formed by the dominant (white male) tradition, by a muted women's culture, and by a muted black culture. She would be affected by both sexual and racial politics in a combination unique to her case; at the same time, as Barbara Smith points out, she shares an experience specific to her group: "Black women writers constitute an identifiable literary tradition . . . thematically, stylistically, aesthetically, and conceptually. Black women writers manifest common approaches to the act of creating literature as a direct result of the specific political, social, and economic experience they have been obliged to share." Thus the first task of a gynocentric criticism must be to plot the precise cultural locus of female literary identity and to describe the forces that intersect an individual woman writer's cultural field. A gynocentric criticism would also situate women writers with respect to the variables of literary culture, such as modes of production and distribution, relations of author and audience, relations of high to popular art, and hierarchies of genre.

Insofar as our concepts of literary periodization are based on men's writing, women's writing must be forcibly assimilated to an irrelevant grid; we discuss a Renaissance which is not a renaissance for women, a Romantic period in which women played very little part, a modernism with which women conflict. At the same time, the ongoing history of women's writing has been suppressed, leaving large and mysterious gaps in accounts of the development of genre. Gynocentric criticism is already well on the way to providing us with another perspective on literary history. Margaret Anne Doody, for example, suggests that "the period between the death of Richardson and the appearance of the novels of Scott and Austen" which has "been regarded as a dead period, a dull blank" is in fact the period in which late eighteenth-century women writers were developing "the paradigm for women's fiction of the nineteenth century-something hardly less than the paradigm of the nineteenth-century novel itself."45 There has also been a feminist rehabilitation of the female gothic, a mutation of a popular genre once believed marginal but now seen as part of the great tradition of the novel. In American literature, the pioneering work of Ann Douglas, Nina Baym, and Jane Tompkins, among others, has given us a new view of the power of women's fiction to feminize nineteenth-century American culture. And feminist critics have made us aware that Woolf belonged to a tradition other than modernism and that this tradition surfaces in her

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work precisely in those places where criticism has hitherto found obscurities, evasions, implausibilities, and imperfections.

Our current theories of literary influence also need to be tested in terms of women's writing. If a man's text, as Bloom and Edward Said have maintained, is fathered, then a woman's text is not only mothered but parented; it confronts both paternal and maternal precursors and must deal with the problems and advantages of both lines of inheritance. Woolf says in A Room of One's Own that "a woman writing thinks back through her mothers." But a woman writing unavoidably thinks back through her fathers as well; only male writers can forget or mute half of their parentage. The dominant culture need not consider the muted, except to rail against "the woman's part" in itself. Thus we need more subtle and supple accounts of influence, not just to explain women's writing but also to understand how men's writing has resisted the acknowledgment of female precursors.

We must first go beyond the assumption that women writers either imitate their male predecessors or revise them and that this simple dualism is adequate to describe the influences on the woman's text. I. A. Richards once commented that the influence of G. E. Moore had had an enormous negative impact on his work: "I feel like an obverse of him. Where there's a hole in him, there's a bulge in me." Too often women's place in literary tradition is translated into the crude topography of hole and bulge, with Milton, Byron, or Emerson the bulging bogeys on one side and women's literature from Aphra Behn to Adrienne Rich a pocked moon surface of revisionary lacunae on the other. One of the great advantages of the women's-culture model is that it shows how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity as well as a negative source of powerlessness; it can generate its own experiences and symbols which are not simply the obverse of the male tradition.

How can a cultural model of women's writing help us to read a woman's text? One implication of this model is that women's fiction can be read as a double-voiced discourse, containing a "dominant" and a "muted" story, what Gilbert and Gubar call a "palimpsest." I have described it elsewhere as an object/field problem in which we must keep two alternative oscillating texts simultaneously in view: "In the purest feminist literary criticism we are ... presented with a radical alteration of our vision, a demand that we see meaning in what has previously been empty space. The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint." Miller too sees "another text" in women's fiction, "more or less muted from novel to novel" but "always there to be read."

Another interpretive strategy for feminist criticism might be the contextual analysis that the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls "thick description." Geertz calls for descriptions that seek to understand the meaning of cultural phenomena and products by "sorting out the structures of signification . . . and determining their social ground and import." A genuinely "thick" description of women's writing would insist upon gender and upon a female literary tradition among the multiple strata that make up the force of meaning in a text. No description, we must concede, could ever be thick enough to account for all the factors that go into the work of art. But we could work toward completeness, even as an unattainable ideal.

In suggesting that a cultural model of women's writing has considerable usefulness for the enterprise of feminist criticism, I don't mean to replace psychoanalysis with cultural anthropology as the answer to all our theoretical problems or to enthrone Ardener and Geertz as the new white fathers in place of Freud, Lacan, and Bloom. No theory, however suggestive, can be a substitute for the close and extensive knowledge of women's texts which constitutes our essential subject. Cultural anthropology and social history can perhaps offer us a terminology and a diagram of women's cultural situation. But feminist critics must use this concept in relation to what women actually write, not in relation to a theoretical, political, metaphoric, or visionary ideal of what women ought to write.

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I began by recalling that a few years ago feminist critics thought we were on a pilgrimage to the promised land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels. But the more precisely we understand the specificity of women's writing not as a transient by-product of sexism but as a fundamental and continually determining reality, the more clearly we realize that we have misperceived our destination. We may never reach the promised land at all; for when feminist critics see our task as the study of women's writing, we realize that the land promised to us is not the serenely undifferentiated universality of texts but the tumultuous and intriguing wilderness of difference itself.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

(*i*) Carolyn Heilbrun and Cathorine Stimpsen identified ..... poles of Feminist Literary Criticism.

(*a*) Three (*b*) Four

(*c*) Two (*d*) One

(*ii*) The essay "Belief and the Problems of Women was written by ..... .

(*a*) Showalter (*b*) Edwin Ardener

(*c*) Shirley (*d*) None of these

(*iii*) The term 'Gynocritics' coined in ..... .

(*a*) Toward a Feminist Poetics (*b*) Cultural Feminism

(*c*) A Room of One's Own (*d*) None of these

13.3 Summary

- The feminist study of women's writings. The term is sometimes used to mean any literary criticism devoted to works written by women. More often, it designates a body of literary criticism principally produced by academic feminists in the United States between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s that sought to characterize imaginative writing by women in contrast to canonical literature written by men. Gynocriticism celebrated a distinctive "voice" in women's literature across genres and periods that it explained in terms of women's cultural position as an oppressed group; of women's experiences, especially experiences of male domination and of female bonding; and of psychological traits supposedly typical of women such as empathy and fluid ego boundaries. This approach, sometimes simplistically labeled "American feminist criticism," pioneered feminist literary history and established a canon of women's literature influential in teaching, publishing, and scholarship. By broadly endorsing women's creativity, gynocriticism overlaps "cultural feminism."
- Gynocriticism's most important precursor is Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929), which posed influential questions about "women and literature." Following Woolf, American feminists of the late 1960s and thereafter saw imaginative literature as an important force affecting women. While some scholars attacked male writers for stereotyping women, other feminists sought role models and found energizing identifications in female characters drawn by women writers. For example, in 1972 Nancy Burr Evans rejoiced to see her "own experiences mirrored" in fiction by women (in Images of Women in Fiction, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon). Similarly, Louise Bernikow's Among Women (1980) and Rachel Brownstein's Becoming a Heroine (1982) emphasized the satisfactions of reading women writers who portrayed female friendships and women's search for identity.
- In "Toward a Feminist Poetics" (1979), Elaine Showalter coined the term gynocritics for the study of women writers. One exemplar of this tradition was her book, A Literature of Their Own (1977), which situated English women novelists in terms of "a common heritage" that

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concerned itself with the deliberate "articulation of women's experience." In 1976 Ellen Moers's Literary Women tracked "the deep creative strategies of the literary mind at work upon the fact of [being] female." Another widely influential text was Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic (1979), which derived common themes and images in "a distinctively female literary tradition" from cultural strictures on female expression, creativity, and authority. "Toward a Feminist Poetics" further distinguished feminist critique, the tough, demystifying practices of women reading sexist men, from gynocritics, the study of "woman as writer … with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women." This distinction apparently pitted critical reading against creative writing, although gynocritics was, like feminist critique, a feminist reading strategy that assumed women would find personal resonance reading texts by women. In a related essay, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (1981), Showalter stressed "the difference of women's writing" from men's, asking, "How can we constitute women as a distinct literary group?," answering that women developed a "double-voiced discourse" from their "muted" position in male-dominant culture. In The New Feminist Criticism (1985), she championed gynocritics as offering "the most exciting prospect for a coherent feminist literary theory" independent of male models and congratulated it for the "massive recovery and rereading of literature by women from all nations and historical periods." By 1989 in Speaking of Gender, Showalter placed gynocriticism as a past "phase" of feminist criticism that had moved on to a broader concern with gender. However, feminist analysis of women's writings continues to flourish.

- Some opponents charged that gynocritical practice was too restrictive because it selected some women writers over others, preferring poets who rejected marriage to sentimentalist encomiasts, for example, or condemning prudish novelists in favor of sexually explicit ones according to prescriptive notions of women's liberation. However, the most common attacks against gynocriticism fault the category of "writing by women" on which it is based. Some people believe this category is meaningless because differences in writing are individual, not sex specific. Pseudonymous authors prove that readers cannot reliably tell authors' sexes, and no experiments find definitive markers of female style. Some scholars argue that gynocriticism falls into the "essentialist" error of assigning definitive characteristics according to authors' biological sex, although gynocritics reply that being a woman is always culturally defined. Others agree that literature is gendered, but not necessarily to match authorial sex. Thus proponents of "écriture féminine" claim this practice maintains an antipatriarchal, feminine "subject position" even under male authorship. Another view sees gender implicit in literary genres and audience expectations, not authors, so that, for example, Harlequin romances are "feminine" no matter who writes them.
- For many feminists of color, lesbians, and postmodernists, the category "women's writing" too often generalizes from privileged white women to all women and their literature, whereas most feminists now agree that women are not a unified category but are divided by class, race, language, sexual practices, and many other factors, and that their writings must be contextualized in historically and culturally specific ways. Some radical feminists fault Showalter's version of gynocriticism from another direction, claiming it is not specific enough to women, especially to women's sexual oppression, but rather applies a paradigm of "dominant" and "muted" powers so that all oppressed groups follow parallel paths of imitation, resistance, and autonomy. In contrast, these theorists point out that each group has its unique history, character, and interests, and any writer or reader is shaped and responsive to multiple, complexly interacting, and possibly contradictory and conflicting forces.
- Although some early gynocriticism now seems naive, feminist criticism of writing by women is currently thriving. It does not automatically reject theories by men or idealize writing by women, though it continues to find women's works personally important and politically relevant to female readers. The most fruitful practice in this area uses the hypothetical

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categories of (some kinds of) writing by (some) women to group texts in order to analyze whether or not, and how, they exhibit a gendered coherence, for example, in studies of the female gothic novel. As feminist scholars range more broadly, they discover women's literary traditions in many times and cultures without insisting that they resemble those nineteenth-century English novels central to early gynocriticism. Some women's traditions, like European Renaissance women's love lyrics, modify dominant male forms. Women's literature from more sex-segregated societies, like Persian manuscripts by and for women, may assume more autonomous shapes, and some contemporary literature, like African-American fiction by women, may set standards for writing by men, rather than the reverse.

13.4 Key-Words

1. Stanza : A grouping of lines of verse, usually forming a self-contained pattern of rhymed lines—thus stanzas of a poem are normally of equal length.
2. Symbol : A figure in which one object represents another object (often an abstract quality): conventional symbols include, for example, scales for justice, a dove for peace, a goat for lust, a lion for strength, rose for beauty or love, etc. A symbol is a kind of metaphor in which the subject of the metaphor is not made explicit, and may be mysterious or undecidable.

13.5 Review Questions

1. What are the models in Showalter's Feminist Criticism in Wilderness?
2. What is the feminist criticism in Cinderella?
3. Elaine Showalter the feminist critic? Discuss
4. What do you mean by the Criticisms of the Biomedical Model? Discuss.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*c*) (*ii*) (*b*) (*iii*) (*a*)

13.6 Further Readings

Books

1. Hutcheon, Linda A poetics of postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1988.
2. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory, 1st edition, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.
3. Lodge, David (ed.) Twentieth Century Literary Criticism, London: Longman, 1972.
4. Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh (eds.) A Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 3rd edition, London: Arnold, 1999.
5. Sethuraman, V.S. and Ramaswamy (eds.) The English Critical Tradition, Volume II, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1977.
6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 14: Umberto Eco's 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' (History and War-Background)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss about Umberto Eco.
- Explain History and War-Background.

Introduction

Having previously established a professional rapport among scholars with his influential works in both semiotics and medieval culture. With its ingenious plot and a protagonist conflicted by spiritual and intellectual concerns, this novel enthralled both popular and critical audiences worldwide and was later adapted to film. Foremost, however, Eco is regarded as one of the world's leading semioticians whose analysis of the linguistic and aesthetic codes or "signs," by which a culture communicates and understands itself, span nearly forty years. Indeed, the philosophical themes of Eco's academic research animate his erudite fiction, which dramatizes principles of semiotic theory through multi-faceted allusions to a broad range of significant cultural artifacts. Scholars have for some time widely acknowledged Eco's brilliant and substantial contributions to semiotic thought—a discipline that Eco almost single-handedly legitimated with his own theoretical writings, according to many. Similarly, most critics of Eco's hugely popular novels have applauded his knack for making the concepts of semiotics palatable to a general audience, who have in turn prompted a resurgence of interest in his earlier works.

Did u know? Eco achieved literary celebrity with the publication of his best-selling first novel *Il Nome della rosa* (1980; *The Name of the Rose*).

14.1 Biographical Information

Eco was born on January 5, 1932, in Alessandria, Italy, the son of Guilio and Givovanna Eco. He attended the University of Turin, where he studied the philosophies and aesthetic theories of the

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European Middle Ages. In 1954, he took a doctorate degree in philosophy, writing a dissertation that he later published as *Il Problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino* (1956; *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*). Upon graduation Eco edited cultural programs at RAI, an Italian radio and television network, until 1959, when he began writing "Diario minimo," a monthly column for a literary magazine on the politics of popular culture—which he has continued to compose in many reincarnations for a string of periodicals throughout his career. Meanwhile, in 1956, he launched a distinguished academic career at his alma mater, the first of several positions at various Italian and American universities that eventually led him to the University of Bologna, where he has chaired the semiotics department since 1975. First as a lecturer on aesthetics and architecture, then later as a professor of visual communications and semiotics, Eco steadily produced a stream of theoretical writings. With such works as *Opera aperta* (1962; *The Open Work*), *A Theory of Semiotics* (1975; his first work originally published in English), and *Lector in fabula* (1979; *The Role of the Reader*) Eco drew respect from academicians and cultivated repute among semioticians everywhere. Hence he primarily appealed to a specialized intellectual audience—until *The Name of the Rose* appeared in 1980. By 1983 this internationally acclaimed, best-selling novel had been translated into more than twenty languages, won several of Europe's most prestigious literary prizes, and sold over twenty-five million copies worldwide. In 1986 Jean-Jacques Annaud directed a film adaptation of *The Name of the Rose* that starred Sean Connery. By the mid-1980s Eco once again returned to scholarly pursuits, publishing such works as *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984), *Travels in Hyper Reality* (1986), and *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1986), and he contributed his editorial expertise to several English-language anthologies on semiotic theory as well. Following the publication of *Il Pendolo di Foucault* (1988; *Foucault's Pendulum*), Eco's best-selling award-winning second novel, he lectured extensively on semiotics at a number of prestigious learning institutions around the globe, some series of which are gathered in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992) and *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994). As translated editions of his earlier theoretical writings became increasingly available, Eco selected various essays dating from 1985 onwards for *Il Limiti dell'interpretazoine* (1990; *The Limits of Interpretation*) and *Apocalypse Postponed* (1994), and he issued *Misreadings* (1993), a translation of a selection of "Diario minimo" pieces first published in 1963, and *Il Secondo diario minimo* (1994; *How to Travel with a Salmon* (1994), a collection of previously unpublished columns. In these and other later works Eco has tended to focus on the linguistic dimensions of semiotics, writing the provocative monograph *La Ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea* (*The Search for the Perfect Language*) in 1993, the novel *L'Isola del giorno prima* (*The Island of the Day Before*) in 1994, and the essay collection *Serendipities* in 1999.

14.2 Eco's Major Works

Eco's writings on semiotic thought, ranging from such seminal studies as *The Open Work, A Theory of Semiotics,* and *The Role of the Reader* to such later works as *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, Interpretation and Overinterpretation, The Limits of Interpretation,* represent some of the definitive texts of the discipline, which studies the cultural meanings and production of symbols and signs, particularly in relation to both natural and artificially constructed languages. In these works Eco developed the interpretive methods and postulates for semiotic analyses of linguistic cultural artifacts that he stylistically and thematically incorporated into his own encyclopedic fiction. Adapting and often parodying the conventions of the detective genre, Eco's novels illuminate a procedural affinity between semiotic inquiry and criminal investigation as his protagonists give interpretations of elaborate systems of cultural "signs" and explanations of metaphysical phenomena to resolve equally convoluted, ancient mysteries. Cerebral in tone and rife with Latin quotations, *The Name of the Rose* is an intricately plotted, literate murder mystery cloaked with multiple meanings. At once a detective story and a semiotic novel of ideas, the narrative recreates a detailed account of medieval life, politics, and thought as it traces the murders of several monks in attendance at an ecclesiastical council at a Benedictine abbey in northern Italy in 1327. When the survivors enlist Brother William of Baskerville to deduce the mystery, a conflict arises between modern rationality and humor, represented by the humanistic William, and medieval superstition and austerity, represented by the Catholic Jorge de Burgos, the elderly blind librarian at the abbey. A

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literal and metaphoric labyrinth of possibilities and obstacles, the library houses a forbidden collection of heretical texts, which William links to the murders based on evidence of secret symbols and coded manuscripts he uncovers there. In richly allusive passages that seem to fulfill biblical prophecies of the Apocalypse, the Inquisition confounds William's search for the truth, but he eventually locates the banned text that incited the murderer—the legendary second volume of Aristotle's *Poetics,* which reputedly extols the therapeutic values of comedy. *Foucault's Pendulum* touches on many historical and religious mysteries of the last two millennia. The narrative centers on a seedy publishing house in contemporary Milan. In order to relieve the monotony of reviewing manuscripts on occultism, three editors playfully construct an extravagant conspiracy theory that combines details from their work with the spurious contents of a coded manuscript delivered by a mysterious stranger, who is later murdered. With the aid of a computer and some quixotic analogies, they create a program called the Plan in order to decipher the document, which they surmise contains a secret of the medieval Knights Templar, a papal order that fought in the Crusades. The Plan yields a 600-year-long web of arcane correlations linking the mysterious Knights to the motives of such historical figures as Rene Descartes, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Adolf Hitler; it also determines the geographical location of a potentially devastating energy source: the historical site of Foucault's pendulum in Paris. As they reconstruct human history to fit their theoretical matrix, the editors come to believe their own fabrication, and when ardent occultists learn of their secret, their esoteric extrapolation precipitates murder and human sacrifice. As the novel follows the myriad twists of the editors's ruminations, it also ultimately condemns their illogical folly. As he ponders how to reach a nearby island lying just beyond the dateline, his mind wanders through a dense catalogue of seventeenth-century minutiae on the people, places, and things that defined the culture of the 1600s. Among Eco's later nonfiction works, *The Search for the Perfect Language* chronicles the historic quest to recover the primal tongue of human language, while *Serendipities* considers how false beliefs have both beneficially and adversely changed the course of human history.

Notes Eco's third novel, *The Island of the Day Before,* recounts the encyclopedic musings of an early seventeenth-century Italian castaway, who cannot swim yet finds himself marooned off the Fiji Islands along the international dateline.

14.3 Critical Reception

Before he wrote fiction, Eco had already established a brilliant literary reputation with his specialized academic texts on medieval culture and semiotics, which many scholars have regarded as definitive, so the exuberant critical and popular reception of his first novel astonished both himself and his publishers, who have called its commercial success "phenomenal" by book-selling standards and noted the cottage industry that sprung up around the novel. Praising both the scholarship and imagination of *The Name of the Rose,* critics have universally acclaimed Eco's literary skills in the novel, especially his thorough treatment of different levels of meaning in the narrative and his impeccably designed, intellectually stimulating plotting. But commentators's opinions widely diverged on *Foucault's Pendulum* when it first appeared. Some critics disdained Eco's highly allusive style, describing it as laborious, encyclopedic, and inappropriate in a novel, yet others were intrigued by the tone of his metaphysical enquiry, favorably comparing it to the humor of Rabelais', Jonathan Swift's, and Voltaire's satires. Eco once explained that *Foucault's Pendulum* "was a book conceived to irritate the reader. I knew it would provoke ambiguous, non-homogenous responses. …" The success of his fiction writing has simultaneously renewed interest in his academic works, ushering in the appearance of numerous English-language translations of his studies in medieval culture and semiotics. Literary scholars in the United States have consistently remarked on the diversity of Eco's allusions and the range of his themes in his theoretical writings, identifying methods and applying his paradigms to a broad spectrum of texts.

14.4 History and War-Background

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Casablanca is a romantic melodrama set in December 1941 in the French Moroccan port of that name, which at the time was under the control of the Vichy government, who were collaborating with the Germans. It was filmed in the summer of 1942, and its plot was clearly influenced by the needs of wartime propaganda. The US had remained determinedly neutral until Pearl Harbour (7/12/1941), when it declared war on the Axis powers. On November 8 th 1942 an Allied force landed at Casablanca to open the campaign in North Africa. A pre-release screening of Casablanca was arranged soon after, and President Roosevelt saw it on New Years Eve, when presumably he considered that it contained messages supportive of changing US positions on the war since 1939. It was rushed into general release on 23 rd January 1943, to coincide with a summit meeting held in Casablanca between Roosevelt, Churchill and French leaders, in which Roosevelt broke US-Vichy relations. In effect, Warner Brothers was able to capitalise on free publicity and the audience's familiarity with the name of the city when the film opened. One poster for the first run had the slogan 'Never anything more timely than Warner Bros Casablanca' with the title shown against a background montage of relevant news cuttings.

In the opening minutes the scene is set succinctly with the aid of a map and a newsreel-type narration. Many refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe are stuck in Casablanca hoping to fly to Lisbon and on to the safety of America, and ready to pay any price for precious exit visas. Vichy officials and other opportunists thrive on their predicament. A senior Gestapo officer has arrived to investigate the theft of transit letters, demanding full co-operation from the Vichy police chief Captain Renault. During a roundup of suspects, the precarious situation of refugees is illustrated – one scene shows a fleeing suspect without identification papers being shot in the back beneath a wall poster of Marshall Petain, the Vichy head of state – he dies clutching a resistance handbill bearing the Cross of Lorraine symbol, revealing his membership of the Free French Organisation.

Now that the isolationalism of the US was at an end, Casablanca's makers were free to set the film in the early part of the war, when the Nazis over-ran most of Europe. This would have been too controversial in the preceding three years; that US neutrality was a sensitive and potentially divisive issue is illustrated by Young Mr Lincoln, which was made in 1939. As Hayward notes (entry on ideology p194/5), although supposedly about a figure of immense historical importance, the historical context - including the fact that the nation was divided by the Civil War - was completely absent from this film.

From the dialogue we have already been made aware that Rick's café is at the centre of everything that happens in Casablanca, and next an airport beacon - resembling a prison's circular searchlight - sweeps across its entrance, emphasising the forced confinement of those in the city. To reinforce this the camera enters and eavesdrops on groups of black marketeers and would-be escapees of different nationalities at tables inside. Then a brief series of shots introduces Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and is designed to align the viewer's consciousness to his. First his hand is seen signing an advance slip (at 8.28 from start); the shot is positioned so that it appears that a (right-handed) person in the audience is reaching up to the screen to sign the slip. Then the camera pans up to his expressionless face as he drags on a cigarette; he is playing a solitary game of chess while monitoring activities in the casino. Moments later, when he confronts a pompous German who has been denied entry, his whole body emerges from the viewer's space as he walks into the frame (9.03). Presumably the director, Michael Curtiz, felt the need positively to persuade viewers to identify with Rick because he is not immediately likeable or worthy of admiration, in contrast to resistance leader Victor Laszlo, a more attractive heroic character who consistently articulates anti-Nazi sentiments. Also, as the story centres on Rick's redemption from unmediated self-interest to active involvement in the Allied cause, and most of what happens takes its logic from Rick's point of view, Curtiz wanted to discourage the audience from having to make a choice between Rick and Laszlo.

Casablanca is now considered one of the best examples of Hollywood filmmaking in its 'Golden Age'. (For example, in 1998 it was voted 2nd within the American Film Institute's '100 Greatest American Films', beaten only by Citizen Kane). It has been criticised for containing a hotch-potch

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of archetypes, and for its characters having questionable psychological credibility, probably because of its somewhat haphazard production, with the script still being written while shooting was underway (see Umberto Eco: 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' (1985) quoted in article by Krin Gabbard in www.jahsonic.com). Also, its visual style is nothing special, and many modern viewers will find the unsubtle propaganda messages rather distracting, if understandable given when it was made. (For example: (1) Ferrare says to Rick 'When will you realize that in this world today, isolationism is no longer a practical policy? '(13.50); (2) Having refused to betray resistance leaders Laszlo says to Strasser: 'And what if you track down these men and kill them? What if you murdered all of us? From every corner of your Republic thousands would rise to take our places. Even Nazis can't kill that fast.' (50.58); (3) Renault kicking the Vichy water bottle into a waste bin (1:37.08).)

But its strengths lie in its spare, cynical dialogue replete with recognisable one-liners, allied to a tightly constructed plot and narrative structure that focuses the audience's attention on a process of revelation by introducing unresolved clues which prompt the spectator to anticipate events they do not yet understand. At the same time the excellent cinematography and the faultless acting persuade us that the film is presenting the most readily comprehensible depiction of events. This in turn encourages viewers to concentrate on following the plot and identifying with the characters as they deal with the crisis that unfolds. Richard Maltby says 'In Casablanca the audience is attached to the film by the process of the revealing of the story, not by the facts of the story's revelations, … and 'the ordering of events attaches the spectator emotionally to its characters as benevolent sources of meaning and significance.'

One example of the revelatory narrative is the introduction of Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) and the disclosure of her previous relationship with Rick. Up to this point the focus has been on the setting, Rick's cynical isolationism, and the opening plot involving theft of the coveted letters of transit. Ilsa and Laszlo are first seen entering Ricks café (24.15) in a long medium tracking shot which takes them past Sam at the piano. Sam and Ilsa appear to recognise one another; Sam looks worried and shakes his head. Ilsa and Laszlo are joined by Renault, and Ilsa asks him about Sam: 'somewhere I've seen him', a remark whose significance is pointed up by its delivery in extreme close-up. Renault supplies an enigmatic description of Rick and its impact on Ilsa is again shown in close-up. The group is joined by Major Strasser and the conversation moves on, but the disruptive influence of Rick's likely presence on Ilsa is registered by the repetition of close shots of Bergman, separating her from the men's discussion. These signals are not immediately pursued, but once Ilsa is left alone at her table she calls Sam to join her. He tells her that Rick has another girlfriend, but Ilsa is unconvinced and asks him to play As Time Goes By, for old times' sake (30.53). A song whose associations are not revealed until later (it features in the scene in the Paris bar in the flashback sequence (41.00)) is made significant by it being played over a still, melancholic close-up of Bergman that lasts for 15 seconds (31.27 to 31.52), noticeably longer than any previous shot.

As Time Goes By was originally written for a 1931 Broadway show and would have been well known to 1943 audiences, enhancing their understanding of Ilsa and Rick's reaction to it. It is subsequently used as linking music; many commentators on Casablanca cite the subliminal but nostalgically potent music, both diegetic and non-diegetic, as a key factor in its success. As well as As Time Goes By it includes several popular 1940s big band tunes including It Had To Be You, Shine, and the appropriately titled You Got Trouble (Knock On Wood) which Sam performs in full to the café clientele.

The existence of a bond between Rick and Ilsa is confirmed when As Time Goes By draws Rick to the table, and by the inter-cutting of extreme close-ups of their faces reinforced by a musical pulse on the sound track to signal a dramatic event. (Musical pointers to emphasise tense moments are used sparingly in Casablanca, making this one more noticeable.) This first close-up of Bogart in the film is significant – slightly closer than normal, using a wider angle lens than previously, with the viewpoint slightly above Bogart's eyeline. The audience would have subliminally registered these variations from the norm and assume they have meaning – in this case surprise and discomfort - without them being articulated explicitly, or markedly disrupting the flow of images. Maltby sums it up neatly: 'At this point, with the nature of their involvement completely unstated by the

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same means that is has been declared central to the narrative, Renault and Strasser re-appear to change the subject and the couple spend the rest of the conversation exchanging looks (via more close-ups) and reminiscences of their last meeting ("The Germans wore grey, you wore blue")'. Then, once Ilsa and Laszlo have left the club, when he asks about Rick she is non-committal and at this point passes through a shadow (34.12), implying that something is being concealed. The audience is drawn into a process of revelation without yet fully understanding what is to be revealed.

Ilsa's re-appearance propels Rick into a heavy drinking session during which his face is shown in half-shadow in the darkened café, illuminated only by the swooping beacon from outside, complementing his depressive mood. He makes an obvious reference to Pearl Harbour: 'It's December 1941 in Casablanca. What time is it in New York? I bet they're asleep in New York. I bet they're asleep all over America.' This retrospective warning appears to be designed to confirm in the (US) audience's mind that joining the war was right and possibly overdue. The drinking binge leads to a flashback sequence of happier times in a whirlwind romance with Ilsa in Paris immediately before the German occupation in 1940; the full lighting of the initial scene immediately lifting the mood. The flashback includes dramatic documentary newsfilm of the Nazi blitzkrieg leading to scenes involving Rick and Ilsa where historic details are communicated via newspaper headlines and tannoy announcements including 'Paris is an Open City', 'The population is advised to evacuate', and 'Italy declares war on us'.

It is pertinent to note that these events took place only two years before the film was made. When Ilsa fails to join him on the Marseilles train to freedom, the encroachment of war is linked to the split in their personal relationship. These scenes would have resonated strongly with the wartime audience, many of whom would have relationships disrupted or ended because of the war. The flashback is positioned at this point in the narrative to provide a partial exposé of events from Rick's point of view, to explain his mood and to switch attention to his relationship with Ilsa. At the end of his reminiscing, the camera pans from left to right to Rick dozing drunkenly in right foreground and knocking over his whisky glass – a parallel to Ilsa knocking over her glass in the Paris flashback after she asks 'Kiss me as if it were the last time.'

Rick is repositioned to the left when suddenly the café door opens and Ilsa is seen in the distance in the middle of the screen, strikingly spotlighted in a shaft of light – almost as if in Rick's dream. To support the narrative structure, each scene in Casablanca advances the plot by confirming what could be derived from previous scenes, and adding further information. This provides continuity and information about characters' motivations. Rick's drunken condition exposes his inner sentiments behind the hard cynical exterior when he dismisses Ilsa's roundabout explanation of why she abandoned him in Paris, and his continued feelings for her are confirmed when he directly asks again the next day in the market (54.30), and Ilsa reveals Laszlo is, and was then, her husband.

The transformation of the character of Rick from determined neutrality and self-preserving interest (embodied in the repeated 'I stick my neck out for nobody') to full engagement (killing the Gestapo commandant in the process of assisting Laszlo and Ilsa to escape) can be interpreted as an analogy for the historical process of evolving US policy towards involvement in the war (It is easy to overlook the widespread support for Fascism among political and business leaders in the US during the period 1938-40. For example, Roosevelt openly approved of the 1938 dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Germany and in 1939 was quoted as regarding Mussolini's regime in Italy as 'of great importance to the world - though still in the experimental stage.' (see Chomsky p68)). The dialogue reveals that Rick has a background of idealistic support for lost causes in opposition to the Axis powers: he was involved in running guns to the Ethiopians when they were invaded by Italy (which would have made him liable to prosecution in the US), and fighting on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War. But his idealism clearly needs re-kindling, and the narrative offers several potential turning points, each of which might also be seen as a metaphor for a real historical event. These include his intervention at the roulette wheel on behalf of the Bulgarian couple, his agreement to the Marseillaise being played in his café in opposition to the German patriotic song, and the frank discussion with Laszlo after he has been injured.

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Immediately before this last scene Rick's confrontation with Ilsa (1:16.16 onwards) draws out their true feelings. She begs for visas and pulls a gun when he refuses, still exhibiting bitterness about Paris ('As long as I have those letters I'll never be lonely'). But then she crumbles, restates her love and submits to his will ('I don't know what's right any longer. You have to think for the two of us. For all of us.') when it is clear his feelings for her remain strong. This is one of many emotional moments for Bergman's character, during which there are several shots of her face in various degrees of close-up. In Casablanca Bergman was in her artistic and visual prime, exuding qualities variously described as a kittenish sexuality and a country girl wholesomeness. Audiences had been waiting for a suitable follow up to her much admired Hollywood debut in Intermezzo three years earlier. David Shipman says she is 'superbly right and completely magical' as Ilsa, and that 'she and Bogart were memorable together and the film was a solid gold hit', which set her up to become one of the biggest Hollywood stars of the 1940s (in entry for Bergman in The Great Movie Stars Vol 1). Both leading actors would be forever associated with these roles. Bogart had finally achieved star rating via High Sierra and The Maltese Falcon the previous year, after twelve years in minor parts and poor movies. He cleverly portrays Rick as a complicated man torn between an idealistic past and a bitter present; his success in Casablanca (including an Oscar nomination) enabled him to broaden from hard-boiled gangsters to romantic leads, notably his films with Lauren Bacall.

The confrontation scene leads to an ingenious closing plot sequence packed into the final 12 minutes in which Rick contrives a situation in which Ilsa and Laszlo escape together, while he gets away with murder and keeps Renault on side. Film critic Roger Ebert asserts that this sequence 'combines suspense, romance and comedy as they have rarely been brought together on screen'.

Although Casablanca has dark themes of repression, danger and lost love, the mood is not allowed to become too serious because of the dry humour embedded in the sardonic dialogue exchanges, particularly those involving Rick and Renault. To further lighten the tone there are also some specifically comedic moments: a pickpocket lifts a wallet, then bumps into Carl, who recognises him and immediately checks his own pockets (58.48); the bartender kisses Rick on both cheeks (1:7.20) after he has rigged the roulette wheel for the Bulgarian couple; an elderly couple trying out their sparse English on Carl have trouble telling the time (1:1.45) (He: 'What watch?'; She: 'Ten watch'; He: 'Such much?'; Carl: 'You'll get along beautifully in America'); and Renault accepting his casino winnings immediately after he has closed Rick's ostensibly because he is 'shocked to find that gambling has been going on'.

It is known that there were two scripts for the last day of shooting. With hindsight it is clear that the version that was not used, which kept Rick and Ilsa together, would have diminished the overall impact of the film, because it would have tarnished Rick with self-interest. The ending actually filmed allows Rick a dignified exit, and a resolution of the inner turmoil between his feelings for Ilsa and his hatred of the Nazis. It also enables the audience to feel good about his self-sacrifice ('I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world') and of his continued participation in the French Resistance alongside Renault.

The richness of the supporting characters is also important: the corrupt owner of the rival club, the weasily black marketeer, the heartless Gestapo commandant, and others, create a moral backdrop for the crisis facing the lead characters and the decisions they take. Best of all is Claude Rains as Renault, who manages a perfect balance between corrupt self-interest ('I blow with the wind' – a cynical reference to the Vichy government) and personal charm. In some ways he is the chief villain, but Rains makes him a sympathetic, amusing and believable character.

Within the Rick/ Laszlo/ Ilsa emotional triangle Rick can be seen as the flawed hero outcast from his own land, contrasted with Laszlo's official/ uncontaminated hero. From this perspective the film provides a reassuring message that the American outlaw figure, and by extension the American nation as a whole, can be true to their instincts even in a world war, a conflict they were originally loathe to join. (In the Western the outlaw hero usually needs a semi-corrupt law official to help him escape; Renault fills that role here.) As Gabbard observes 'Casablanca offers the viewer benign regression to a moment when right and wrong were clear cut and going off to war could be a deeply romantic gesture.'

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Casablanca is now over 60 years old and in many respects is very much a film of its (specific) time: there is a liberal sprinkling of rather crude wartime propaganda, it was made in black and white entirely on studio sets, and, typically for the period, everyone appears immaculately dressed throughout and seem to survive on bourbon and champagne cocktails. There is, therefore, much debate about the reasons for its enduring appeal. Undoubtedly its legendary status plays a part, by promoting interest and respect from new generations of viewers, that would otherwise not be granted a film of this vintage. This apart, it can be argued that it deserves admiration for its rich combination of skilfully drawn, three-dimensional characters, a cleverly constructed plot that maintains tension and keeps going right to the last frame, its nostalgic music, Ingrid Bergman's luminous natural beauty, the amusing snappy dialogue, and flawless cinematic execution. As an NFT reviewer concluded ' … the sum of its many marvellous parts far exceeds the whole.' (National Film Theatre review 1974, quoted in Halliwell's Film Guide)

14.5 Eco's Writing

The original play was inspired by a trip to Europe made by Murray Burnett in 1938, during which he visited Vienna shortly after the Anschluss, where he saw discrimination by Nazis first-hand. In the south of France, he came across a nightclub, which had a multinational clientele and the prototype of Sam, the black piano player. In the play, the Ilsa character was an American named Lois Meredith and did not meet Laszlo until after her relationship with Rick in Paris had ended; Rick was a lawyer. To make Rick's motivation more believable, Wallis, Curtiz, and the screenwriters decided to set the film before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The first writers assigned to the script were the Epstein twins, Julius and Philip who, against the wishes of Warner Brothers, left the project after the attack on Pearl Harbor to work with Frank Capra on the *Why We Fight* series in Washington, D.C. While they were gone, the other credited writer, Howard Koch was assigned to the script and produced some thirty to forty pages. When the Epstein brothers returned after a month, they were reassigned to Casablanca and—contrary to what Koch claimed in two published books—his work was not used. In the final Warner Brothers budget for the film, the Epsteins were paid $30,416 and Koch $4,200.

The uncredited Casey Robinson assisted with three weeks of rewrites, including contributing the series of meetings between Rick and Ilsa in the cafe. Koch highlighted the political and melodramatic elements, while Curtiz seems to have favored the romantic parts, insisting on retaining the Paris flashbacks. Wallis wrote the final line ("Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.") after shooting had been completed. Bogart had to be called in a month after the end of filming to dub it. Despite the many writers, the film has what Ebert describes as a "wonderfully unified and consistent" script. Koch later claimed it was the tension between his own approach and Curtiz's which accounted for this: "Surprisingly, these disparate approaches somehow meshed, and perhaps it was partly this tug of war between Curtiz and me that gave the film a certain balance." Julius Epstein would later note the screenplay contained "more corn than in the states of Kansas and Iowa combined. But when corn works, there's nothing better."

Initial Response

Casablanca received "consistently good reviews". Bosley Crowther of The New York Times wrote, "The Warners... have a picture which makes the spine tingle and the heart take a leap." The newspaper applauded the combination of "sentiment, humor and pathos with taut melodrama and bristling intrigue". While he noted its "devious convolutions of the plot", he praised the screenplay quality as "of the best" and the cast's performances as "all of the first order".

The trade paper Variety commended the film's "combination of fine performances, engrossing story and neat direction" and the "variety of moods, action, suspense, comedy and drama that makes Casablanca an A-1 entry at the b.o". The paper applauded the performances of Bergman and Henreid and analyzed Bogart's own: "Bogart, as might be expected, is more at ease as the bitter and cynical operator of a joint than as a lover, but handles both assignments with superb finesse." Variety wrote of the film's real-world impact, "Film is splendid anti-Axis propaganda,

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particularly inasmuch as the propaganda is strictly a by-product of the principal action and contributes to it instead of getting in the way." Some other reviews were less enthusiastic: The New Yorker rated it only "pretty tolerable".

Lasting Impact

The film has grown in popularity. Murray Burnett called it "true yesterday, true today, true tomorrow". By 1955, the film had brought in $6.8 million, making it only the third most successful of Warners' wartime movies (behind *Shine On, Harvest Moon* and *This is the Army*). On April 21, 1957, the Brattle Theater of Cambridge, Massachusetts, showed the film as part of a season of old movies. It was so popular that it began a tradition of screening *Casablanca* during the week of final exams at Harvard University which continues to the present day, and is emulated by many colleges across the United States. Todd Gitlin, a professor of sociology who himself attended one of these screenings, had said that the experience was, "the acting out of my own personal rite of passage". The tradition helped the movie remain popular while other famous films of the 1940s have faded away, and by 1977, *Casablanca* was the most frequently broadcast film on American television.

On the film's 50th anniversary, the *Los Angeles Times* called *Casablanca*'s great strength "the purity of its Golden Age Hollywoodness [and] the enduring craftsmanship of its resonantly hokey dialogue". The newspaper believed the film achieved a "near-perfect entertainment balance" of comedy, romance, and suspense.

According to Roger Ebert, *Casablanca* is "probably on more lists of the greatest films of all time than any other single title, including *Citizen Kane*" because of its wider appeal. Ebert opined that *Citizen Kane* is generally considered to be a "greater" film but *Casablanca* is more loved. Ebert said that he has never heard of a negative review of the film, even though individual elements can be criticized, citing unrealistic special effects and the stiff character/portrayal of Laszlo. Rudy Behlmer emphasized the variety in the picture: "it's a blend of drama, melodrama, comedy [and] intrigue".

Ebert has said that the film is popular because "the people in it are all so good" and that it is "a wonderful gem". As the Resistance hero, Laszlo is ostensibly the most noble, although he is so stiff that he is hard to like. The other characters, in Behlmer's words, are "not cut and dried": they come into their goodness in the course of the film. Renault begins the film as a collaborator with the Nazis, who extorts sexual favors from refugees and has Ugarte killed. Rick, according to Behlmer, is "not a hero,... not a bad guy": he does what is necessary to get along with the authorities and "sticks his neck out for nobody". Even Ilsa, the least active of the main characters, is "caught in the emotional struggle" over which man she really loves. By the end of the film, however, "everybody is sacrificing."

There are a few dissenting reviewers. According to Pauline Kael, "It's far from a great film, but it has a special appealingly schlocky romanticism..."[70] Umberto Eco wrote that "by any strict critical standards... *Casablanca* is a very mediocre film." He viewed the changes the characters undergo as inconsistent rather than complex: "It is a comic strip, a hotch-potch, low on psychological credibility, and with little continuity in its dramatic effects."

There is anecdotal evidence that *Casablanca* may have made a deeper impression among film-lovers than within the professional movie-making establishment. In the November/December 1982 issue of *American Film*, Chuck Ross claimed that he retyped the screenplay to *Casablanca*, only changing the title back to *Everybody Comes to Rick's* and the name of the piano player to Dooley Wilson, and submitted it to 217 agencies. Eighty-five of them read it; of those, thirty-eight rejected it outright, thirty-three generally recognized it (but only eight specifically as *Casablanca*), three declared it commercially viable, and one suggested turning it into a novel. Hugh Hefner cited it as part of his motivation to open up the Playboy Club.

Influence on Later Works

Many subsequent films have drawn on elements of *Casablanca*. *Passage to Marseille* reunited Bogart, Rains, Curtiz, Greenstreet and Lorre in 1944, while there are many similarities between *Casablanca*

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and two later Bogart films, *To Have and Have Not* (1944) and *Sirocco* (1951). Parodies have included the Marx Brothers' *A Night in Casablanca* (1946), Neil Simon's *The Cheap Detective* (1978), and *Out Cold* (2001), while it provided the title for the 1995 hit *The Usual Suspects*. Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam* (1972) appropriated Bogart's *Casablanca* persona as the fantasy mentor for Allen's nebbishy character, featuring actor Jerry Lacy in the role of Bogart.

Casablanca itself was a plot device in the science-fiction television movie *Overdrawn at the Memory Bank* (1983), based on John Varley's story, and made a similar, though much less pivotal, appearance in Terry Gilliam's dystopian *Brazil* (1985). Warner Bros. produced its own parody of the film in the homage *Carrotblanca*, a 1995 Bugs Bunny cartoon. In *Casablanca*, a novella by Argentine writer Edgar Brau, the protagonist somehow wanders into Rick's Café Americain and listens to a strange tale related by Sam.

14.6 Summary

- *Casablanca* has been subjected to many different readings. Semioticians account for the film's popularity by claiming that its inclusion of a whole series of stereotypes paradoxically strengthens the film.Umberto Eco explained: Thus *Casablanca* is not just one film. It is many films, an anthology. [...] When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us. For we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, and celebrating a reunion.
- Eco also singled out sacrifice as one of the film's key themes: "the myth of sacrifice runs through the whole film." It was this theme which resonated with a wartime audience that was reassured by the idea that painful sacrifice and going off to war could be romantic gestures done for the greater good. Koch also considered the film a political allegory. Rick is compared to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who gambled "on the odds of going to war until circumstance and his own submerged nobility force him to close his casino (partisan politics) and commit himself—first by financing the Side of Right and then by fighting for it." The connection is reinforced by the film's title, which means "white house".
- Harvey Greenberg presents a Freudian reading in his *The Movies on Your Mind*, in which the transgressions which prevent Rick from returning to the U.S. constitute an Oedipus complex, which is resolved only when Rick begins to identify with the father figure of Laszlo and the cause which he represents. Sidney Rosenzweig argues that such readings are reductive, and that the most important aspect of the film is its ambiguity, above all in the central character of Rick; he cites the different names which each character gives Rick (Richard, Ricky, Mr. Rick, Herr Blaine and so on) as evidence of the different meanings which he has for each person.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

(*i*) The best setting rural of eco is ..... .

(*a*) Nome della rosa (*b*) Cosablanca

(*c*) The Aesthetics of Themas (*d*) None of these

(*ii*) Eco was born on January 5th, ...

(*a*) 1930 (*b*) 1931

(*c*) 1932 (*d*) 1941

(*iii*) The novel the Island of the day before, is the ..... novel of eco.

(*a*) 1st (*b*) 2nd

(*c*) 3rd (*d*) None of these

(*iv*) The purting of its Golden Age Hollywoodness—refers to ..... .

(*a*) American (*b*) Casablanca

(*c*) Passage to Marscille (*d*) None of these

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14.7 Key-Words

1. Affective fallacy : Term used by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley to designate what they see as the error of making subjective responses (congnitive or emotional) the criteria for interpretive, critical or aesthetic judgements.
2. Allegory : (Gk. 'other speaking') a narrative which—through allusion, metaphor, symbolism, etc. can be read not simply on its own terms but as telling another, quite different story at the same time.
3. Alliteration : Repeated consonant sounds, particularly at the beginning of words, e.g. 'kiddies' clobber', 'mountains of moonstone'.

14.8 Review Questions

1. Discuss Umberto Eco's life and work.
2. What are the major works of Umberto Eco?
3. Explain history and war background.
4. Write a short note on Casablanca.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*c*) (*iii*) (*c*) (*iv*) (*b*)

14.9 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 15: Umberto Eco's 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' (Textual Analysis)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Eco's Casablanca.
- Analyse Eco's Casablanca.

Introduction

All texts, whether they are spoken or written, make their meanings against the background of other texts and things that have been said on other occasions (Lemke 1992). Texts may more or less implicitly or explicitly cite other texts, they may refer to other texts,or they may allude to other past, or future, texts. We thus 'make sense of every word, every utterance, or act against the background of (some) other words, utterances, acts of a similar kind' (Lemke 1995: 23). All texts are, thus, in an intertextual relationship with other texts.

Umberto Eco (1987) provides an interesting discussion of inter-textuality in his chapter 'Casablanca: Cult movies and intertextual collage'. Eco points out that the film Casablanca was made on a very small budget and in a very short time. As a result its creators were forced to improvise the plot, mixing a little of everything they knew worked in a movie as they went. The result is what Eco describes as an 'intertextual collage'. For Eco, Casablanca has been so successful because it is not, in fact, an instance of a single kind of film genre but a mixing of stereotyped situations that are drawn from a number of different kinds of film genres. As the film proceeds, he argues, we recognize the film genres that they recall. We also recognize the pleasures we have experienced when we have watched these kinds of films.

The first few scenes of Casablanca, for example, recall film genres such as the adventure movie, the patriotic movie, news reels, war propaganda movies, gangster movies, action movies, spy movies and finally, with the appearance of Ingrid Bergman, a romance. The poster for thismovie suggests a number of these film genres, but people who have seen the movie would most likely describe it as a romance. As Brown (1992: 7) observes, the chemistry between its two stars Humphrey Bogard and Ingrid Bergman 'was so thick it would make movie history' and defines Casablanca movie romance for all time. It is not, however, just a romance. It is, rather, a mixing of types of film, in which one of the major themes is the relationship between the two lead players, set in a world of action, adventure, spies, gangsters and of course, romance.

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15.1 Intertextual Analysis

A cult film, also commonly referred to as a cult classic, is a film that has acquired a cult following with a specific group of fans. Often, cult movies have failed to achieve fame outside small fanbases; however, there are exceptions that have managed to gain fame among mainstream audiences. Many cult movies have gone on to transcend their original cult status and have become recognized as classics. Cult films often become the source of a thriving, obsessive, and elaborate subculture of fandom, hence the analogy to cults. However, not every film with a devoted fanbase is necessarily a cult film. Usually, cult films have limited but very special, noted appeal. Cult films are often known to be eccentric, often do not follow traditional standards of mainstream cinema and usually explore topics not considered in any way mainstream-yet there are examples that are relatively normal. Many are often considered controversial because they step outside standard narrative and technical conventions.

A cult film is a movie that attracts a devoted group of followers or obsessive fans, often despite having failed commercially on its initial release. The term also describes films that have remained popular over a long period of time amongst a small group of followers. Although they may only have a short cinema life, cult films often enjoy ongoing popularity through long runs on video, thus being issued in video "runs" with more copies than other movies. The movie Office Space (1999), which lost money during its box office run, managed to turn significant profits when word-of-mouth made it a popular video rental and purchase. Harold and Maude (1971) was not successful financially at the time of its original release, but has since earned a cult following and has become successful following its video and DVD releases. Many cult films were independent films and were not expected by their creators to have mainstream success. Sometimes the audience response to a cult film is somewhat different than what was intended by the film makers. Cult films usually offer something different or innovative in comparison to mainstream films, but cult films can also be popular across a wide audience.

A film can be both a major studio release and a cult film, particularly if despite its affiliation with a major studio, it failed to achieve broad success on either the theatrical or home video markets but was championed by a small number of dedicated film fanatics who seek out lesser-known offerings. It is also true that the content of certain films (such as dark subjects, alienation, transgressive content, or other controversial subject matter) can also decide whether or not a film is a "cult film", regardless of the film's budget or studio affiliations. An example may be Paul Verhoeven's big budgeted, highly sexualized Showgirls (1995), initially intended to be a drama film about the rise of a Las Vegas stripper, that flopped both critically and commercially when released theatrically; afterward, it enjoyed success on the home video market, generating more than $100 million from video rentals. Today, it is a favorite of gay audiences and audiences in general have considered it to be a comedy thanks to frequent midnight movie showings. According to activist writer Naomi Klein, ironic enjoyment of the film initially arose among those with the video before MGM, the film's chief marketer, capitalized on the idea. MGM noticed the video was performing well since "trendy twenty-somethings were throwing Showgirls irony parties, laughing sardonically at the implausibly poor screenplay and shrieking with horror at the aerobic sexual encounters."

15.2 Text—Casablanca

15.2.1 Cult

"Was it the cannon fire or is my heart pounding?" Whenever Casablanca is shown, at this point the audience reacts with an enthusiasm usually reserved for football. Sometimes a single word is enough: fans cry every time Bogey says "kid." Frequently the spectators quote the best lines before they are uttered. According to the traditional standardsi n aesthetics, Casablancais not a work of art-if such an expression still means anything. In any case, if the films of Dreyer, Eisenstein, or Antonioni are works of art, Casablancare presents a very modest aesthetic achievement. It is a hodgepodge of sensational scenes strung together implausibly; its characters are psychologically incredible, its actors act in a manneristic way. Nevertheless, it is a great example of cine-matic

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discourse, a palimpsest for the future students of twentieth-century religiosity, a paramount laboratory for semiotic research in textual strategies. Moreover, it has become a cult movie. What are the requirements for transforming a book or a movie into a cult object? The work must be loved, obviously, but this is not enough. It must provide a completely furnished world, so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were part of the beliefs of a sect, a private world of their own, a world about which one can play puzzle games and trivia contests, and whose adepts recognize each other through a common competence. Of course all these elements (characters and episodes) must have some archetypal appeal, as we shall see. One can ask and answer questions about the various stations of the subway in New York or Paris only if these spots have become or have been taken as mythical areas, and such names as "Canarsy Line" or "Vincennes- Neuilly" do not only stand for physical places, but become the catalyzers of collective memories.

It is curious how a book can give rise to a cult even though it is a great work of art. Both The ThreeM usketeersan d The Divine Comedyr ank among the cult books - and there are more trivia games among the fans of Dante than among the fans of Dumas. On the contrary, I suspect, a cult movie must dis-play some organic imperfections: it seems that the boastful Rio Bravo is a cult movie whereas the great Stagecoachis not. I think that in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to unhinge it, to break it up or take it apart so that one then may remember only parts of it, regardless of their original relationship to the whole. With a book, one can unhinge it manually, so to speak, dismembering it into a series of excerpts. A movie, on the contrary, must be already wobbly and disjointed in itself. For a perfect movie, which cannot be reread every time we want or from the place we choose, as it happens with a book, remains in our memory as a whole, in the form of a central idea or emotion; only a disjointed movie survives as a disconnected series of images, of peaks, of visionary icebergs. To become cult, a movie should not display a central idea but many. It should not exhibit a coherent philosophy of composition. It must live on in and because of its glorious incoherence. However, it must have some qualities.

Let me say that it may be disjointed from the point of view of its production (in the sense that nobody knew exactly what had to be done - as is evidently the case with The Rocky Horror Picture Show), but yet it must display certain textual features since, beyond the conscious con-trol of the producer, it has become a sort of textual syllabus, a living example of living textuality. In the face of this, the addressee must suspect that it is not true that works are created by their authors. Works are created by works, texts are created by texts, and all together they speak to and with one another independently of the intentions of their authors.

A cult movie is the proof that, as literature comes from literature, cinema also comes from cinema. Which are the elements of a movie that can be dislocated from the whole and adored for themselves? In order to go on with this analysis of Casablanca, I should use some important semiotic categories, such as the ones (provided by the Russian Formalists) of theme and motif. I confess that I find very difficult to ascertain what the various Russian Formalists meant by motif. If-according to Veselovskij- a motif is the simplest narrative unit, then one wonders why "fire from heaven" should belong to the same category as "the persecuted maid" (since the former can be represented by an image, while the latter requires a certain narrative development). It would be interesting to follow Tomacevskij and to look, in Casablanca,fo r free and tied motifs or for dynamic and static motifs. We should distinguish between more or less universal narra-tive functions a la Propp, visual stereotypes like the Cynic Adventurer, and more complex archetypal situations like the Unhappy Love. I hope that someone will do such a job, but let me today assume, more prudently (and borrowing the concept from the research in artificial intelligence), the more flexible notion of "frame." In my The Role of the Reader Idistinguished between common and intertextual frames. By common frame I meant data-structures for representing stereo-typed situations like dining at a restaurant or going to the railway station; that is, a sequence of actions which are more or less coded by our normal competence. And by intertextual frames I meant stereotyped situations coming from the previous textual tradition and recorded by our encyclopedia, such as, for example, the duel between the sheriff and the bad guy or the narrative situation in which the Hero fights against the Villain and wins; as well as more macroscopic textual situations, such as the story of the vierges ouilleeo r the clas-sical scene of the recognition (Bakhtin considered this a motif, in the

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sense of a chronotope). We could distinguish between stereotyped intertextual frames (for instance, the Drunkard Redeemed by Love) and stereotyped iconographical units (for instance, the Evil Nazi). But since even these iconographical units, when they appear in a movie, if they do not directly elicit an action, at least suggest its possible development, we can use the notion of intertextual frame to cover both. We are interested, moreover, in finding out those frames which not only are recognizable by the audience as belonging to a sort of ancestral intertex-tual tradition, but which also display a particular fascination. "A suspect who escapes a pass control and is shot by the police" is undoubtedly an intertextual frame, but it does not have a "magic" flavor. Let us take intuitively the idea of "magic" frame. Let us define as "magic" those frames which, when appear-ing in a movie, and when then separated from the whole, transform this movie into a cult movie. In Casablancaw e can find more intertextual frames than "magic" intertextual frames. Let us call these latter intertextualar chetypes. The term "archetype" here does not pretend to have any particularp sycho-analytic or mythic connotation, but serves only to indicate a pre-established and frequently re-appearing narrative situation that is cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts, and provokes in the addressee a sort of intense emotion accompanied by the vague feeling of a dejavu that everybody yearns to see again. I would not say that an intertextual archetype is neces-sarily "universal." It can belong to a rather recent textual tradition, as it happens with certain "topoi" of slapstick comedy. It is sufficient to consider it as a topos or standard situation that comes to be particularly appealing to a given cultural area or historical period.

15.2.2 The Making of "Casablanca"

"Can I tell you a story?" asks Ilse. Then she adds: "I don't know the ending yet.") Rick says: "Go on. Tell it. Maybe one'll come to you as you go along." Rick's line is a sort of epitome of Casablancait self. According to Ingrid Bergman, it seems that the film was being made at the same time as it was being shot. Until the last moment not even Michael Curtiz knew whether Ilse would leave with Rick or with Victor, and it is plausible that Ingrid Bergman appears so fascinatingly mysterious because she did not know which man she should look at more tenderly. This explains why, in the story, she in fact does not choose her fate, but rather is chosen. When you do not know how to deal with a story, you put in it stereotyped situations because you know that they, at least, have already worked elsewhere. Take a marginal but revealing example. Each time Laszlo orders something to drink (and it happens four times) he changes his choice: (i) cointreau, (ii) cocktail, (iii) cognac, and (iv) whiskey (once he drinks champagne but does not ask for it). Why such confusing and confused drinking habits in a man endowed with an ascetic temper? There is no psychological reason for that. My guess is simply that each time Curtiz was quoting, unconsciously, similar situations in other movies and trying to provide a reasonably complete sampling. Thus one is tempted to read Casablancaas T. S. Eliot read Hamlet, attributing its fascination not to the fact that it was a successful work (actually he considered it one of Shakespeare's less fortunate efforts), but to the imperfection of its composition. He viewed Hamlet as the result of an unsuccessful fusion of several earlier versions of the story, so that the puzzling ambiguity of the main character was due to the author's difficulty in putting together different topics. So both critics and public find Hamlet beautiful because it is interesting, believing it is interesting because it is beautiful. On a smaller scale the same thing happened to Casablanca. Forced to improvise a plot, the authors whipped up a little of everything, and everything they put in came from a repertoire that had stood the test of time. When only a few stock formulas are used, the result is simply kitsch. But when the reper-toire of formulas is used wholesale, then the result is an architecture like Gaudi's Holy Family Church-the same vertigo, the same stroke of genius.

15.3.3 Stop By Stop

Every story plays upon one or more archetypes. Usually, to make a good story a single archetype is enough. But Casablancais not satisfied with that: it uses them all. It would be nice to identify our archetypes scene by scene and shot by shot, stopping the tape at every relevant step. Every time I have scanned Casablanca with very cooperative research groups, the whole business has taken many hours. Besides, when a team starts this kind of game, the chances of stopping the videotape grow proportionally according to the size of the audience. Each member of the team sees something

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the others did not, and many start pro-jecting into the movie their memories of other movies made after Casablanca -which seems to be the normal situation for a cult movie and which suggests that perhaps the best deconstructive readings should be made upon unhinged texts (or that deconstruction is simply a way of breaking texts). I think, however, that the first twenty minutes of the film represent a kind of review of the principal archetypes. Once they have been assembled, without any concern for synthesis, then the story begins to suggest a sort of savage syntax of the archetypal elements and organizes them in multilevelled oppositions. Casablancalo oks like a musical piece with an extraordinarilyl ong overturew here every theme is exhibited according to a monodic line. Only later the symphonic work takes place. In a way, the first twenty minutes could be analyzed by a Russian Formalist and the rest by a Greimasian. So, let me try just a sample analysis of the first part. I think that a real text-analytical work on Casablancais still to be done. I merely offer here some hints to future researchers who will implement, some day, a complete recon-struction of its deep textual structure. First, African music, then, the Marseillaise. Two different genres are evoked: the adventure movie and the patriotic movie. Third genre: the newsreel. Over the image of the globe, the voice off suggests the news report. Fourth genre: the odyssey of the refugees. Fifth genre: Casa-blanca and Lisbon are, traditionally, high places of international intrigue. Thus, in two minutes, five genres are evoked at the same time. Casablanca-Lisbon. Passage to the Promised Land (Lisbon-America). Casablanca is the Magic Door. We still do not know what is the Magic Key and by which Magic Horse one can reach the Promised Land. "Wait, wait, wait." To make the passage one must submit to a Test. The Long Expectation. Purgatory. "Deutschland iiber alles." The German anthem introduces the theme of the Barbarians. The Kasbah. Pepe le Moko. Confusion, robberies, violence, and repression. Petain (Vichy) vs. the Cross of Lorena. See at the end the same opposition closing the story: Vichy water versusJoining the Resistance. War Propaganda movie. The Magic Key: the visa. It is around the winning of the Magic Key that passions are unleashed. Captain Renault is the Guardian of the Door or the boatman of the Acheron, to be conquered by a Magic Gift (money or sex). The Magic Horse: the airplane. The airplane flies over Rick's "CafeAmericain" recalling the Promised Land of which the Caf6 is the reduced-scale model. Major Strasser shows up. Theme of the Barbarians and their emasculated slaves. "Je suis l'empire a la fin de la decadence / qui regarde passer les grands barbares blancs / en composant des acrostiques indolents. .. ."

"Everybody comes to Rick's." By quoting the original play, Renault intro-duces the audience to the Caf6. The interior: the Foreign Legion (each char-acter has a different nationality and a different story to tell - as well as his own skeleton in the closet), Grand Hotel (people come and people go, and nothing ever happens), the Mississippi River Boat, the New Orleans Brothel (with the black piano player), the Inferno of Gambling in Macao or Singapore (with Chinese women), the Smugglers' Paradise, the Last Outpost on the Edge of the Desert. Rick's place is a magic circle where everything can happen-love, death, pursuit, espionage, games of chance, seductions, music, patriotism. Limited resources and the unity of place, due to the theatrical origin of the story, suggested an admirable condensation of events in a single setting. One can identify the usual paraphernalia of at least ten exotic genres. Rick slowly shows up, first by a synecdoche (his hand), then by a metonymy (the check). The various aspects of the contradictory (plurifilmic) personality of Rick are introduced: the Fatal Adventurer, the Self-Made Businessman (money is money), the Tough Guy from a gangster movie, Our Man in Casa-blanca (international intrigue), the Cynic. Later he will also be characterized as the Hemingway Hero (he helped the Ethiopians and the Spaniards against fascism). He does not drink. This undoubtedly represents a nice problem, for later Rick must play the role of the Redeemed Drunkard, and he has to be made a drunk (as Disillusioned Lover) so that he can be redeemed. But the face of Bogey supports pretty well this unbearable amount of contradictory psychological features. The Magic Key itself: the transit letters. Rick receives them from Peter Lorre, and from this moment everybody wants them. How to avoid thinking of Sam Spade and of The Maltese Falcon? Music Hall. Mr. Ferrari. Change of genre: comedy with flippant dialogue. Rick is now the Disenchanted Lover, or the Cynical Seducer. Rick vs. Renault. The Charming Scoundrels. The theme of the Magic Horse and of the Promised Land returns. Roulette as the Game of Life and Death (Russian Roulette that devours fortunes and can destroy the happiness of the Bulgarian Couple, the Epiphany of Innocence). The Dirty Trick: cheating at cards. At this point

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the Trick is an Evil one, but later on it will be a Good one, providing a way to the Magic Key for the Bulgarian bride. Arrest and attempted escape of Ugarte. Action movie. Laszlo and Ilse. The Uncontaminated Hero and the Femme Fatale, both in white-always; clever opposition with the Germans, usually in black. In the meeting at Laszlo's table, Strasser is in white, in order to reduce the oppo-sition. However, Strasser and Ilse are the Beauty and the Beast. The Nor-wegian agent: spy movie. The Desperate Lover. Drink to Forget. The Faithful Servant and his Beloved Master. Don Quijote and Sancho. Play it (again, Sam). Anticipated quotation of Woody Allen. The long flashback begins. Flashback as a content and flashback as a form. Quotation of the flashback as a topical stylistic device. The Power of Memory. The Last Time I Saw Paris. Two Weeks in Another City. Brief Encounter. French movies of the thirties (the station as Quai des Brumes). At this point the review of the archetypes is more or less complete. There is still the moment when Rick plays the Rough Diamond (who allows the Bul-garian bride to win) and two typical situations: the scene of the Marseillaise and the two lovers discovering that Love Is Forever. The gift to the Bulgarian bride (along with the enthusiasm of the waiters), the Marseillaise, and the Love Scene are three instances of the rhetorical figure of Climax, as the quintessence of Drama (each climax coming obviously with its own anti-climax). Now the story can elaborate upon its elements. The first symphonic elaboration comes with the second scene around the roulette. We discover for the first time that the Magic Key (which everybody believed to be affordable only by money) can in fact be given only as a Gift, a Gift that rewards Purity. The Donor will be Rick. He gives the money (free) to the Bulgarian couple, and he gives the visa (free) to Laszlo. Actually there is also a third Gift, the one Rick makes of his own desire, sacrificing himself. The receiver of this gift is the uncontaminated Laszlo, for (and please notice) there is no gift for Ilse, who in some sense, even though innocent, has betrayed two men. By becoming the Donor, Rick finds Redemption. No one impure can reach the Promised Land. But Rick and Renault redeem themselves and so can reach toward the other Promised Land-not America (which is Para-dise), but the Resistance, the Holy War (which is a glorious Purgatory). Laszlo flies directly to Paradise because he has already undergone the Ordeal of clan-destinity. Moreover, Rich is not the only one to make a sacrifice: the idea of sacrifice pervades the whole story, from Ilse's sacrifice in Paris when she aban-dons the man she loves to return to the wounded hero, to the Bulgarian bride's sacrifice when she is prepared to give herself to help her husband, up to Victor's sacrifice when he is resigned to see Ilse with Rick in order to guarantee her safety. The second symphonic elaboration is upon the theme of the Unhappy Love. Unhappy for Rick, who loves Ilse and cannot have her. Unhappy for Ilse, who loves Rick and cannot live with him. Unhappy for Victor, who understands that he has not really kept Ilse. The interplay of unhappy loves produces various twists and turns. In the beginning Rick is unhappy because he does not under-stand why Ilse left him. Then Victor is unhappy because he does not under-stand why Ilse is attracted to Rick, or when it happened for the first time. Finally, Ilse is unhappy because she does not understand why Rick makes her leave with her husband. These unhappy loves are arranged in a triangle. But in the normal adulterous triangle there is a Betrayed Husband and a Victorious Lover, while in this case both men are betrayed and suffer a loss. In this defeat, however, an additional element plays a part, so subtly it almost escapes the level of consciousness. Quite subliminally, a hint of Platonic Love is established. Rick admires Victor, Victor is ambiguously attracted by the personality of Rick, and it seems that at a certain point each of the two plays out a duel of self-sacrifice to please the other. In any case, as in Rous-seau's Confessions, the woman is an intermediary between the two men. She herself does not bear any positive value (except, obviously, Beauty): the whole story is a virile affair, a dance of seduction between Male Heroes. From now on the film implements the definitive construction of its inter-twined triangles, to end with the final resolution: the Supreme Sacrifice and the Redeemed Bad Guys. Notice that, if the redemption of Rick has been set up or foreshadowed quite early on, Renault's redemption is absolutely unjusti-fied. It apparently comes only because this was the final requirement to meet, on the part of the movie, in order to be a perfect Epos of Frames.

30.2.4 The Archetypes Hold a Reunion

Casablanca is a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there, because each actor repeats a part played in other occasions, and because the characters live not the "real" life of

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human beings, but a life as stereotypically portrayed by previous films. Casablancab rings with it the scent of dijd vu to such an extent that the spectator is ready to see in it also what happened after it. It is not until To Have and Have Not that Bogey played the role of the Hemingway hero, but here he appears "already" loaded with Hemingwayesque connotations for the simple diegetic detail that Rick fought in Spain. Peter Lorre trails behind him reminiscences of Fritz Lang; Conradt Veidt wraps his German officer in a faint perfume from The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari-he is not a ruthless technological Nazi, but a nocturnal and diabolical Caesar. Casablancah as succeeded in becoming a cult movie because it is not one movie. It is "the movies." And this is the reason it works, in spite of any aesthetic theory. For it stages the powers of Narrativity in its natural state, before art intervenes to tame it. This is why we accept that the characters change mood, morality, and psychology from one moment to the next, that conspirators cough to interrupt the conversation when a spy approaches, that bar girls weep at the sound of the Marseillaise. ... When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two cliches make us laugh, but a hundred cliches move us because we sense dimly that the cliches are talking among themselves and celebrating a reunion. Just as extreme pain meets sensual pleasure, and extreme perversion borders on mystical energy, so does extreme banality allow us to catch a glimpse of the Sublime. Nobody would have been able to achieve such a cosmic result intentionally. Nature has spoken here in place of men. If nothing else, this is a phenomenon worthy of veneration.

15.2.5 Cult Culture

The structure of Casablanca helps us to understand what happens in those movies that are born in order to become cult objects. What Casablanca does unconsciously, other movies will do with an extreme intertextual awareness - and with the expectation that the spectator be equally aware of their purposes. These are "postmodern" movies, where the quotation of the topos is recognized as the only way to cope with the burden of our encyclo-pedical filmic competence. Think, for instance, of Bananas, with its explicit quotation of the Odessa steps sequence from Eisenstein's Potemkin. In Casablancaon e enjoys the quota-tion even though one does not recognize it, and those who do recognize it feel as belonging to the same clique. In Bananas those who do not catch the topos cannot enjoy the scene, while those who do simply feel smart. Another (and different) case is the quotation of the topical duel between the black Arab giant with his scimitar and the unprotected hero in Raiders of the Lost Ark. If you remember, the topos suddenly turns into another one, as the unprotected hero is transformed, in a split second, into The Fastest Gun in the West. Here the naive viewer is allowed to miss the quotation, except that his or her enjoyment will then be pretty trivial; and the real enjoyment is reserved for the people accustomed to cult movies, who know the whole reper-toire of "magic" archetypes. In a way, Bananas works for cultivated cinephiles and film buffs, while Raidersw orks for Casablancaa ddicts. The third case is the one of E. T., when the alien is brought outside under a Halloween disguise and meets the dwarf from The EmpireS trikesB ack. You remember that E.T. is startled and then runs to greet him (or it). Here nobody can enjoy the scene if they do not share, at least, the following elements of intertextual competence:

1. they must know where the second character comes from (Spielberg citing Lucas),
2. they must know something about the relationship between the two directors,
3. they must know that both monsters have been designed by Rambaldi and that, consequently, they are linked by some form of brotherhood.

The required competence is not only inter-cinematic. It is inter-media, in the sense that the spectator must know not only other movies, but the whole of massmedia gossip about the movies. This third example presupposes a "Casa-blanca universe" in which cult has become the normal way of enjoying movies. Thus, in this case, we witness an instance of meta-cult, or of cult about cult-a cult culture. It would be semiotically uninteresting to look for quotations of archetypes in Raiderso r in Indiana Jones: they were conceived within a meta-semiosical cul-ture, and what the semiotician can find in them is exactly what the directors put there. Spielberg and Lucas are semiotically

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nourished authors working for a culture of instinctive semioticians. With Casablancath ings go differently. So Casablancaex plains Raiders, but Raidersd oes not explain Casablanca. At most it can explain the new ways in which Casablancaw ill be received in the next years. A day will come, and it will be a sad one, in which an overly smart, over-sophisticated audience will read Casablanca, as conceived by Michael Curtiz, after having read Calvino and Communications 4. That will be sad, but it will happen. Only in the course of this symposium have we been able to discover, for the last time, the Truth. Apres nous, le delug.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct options:

(*i*) The films casaslanca was made on a very ..... .

(*a*) small budget (*b*) big budget

(*c*) medium (*d*) None of these

(*ii*) Casablanca have genres of ..... .

(*a*) the adventure movie (*b*) patriotic movie

(*c*) gangster movie (*d*) All of these

(*iii*) In this film two stars Humphrey Bogard and ..... have perfect chemistm.

(*a*) Ingrid Bergman (*b*) Bogey

(*c*) Dejavn (*d*) None of these

15.3 Summary

- Umberto Eco (1987) provides an interesting discussion of inter-textuality in his chapter 'Casablanca: Cult movies and intertextual collage'. Eco points out that the film Casablanca was made on a very small budget and in a very short time. As a result its creators were forced to improvise the plot, mixing a little of everything they knew worked in a movie as they went. The result is what Eco describes as an 'intertextual collage'. For Eco, Casablanca has been so successful because it is not, in fact, an instance of a single kind of film genre but a mixing of stereotyped situations that are drawn from a number of different kinds of film genres. As the film proceeds, he argues, we recognize the film genres that they recall. We also recognize the pleasures we have experienced when we have watched these kinds of films.
- A cult film, also commonly referred to as a cult classic, is a film that has acquired a cult following with a specific group of fans. Often, cult movies have failed to achieve fame outside small fanbases; however, there are exceptions that have managed to gain fame among mainstream audiences. Many cult movies have gone on to transcend their original cult status and have become recognized as classics.
- Cult films are often known to be eccentric, often do not follow traditional standards of mainstream cinema and usually explore topics not considered in any way mainstream-yet there are examples that are relatively normal. Many are often considered controversial because they step outside standard narrative and technical conventions.
- A cult film is a movie that attracts a devoted group of followers or obsessive fans, often despite having failed commercially on its initial release. The term also describes films that have remained popular over a long period of time amongst a small group of followers. Although they may only have a short cinema life, cult films often enjoy ongoing popularity through long runs on video, thus being issued in video "runs" with more copies than other movies. The movie Office Space (1999), which lost money during its box office run, managed to turn significant profits when word-of-mouth made it a popular video rental and purchase.

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15.4 Key-Words

1. Cultural materialism : Cultural materialism may be considered as the British version of new historicism. Both schools of criticism are characterized by newly theorized and politicized readings of history and literary texts. While new historicism is particularly cncerned with the textuality of history, however, cultural materialism, influenced by Raymond Williams's version of Marxist criticism, focuses on the material conditions of the production and reception of literary texts. Cultural materialists are thus concerned to expose the ideological and political dimensions of such texts.

15.5 Review Questions

1. Discuss Casablanca as a cult movie.
2. Write a short note on Casablanca.
3. Explain the textual analysis of Casablanca.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*d*) (*iii*) (*a*)

15.6 Further Readings

Books

1. Hutcheon, Linda A poetics of postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1988.
2. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory, 1st edition, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.
3. Lodge, David (ed.) Twentieth Century Literary Criticism, London: Longman, 1972.
4. Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh (eds.) A Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 3rd edition, London: Arnold, 1999.
5. Sethuraman, V.S. and Ramaswamy (eds.) The English Critical Tradition, Volume II, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1977.
6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 16: Umberto Eco's 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' (Deconstructing and Disciplinarising Hollywood)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Understand Casablanca deconstructing.
- Discuss Casablanca as Cult Movies.

Introduction

Casablanca is a 1942 American romantic drama film directed by Michael Curtiz, starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid, and featuring Claude Rains, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre and Dooley Wilson. Set during World War II, it focuses on a man torn between, in the words of one character, love and virtue. He must choose between his love for a woman and helping her Czech Resistance leader husband escape from the Vichy-controlled Moroccan city of Casablanca to continue his fight against the Nazis.

Although it was an A-list film, with established stars and first-rate writers-Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein and Howard Koch received credit for the screenplay-no one involved with its production expected Casablanca to be anything out of the ordinary; it was just one of hundreds of pictures produced by Hollywood every year. The film was a solid, if unspectacular, success in its initial run, rushed into release to take advantage of the publicity from the Allied invasion of North Africa a few weeks earlier. Despite a changing assortment of screenwriters frantically adapting an unstaged play and barely keeping ahead of production, and Bogart attempting his first romantic leading role, Casablanca won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Its characters, dialogue, and music have become iconic, and the film has grown in popularity to the point that it now consistently ranks near the top of lists of the greatest films of all time.

16.1 Introductory Note

Umberto Eco (b.1932) was born in Allesandra, Italy, and studied at the University of Turin. He has taught at universities in Turin, Milan, Florence and Bologna, and is a frequent academic visitor to the United States. In 1981, he achieved international fame with his novel. The Name of the Rose, which was both a bestseller and a literary success. This has continued with *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988; trans 1989) and *Baudolino* (2000). Before that, he had established himself as an authority in the fields of semiotics, cultural studies and literary theory, which such publications as A Theory of Semiotics (1976) [first published in Italy 1975], *The Role of the Reader:* explorations in the semiotics

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of texts (1981) (1979), *and Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984). His first full-length study of literary meaning was *Opera Aperta* ('Open Works' -1962) where he found the most rewarding works to involve fields of meaning rather than strings of mere lexical items, that is where the reader is actively co-opted to explore her/his own expectations and the responses when or if they are defeated. This perspective has developed to consider how we might limit interpretation, or , at least, establish where inconsistencies might life; see his *The limits of Interpretation* (1990 [1990]) and his contributions to *interpretation and overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (1992). pp.23-88. This has also branched out into the study of how we might identify the best translations: *Experiences in Translation (2000) and Mouse or Rat?*: translation as negotiation (2003).

Semiotics is the general science of signs, of which linguistics, according to Saussure is a subdivision. One consequence of this way of looking at language has been to encourage comparative study of literary and visual media, especially in the area of narrative. Another has been to break down the traditional prejudice of the custodians of 'high culture' against the products of popular of mass culture. These tendencies are exhibited very clearly in Eco's work, which is notable for its broad range of illustration and electric methodology. He is as interested in the semiotics of blue jeans or the Superman story as in the dense polysemy of Joyce's Finnegans Wake, and this, combined with a lively, witty style, makes him one of the most accessible of critics in the structuralist tradition.

In 'Casablanca: cult movies and intertextual collage', he turns his attention on one of the popular classics of Hollywood cinema, reading off its multiple meaning in a manner reminiscent of Roland Barthes (see above, pp. 311-36). In the famous Humphrey Bogart-Ingrid Bergman movie. Eco Suggests, filmic archetypes (or cliches, as a more elitist critic might call them) are multiplies to the point where they begin to 'talk among themselves' and generate an intoxicating excess of signification. This process, by which kitsch, in its reception by a finely attuned audience, can allegedly achieve something approximating the sublimity of classic art, is a recurrent theme and subject of controversy in discussions of postmodernism.

'Casablanca', first published in this form in 1984, in reprinted here form a collection of Eco's occasional and journalistic essays. *Faith in Fakes* (1986) (published in the United States and (as a paperback) in Britain under the title, Travels in Hyperreality)

Peter Bondanella, 'Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: from Structuralism to Semiotics',in Umberto Eco's Alternative: the politics of culture and ambiguities of interpretation, ed. Norma Bouchard and Veronica Pravadelli (1998), pp. 211.24 Peter Pericles Trifonas, Umberto Eco and Football (2001) Gary P. Radford, On Eco (2003)

16.2 Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage

Cult

'Was that artillery fire, or is it my heart pounding?'[1] Whenever *Casablanca*[2] is shown, at this point the audience reacts with an enthusiasm usually reserved for football. Sometimes a single word is enough: fans cry every time Bogey says 'kid'. Frequently the spectators quote the best lines before the actors say them.

According to traditional standards in aesthetics, *Casablanca* is not a work of art, if such an expression still has a meaning. In any case, if the films of Dreyer, Eisenstein, or Antonioni are works of art, *Casablanca* represents a very modest aesthetic achievement. It is a hodgepodge of sensational scenes strung together implausibly, its characters are psychologically incredible, its actors act in a mannered way. Nevertheless, it is a great example of cinematic discourse, a palimpsest for future students of twentieth-century religiosity, a paramount laboratory for semiotic research into textual strategies. Moreover, it has become a cult movie.

1 Like the more famous line, 'Play it again, Sam' (actually 'Play it. Sam') this quotation is not quite accurate. Ingrid Bergman's words in the film are: 'Was that cannon fire, or is it my hear pounding?

2. The action of Casablanca (made in 1942, directed by Michael Curtiz) takes place early in the Second World War, when Morocoo was controlled by the Vichy French Government. The American Rick (Humphrey Bogart) runs a cafe-night club in Casblanca which is a place of passage for refuges trying to get exit visas to

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What are the requirements for transforming a book or a movie into a cult object? The work must be loved, obviously, but this is not enough. It must provide a completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan's private sectarian world, a world about which one can make up quizzes and play trivia games so that the adepts of the sect recognize through each other a shared expertise. Naturally all these elements (Characters and episodes) must have some archetypical appeal, as we shall see. One can ask and answer questions about the various subway stations of New York or Paris only if these spots have become or have been assumed as mythical areas and such names as Canarsie line or Vincennes-Neuilly stand not only for physical places but become the catalyzers of collective memories.

Curiously enough, a book can also inspire a cult even though it is a great work of art: both *The Three Musketeers* and *The Divine Comedy* rank among the cult books; and there are more trivia games among the fans of Dante than among the fans of Dumas. I suspect that a cult movie, on the contrary, must display some organic imperfections. It seems that the boastful *Rio Bravo* is a cult movie and the great stagecoach is not.

I think that in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole. In the case of a book one can unhinge it, so to speak, physically, reducing it to a series of excerpts. A movie, on the contrary, must be already ramshackle, rickety, unhinged it itself. A perfect movie, sine it cannot be reread every time we want, from the point we choose, as happens with a book, remains in our memory as a whole, in the form of a central idea or emotion; only an unhinged movie survives as a disconnected series of images, of peaks, of visual icebergs. It should display not one central idea but many. It should not reveal a coherent philosophy of composition. It must live on, and because of, its glorious ricketiness.

However, it must have some quality. Let me say that it can be ramshackle from the production point of view (in that nobody knew exactly what was going to be done next)—as happened evidently with the Rocky Horror Picture Show—but it must display certain textual features, in the sense that, outside the conscious control of its creators, it becomes a sort of textual syllabus, a living example of living textuality. Its addressee must suspect it is not true that works are created by their authors. Works are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors. A cult movie is the proof that, as literature comes from literature, cinema comes from cinema.

Which elements, in a movie, can be separated from the whole[3] and adored for themselves? In order to go on with this analysis of *Casablanca* I should use some important semiotic cateogories, such as the ones (provided by the Russian Formalists)[4] of theme and motif. I confess I find it very difficult to ascertain what the various Russian Formalists meant by motif. If-as Veselovsky says- a motif is the simplest narrative unit, then one wonders why 'first from heaven' should belong to the same category as 'the persecuted maid' (since the former can be represented by an image, while the latter requires a certain narrative development). It would be interesting to follow

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the United States, usually by bribing the Prefect of Police, Renault. A Czech Resistance leader, Victor Laszlo, turns up with his wife, Ilse (Ingrid Bergman), who had a love affair with Rick in Paris just before the German Occupation, when she believed her husband to be dead. On discovering that he was alive, she parted from Rick without explanation Bitterly hurt by this experience, Rick is at first hostile to Ilse in Casablanca, but on learning the truth, and that she still loves him, chivalrously helps her and Laszlo to escape the clutches of the Gestapo chief Strasser, at considerable risk to himself. In the final sequence, Rick and the implausibly reformed Renault go off to join the Free French.

3 With the widespread availability of DVDs, Eco's point is capable of greater emphasis: our identification with the episode or intertextual motif is expedited by the technical facility of the instant re-run, sometimes cutting across any imposed editorial order or theme.

4 A reference to what were in effect two Russian groupings that flourished in the pre-and immediately post-revolutionary years, the Moscow Linguistic Circle, which included Roman Jakobson (see introductory note to essay, p.140 above), and the Opoyaz group based in St Petersburg, including Viktor Shklovsky. Motifs were particularly memorable and 'defamiliarized' symbols to be considered aside from their position within narrative frameworks or 'themes'.

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Tomashevsky and to look in *Casablanca* for free or tied and for dynamic or static motifs. We should distinguish between more or less universal narrative functions a la Propp,[5] visual stereotypes like the cynic Adventurer, and more complex archetypical situations like the Unhappy Love. I hope someone will do this job, but here I will assume, more prudently (and borrowing the concept from research into Artificial intelligence) the more flexible notion of 'frame'.

In *The Role of the Reader I* distinguished between common and intertextual frames. I meant by 'common frame' data-structures for representing stereotyped situations such as dining at a restaurant or going to the railway station; in other words, a sequence of actions more or less coded by our normal experience. Any by 'intertextual frames' I meant stereotyped situations derived from preceding textual tradition and recorded by our enclopedia, such as, for example, the standard duel between the sheriff and the bad guy or the narrative situation in which the hero fights the villain and wins, or more macroscopic textual situation, such as the story of the vierge souillée [dishonoured virgin] or the classic recognition scene (Bakhtin considered it a motif, in the sense of a chronotope)[6]. We could distinguish between stereotyped intertextual frames (for instance, the Drunkard Redeemed by Love) and sterotyped iconographical units (for instance, the Evil Nazi). But since even these iconographical units, when they appear in a movie, if they do not directly elicit in action, at least suggest its possible development, we can use the notion of inter-textual frame to cover both.

Moreover, we are interested in finding those frames that not only are recognizable by the audience as belonging to a sort of ancestral intertextual tradition but that also display a particular fascination. 'A suspect who eludes a passport control and is shot by the police' is undoubtedly an intertextual frame but it does not have a 'magic' flavor. Let me define as 'magic' flavor. Let me address intuitively the idea of 'magic' frame. Let me define as 'magic' those frames that, when they appear in a movie and can be separated from the whole, transform this movie into a cult object. In *Casablanca* we find more intertextual frames than 'magic' intertextual frames. I will call the latter 'intertextual archetypes'.

The term 'archetype' does not claim to have any particular psychoanalytic or mythic connotation,[7] but serves only to indicate a pre-established and frequently reappearing narrative situation, cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts and provoking in the addressee a sort of intense emotion accompanied by the vague feeling of a déjà vu,[8] that everybody yearns to see again. I would not say that an intertextual archetype is necessarily 'universal'. It can belong to a rather recent textual tradition, as with certain topoi of slapstick comedy. It is sufficient to consider it as a topos or standard situation that manages to be particularly appealing to a given cultural area or a historical period.

The Making of Casablanca

'Can I tell you a story'? Ilse asks. Then she adds: 'I don't know the finish yet.' Rick says: 'Well, go on, tell it. Maybe one will come to you as you go along.' Rick's line is a sort of epitome of *Casablanca* itself. According to Ingrid Bergman seems so fascinatingly mysterious because she did not know at which man she was to look with greater tenderness.

The explains why, in the story, she does not, in fact, choose her fate: she is chosen. When you don't know how to deal with a story, you put stereotyped situations in it because you know that they, at least, have already worked elsewhere. Let us take a marginal but revealing example. Each time Laszlo orders something to drink (and it happen four times) he changes his choice: (1) Cointreau, (2) cocktail, (3) cognac, and (4) whisky (he once drinks champagne but he does not ask for it). Why such confusing and confused drinking habits for a man endowed with an ascetic

5. Vladimir Propp. Morphology of the Folktale (1928)
6. Chronotope is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin (see pp 235-63, above) to analyse the ways in which time and space are represented and related in narrative.
7. As it does in the work of Carl Jung and critics influenced by him, such as Maud Bodkin and Northrop Frye. (see sections 14,15 and 31 of 20th century Literary Criticism.)
8. Something already seen.

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temper? There is no psychological reason. My guess is that each time Curtiz was simply quoting, unconsciously, similar situations in other movies and trying to provide a reasonably complete repetition of them.

Thus one is tempted to read *Casablanca* as T.S. Eliot read *Hamlet*, attributing its fascination not to the fact that it was a successful work (actually he considered it one of Shakespeare's less fortunate efforts) but to the imperfection of its composition. He viewed *Hamlet* as the result of an unsuccessful fusion of several earlier versions of the story, and so the puzzling ambiguity of the main character was due to the author's difficulty in putting together different topoi. So both public and critics find Hamlet beautiful because it is interesting, but believe it is interesting because it is beautiful.

On a smaller scale the same thing happened to Casablanca. Forced to imrprovise a plot, the authors mixed a little of everything, and everything they chose came from a repertoire that had stood the test of time. When only a few of these formulas are used, the result is simply kitsch. But when the repertoire of stock formulas is used , the result is simply kitsch. But when the repertoire is used wholesale, then the result is an architecture like Gaudi's Sagrada Familia:[9] the same vertigo,the same stroke of genius.

Stop by Stop

Every story involves one or more archetypes. To make a good story a single archetype is usually enough. But Casablanca is not satisfied with that, it uses them all.

It would be nice to identify our archetypes scene by scene and short by shot, stopping the tape at every relevant step. Every time I have scanned *Casablanca* with very cooperative research groups, the review has taken many hours. Furthermore, when a team starts this kind of game,the instance of stopping the videotape increase proportionally with the size of the audience. Each member of the team sees something that the others have missed, and many of them start to find in the movie even memories of movies made after *Casablanca* - evidently the normal situation fora cult movie, Suggesting that perhaps the best deconstructive readings should be made of unhinged texts (or that deconstruction is simply a way of breaking up texts).

However, I think that the first twenty minutes of the film represent a sort of review of the principal archetypes. Once they have been assembled, without any synthetic concern, then the story starts to suggest a sort of savage syntax of the archetypical elements and organizes them in multileveled oppositions. Casablanca looks like a musical piece with an extraordinarily long overture, where every theme is exhibited according to a monodic line. Only later does the symphonic work take place. In a way the first twenty minutes could be analyzed by a Russian Formalist and the rest by a Greimasian.[10]

Let me then try only a sample analysis of the first part. I think that a real text analytical study of Casablanca is still to be made, and I offer only some hints to future teams of researchers, who will carry out, someday, a complete reconstruction of its deep textual structure.

1. First, African music, then the Marseillaise. Two different genres are evoked: adventure movie and patriotic movie.
2. Third genre. The globe: Newsreel. The voice even suggests the news report. Fourth genre: the odyssey of refugees. Fifth genre: Casablanca and Lisbon are, traditionally, hauts lieux [favourite places] for international intrigues. Thus in two minutes five genres are evoked.
3. Casablanca-Lisbon. Passage to the Promised Land (Lisbon-America). Casablanca is the Magic Door. We still do not know what the Magic key is or by which Magic Horse one can reach the Promised Land.
4. 'Wait, wait, wait.' To make the passage one must submit to a Test. The Long Expectation. Purgatory situation.

9 Antonio Gaudi (1852-1926), Spanish art nouveau architect best known for his (still uncompleted) Church of the Holy Family in Barcelona.

10 See note 4, p 441, above

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5. 'Deutschland tiber Alles.' THe German anthem introduces the theme of Barbarians.
6. The Casbah. Pépé le Moko. Confusion, robberies, violence, and repression.
7. Pétain (Vichy) vs. the cross of Lorraine. See at the end the same opposition closing the story: Eau de Vichy vs. Choice of the Resistance. War Propaganda movie.
8. The Magic Key: the visa. It is around the winning of the Magic Key that passions are unleashed. Captain Renault mentioned: he is the Guardian of the Door, or the boatman of the Acheron to be conquered by a Magic Gift (money or sex).
9. The Magic Horse: the airplane. The airplane flies over Rick's Café American, thus recalling the Promised Land of which the Café is the reduced model.
10. Major Strasser shows up. Theme of the Barbarians, and their emasculated slaves. 'Jesuis I'empire à la fin de la décadence/Qui regarde passed les grands barbares blancs/En composant des acrostiques indolents...'[11]
11. 'Everybody comes to Rick's.' By quoting the original play,[12] Renault introduces the audience to the Café. The interior: Foreign Legion (each character has a different nationality and a different story to tell, and also his own skeleton in the closet), Grand Hotel (people come and people go, and nothing ever happens), Mississippi River Boat, New Orleans Brothel (black piano player), the Gambling inferno in Macao or Singapore (with Chinese women), the Smugglers' Paradise, the Last outpost on the Edge of the Desert. Rick's place is a magic circle where everything can happen-love, death, pursuit, espionage, games of chance, seductions, music, patriotism. Limited resources and the unity of place, due to the theatrical origin of the story, suggested an admirable condensation of events in a single setting. One can identify the usual paraphernalia of at least ten exotic genres.
12. Rick slowly shows up, first by synecdoche (his hand), then by metonymy (the check)[13]. The various aspects of the contradictory (plurifilmic) personality of Rick are introduced: the Fatal Adventurer, the Self-Made Businessman (money is money), the Tough Guy from a gangster movie, our Man in Casablanca (international intrigue), the Cynic. Only later he will be characterized also as the Hemingwayan Hero (he helped the Ethiopians an the Spaniards against fascism). He does not drink. This undoubtedly represents a nice problem, for later Rick must play the role of the Redeemed Drunkard and he has to be made a drunkard (as a Disillusioned Lover) so that he can be redeemed. But Bogey's face sustains rather will this unbearable number of contradictory psychological features.
13. The Magic Key, in person: the transit letters. Rick receives them from Peter Lorre and from this moment everybody wants them: how to avoid thinking of Sam Spade and of The Maltese Falcon?[14]
14. Music Hall. Mr. Ferrari. Change of genre: comedy with brilliant dialogue. Rick is now the Disenchanted Lover, or the Cynical Seducer.
15. Rick vs. Renault. The Charming Scoundrels.
16. The theme of the Magic Horse and the Promised Land returns.
17. Roulette as the Game of Life and Death (Russian Roulette that devours fortunes and can destroy the happiness of the Bulgarian Couple, The Epiphany of Innocence). The Dirty Trick: cheating at cards. At this point the Trick is an Evil one but later it will be a Good one, providing a way to the Magic Key for the Bulgarian bride.
18. Arrest and tentative escape of Ugarte. Action movie.

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11. 'I an the empire at the end of its decline/Watching the great white barbarians pass/While composing idle acrostics' 11. 1-3 of Paul Verlaine's 'Languer'. one of his poems ' A la manière de plusieurs' in the collection, Jadis et Naguere (1884).
12. Casablanca was based on an unproduced stage play entitled.Everybody Comes of Rick's.
13. See not 1, p. 165, above.
14. Another Hollywood classic, made in 1934, also starring. Humphrey Bogart and Peter Lorre.

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19. Laszlo and Ilse. The Uncontaminated Hero and La Femme Fatale. Both in white always; clever opposition with Germans, usually in black. In the meeting at Laszlo's table, Strasser is in white, in order to reduce the opposition. However, Strasser and Ilse are Beauty and the Beast. The Norwegian agent: spy movie.
20. The Desperate lover and Drink to Forget.
21. The Faithful Servant and his Beloved Master. Don Quixote and Sancho.
22. Play it (again, Sam). Anticipated quotation of Woody Allen.[15]
23. The long flashback begins. Flashback as a content and flashback as a form. Quotation of the flashback as a topical stylistic device. The Power of Memory. Last Day in Paris. Two weeks in Another Town. Brief Encounter. French movie of the 1930's (the station as quai des brumes).[16]
24. At this point the review of thearchetypes is more or less complete. There is still the moment when Rick plays the Diamond in the Rough (who allows the Bulgarian bride to win)[17], and two typical situations: the scene of the Marseillaise and the two lovers discovering that Love is Forever. The gift to the Bulgarian bride (along with the enthusiasm of the waiters), the Marseillaise, and the Love Scene are three instances of the rhetorical figure of Climax, as the quintessence of Drama (each climax coming obviously with its own anticlimax).

Now the story can elaborate upon its elements.

The first symphonic elaboration comes with the second scene around the roulette table. We discover for the first time that the Magic Key (that everybody believed to be only purchasable with money) can in reality be given only as a Gift, a reward for Purity. The Donor will be Rick. He gives (free) the visa to Laszlo. In reality there is also a third Gift, the Gift Rick makes of his own desire, sacrificing himself. Note that there is no gift for Ilse, who in some way, even though innocent, has betrayed two men. The Receiver of the Gift is the Uncontaminated Laszlo. By becoming the Donor, Rick meets Redemption. No one impure can reach the Promised Land. But Rick and Renault redeem themselves and can reach the other Promised Land, not America (which is Paradise) but the Resistance, the Holy War (which is glorious Purgatory). Laszlo flies directly to Paradise because he has already suffered the ordeal of the underground. Rick, moreover, is not only one who accepts sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice pervades the whole story, Ilse's sacrifice in Paris when she abandons the man she loves to return to the wounded hero, the Bulgarian bride's sacrifice when she is prepared to give herself to help her husband, Victor's sacrifice when he is prepared to see Ilse with Rick to guarantee her safety.

The second symphonic elaboration is upon the theme of the Unhappy Love. Unhappy for Rick, who loves Ilse and cannot have her. Unhappy for Ilse, who loves Rick and cannot leave with him. Unhappy for Victor, who understands that he has not really kept Ilse. The interplay of unhappy loves produces numerous twists and turns. In the beginning Rick is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilse leaves him. Then Victor is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilse is attracted to Rick. Finally Ilse is unhappy because she does not understand why Rick makes her leave with her husband.

These unhappy loves are arranged in a triangle. But in the normal adulterous triangle there is a Betrayed Husband and a Victorious Lover, while in this case both men are betrayed and suffer a loss.

In this defeat, however, an additional element plays a part, so subtly that it almost escapes the level of consciousness. Quite subliminally a hint of Platonic Love is established. Rick admires Victor, Victor is ambiguously attracted by the personality of Rick, and it seems that at a certain point each of the two is playing out the duel of sacrifice to please the other. In any case, as in Rousseau's Confessions, the woman is her an intermediary between the two men. She herself does

15. Play It Again, Sam is the title of a film made by woody Allen in 1972, about a neurotic film critic obsessed with Humphrey Bogart.
16. Literally, 'quay (or railway platform) of fogs', this was the title of a classic French film, directed by Marcel Carné in 1938.
17. To be precise, Rick ensures that her husband wins at the roulette table, thus ensuring that the couple can buy their exit visas from Renault for cash, instead of the girl having to sleep with the police chief to obtain them.

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not bear any positive value (except, obviously, beauty). The whole story is a virile affair, a dance of seduction between Male Heroes.

From now on the film carries out the definitive construction of its intertwined triangles, to end with the solution of the Supreme Sacrifice and of the Redeemed Bad Guys. Note that, while the redemption of Rick has long been prepared, the redemption of Renault is absolutely unjustified and comes only because this was the final requirement the movie had to meet in order to be a perfect Epos of Frames.

The Archetypes Hold a Reunion

Casblanca is a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there, because each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, and because human beings live not 'real' life but life as stereotypically portrayed in previous films: Casablanca carries the sense of déjà vu to such a degree that the addressee is ready to see in it what happened after it as well. It is not until To have and Have and Have not that Bogey plays the role of Hemingway hero, but here he appears 'already' loaded with Hemingwayesque connotations simply because Rick fought in Spain. Peter Lorre trails reminiscences of Fritz Lang, Conrad Veidt's German Officer emanates a faint whiff of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. He is not ruthless, technological Nazi; he is a nocturnal and diabolical Caesar.

Casablanca became a cult movie because it is not one movie. It is 'movies'. And this is the reason it works, in defiances of any aesthetic theory.

For it stages the powers of Narrativity in its natural state, before art intervenes to tame it. This is why we accept the way that characters change mood, morality, and psychology from one moment to the next, that conspirators cough to interrupt the conversation when from one moment to the next, that conspirators cough to interrupt the conversation when a spy is approaching that bar girls cry at the sound of the Marseillaise....

When all the archetypes burst out shamelessly, we plumb Homeric profundity. Two cliches make us laugh but a hundred cliches move us because we sense dimly that the cliches are talking among themselves, celebrating a reunion.

Just as the extreme of pain meets sensual pleasure, and the extreme of perversion borders on mystical energy, so too the extreme of banality allows us to catch a glimpse of the sublime.

Nobody would have been able to achieve such a cosmic result intentionally. Nature has spoken in place of men. This, along, is a phenomenon worthy of veneration.

The Charged Cult

The structure of Casablanca helps us understand what happens in later movies born in order to become cult objects.

What Casablanca does unconsciously, other movies will do with extreme intertextual awareness, assuming also that the addressee is equally aware of their purposes. These are 'postmodern' movies, where the quotation of the topos is recognized as the only way to cope with the burden of our filmic encyclopedic expertise.

Think for instance of Bannanas, [18] with its explicit quotation of the Odessa steps from Eisenstein's Potemkin. In Casablanca one enjoys quotation even though one does not recognize it, and those who recognize it feel as if they all belonged to the same little clique. In Bananas those who do not catch the topos cannot enjoy the scene and those who do simply feel smart.

Another (and different) case is the quotation of the topical duel between the black Arab giant with his scimitar and the unprotected hero, in Raiders of the Lost Ark. If you remember, the topos suddenly turns into another one, and the unprotected hero becomes in a second. The Fastest Gun in the west. Here the ingenuous viewer can miss the quotation though his enjoyment will then be rather slight; and real enjoyment is reserved for the people accustomed to cult movies, who know the whole repertoire of 'magic' archetypes. In a way, Bananas works for cultivated 'cinephiles' while Raiders works for Casablanca-addicts.

18 Film made by Woody Allen in 1971

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The third case is that of E.T., when the alien is brought outside in a Halloween disguise and meets the dwarf coming from The Empire Strikes Back. You remember that E.T. starts and runs to cheer him (or it). Here nobody can enjoy the scene if he does not share, at least, the following elements of intertextual competence:

1. He must know where the second character comes from (Spielberg citing Lucas),[19]
2. He must know something about the links between the two directors, and
3. He must know that both monsters have been designed by Rambaldi and that, consequently, they are linked by some form of brotherhood.

The required expertise is not only intercinematic, it is intermedia, in the sense that the addressee must know not only other movies but all the mass media gossip about movies. This third example presupposes a 'Casablanca universe' in which cult has become the normal way of enjoying movies. Thus in this case we witness an instance of metacult, or of cult about cult - a Cult Culture.

It would be semiotically uninteresting to look for quotations of archetypes in Raiders or in Indiana Jones: they were conceived within a metasemiotic culture, and what the semiotician can find in them is exactly what the directors put there. Spielberg and Lucas are semiotically nourished authors working for a culture of instinctive semioticians.

With Casablanca the situation is different. So Casablanca explains Raiders, but Raiders does not explain Casablanca. At most it can explain the new ways in which Casablanca will be received in the next years.

It will be a sad day when a too smart audience will read Casablanca as conceived by Michael Curtiz after having read Calvino [20] and Barthes. But that day will come. Perhaps we have been able to discover here, for the last time, the Truth.

Après nous, le deéluge.[21]

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

(*i*) Casablanca is an American ..... .

(*a*) Michael Curtiz (*b*) Humphrey Bogard

(*c*) Ingrid Bergman (*d*) None of these

(*ii*) Casablanca first published essay in ..... .

(*a*) 1984 (*b*) 1981

(*c*) 1983 (*d*) 1990

(*iii*) Deutschland tiber Alles is the theme of ..... .

(*a*) wise (*b*) love

(*c*) Barbarians (*d*) None of these.

16.3 Summary

- Umberto Eco (b.1932) was born in Allesandra, Italy, and studied at the University of Turin. He has taught at universities in Turin, Milan, Florence and Bologna, and is a frequent academic visitor to the United States. In 1981, he achieved international fame with his novel. The Name of the Rose, which was both a bestseller and a literary success.
- In 'Casablanca: cult movies and intertextual collage', he turns his attention on one of the popular classics of Hollywood cinema, reading off its multiple meaning in a manner

19. ET was made by Stephen Spielberg: the Empire Strikes Back by George Lucas.

20. Italo Calvino (1923–86). Italian experimental novelist.

21. After us, the deluge' -Proverbial expression variously attributed to Madame la Pompadour and Louis XV of France.

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reminiscent of Roland Barthes (see above, pp. 311-36). In the famous Humphrey Bogart-Ingrid Bergman movie. Eco Suggests, filmic archetypes (or cliches, as a more elitist critic might call them) are multiplies to the point where they begin to 'talk among themselves' and generate an intoxicating excess of signification. This process, by which kitsch, in its reception by a finely attuned audience, can allegedly achieve something approximating the sublimity of classic art, is a recurrent theme and subject of controversy in discussions of postmodernism.

- 'Casablanca', first published in this form in 1984, in reprinted here form a collection of Eco's occasional and journalistic essays. *Faith in Fakes* (1986) (published in the United States and (as a paperback) in Britain under the title, Travels in Hyperreality)
- Casblanca is a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there, because each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, and because human beings live not 'real' life but life as stereotypically portrayed in previous films: Casablanca carries the sense of déjà vu to such a degree that the addressee is ready to see in it what happened after it as well. It is not until To have and Have and Have not that Bogey plays the role of Hemingway hero, but here he appears 'already' loaded with Hemingwayesque connotations simply because Rick fought in Spain. Peter Lorre trails reminiscences of Fritz Lang, Conrad Veidt's German Officer emanates a faint whiff of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. He is not ruthless, technological Nazi; he is a nocturnal and diabolical Caesar.

16.4 Key-Words

1. Intentional fallacy : A term coined by Julia Kristeva to rfer to the fact that texts are constituted by a 'tissue of citations', that every word of every text refers to other texts and so on, limitlessly. Often used in an imprecise or weak sense to talk abut echoes or allusions.

16.5 Review Questions

1. Discuss Deconstructing and disciplinarising Hollywood.
2. Give a intertextual analysis of Casablanca.
3. Critically examine Casablanca, as Cult Movies.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*a*) (*ii*) (*a*) (*iii*) (*c*)

16.6 Further Readings

Books

1. Hutcheon, Linda A poetics of postmodernism, London: Routledge, 1988.
2. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory, 1st edition, New Delhi: Pearson, 2007.
3. Lodge, David (ed.) Twentieth Century Literary Criticism, London: Longman, 1972.
4. Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh (eds.) A Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, 3rd edition, London: Arnold, 1999.
5. Sethuraman, V.S. and Ramaswamy (eds.) The English Critical Tradition, Volume II, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1977.
6. Seturaman, V.S. (ed.) Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

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Unit 17: Umberto Eco's 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage' (Intertextual Analysis)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Umberto Eco's Casablanca.
- Analyse Casablanca's intertextual history.

Introduction

In Casablanca the world is a movie set (with a few newsreel cutaways) and America is shown as the universal refuge -- or at least Hollywood is. Humphrey Bogart and Dooley Wilson are just about the only Americans in the cast (another version of Huck and Jim). The rest are all foreigners -- Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Sydney Greenstreet -- lucky to be spending the war in Culver City. Most of these were even actual refugees from fascism -- Paul Henreid, Peter Lorre, Marcel Dalio, S.Z. Sakall, Curt Bois, and, of course, Conrad Veidt as the villainous Nazi, playing out his own version of From Caligari to Hitler by climaxing a career that began with the role of Cesare the Somnambulist.

That Lorre, Sakall, and director Michael Curtiz were all born in Hungary can't, of itself, account for the movie's popularity in that country where, I'm told, it is traditionally telecast on New Year's Eve. This casbah is universal. If any Hollywood movie exemplifies the "genius of the system," it is surely Casablanca -- a film whose success was founded on almost as many types of skill as varieties of luck. (It's ironic that aspiring screenwriters take Casablanca's script as a text; rewritten many times, the film was virtually made up as its makers went along.) Mixing genres with wild abandon, Casablanca became a cult film precisely because as Umberto Eco put it, "it is not one movie. It is movies." All Hollywood movies that is, with a soupçon of the French cinema of the late '30's. In other words, Casablanca was the culture of the West, everything we were fighting for in World War II, brought together in one neat package.

It is because Casablanca is "movies" that it continues to haunt Hollywood. The film was replicated throughout the '40s and into the Cold War -- reaching its nadir with the 1951 Hong Kong in which Ronald Reagan (once, according to a Warner Bros. press release, a candidate for the original cast) plays the cynical American adventurer with the secret heart of gold. Ten years later, Casablanca

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was enshrined in revival houses across America as a sacred relic, not to mention an audience-participation precursor of The Rocky Horror Picture Show. (Like Casablanca, The Rocky Horror Picture Show is a compendium of mass media cliché and romantic wisdom -- in this case pertaining to post-Elvis Anglo-American youth culture.) If Casablanca itself was the Casablanca of 1961 (call this now designated cult film "Casablanca"), the next decade was, of course, a problematic one for Americans abroad: You might argue Dennis Hopper's The Last Movie as the CASABLANCA of 1971, if not for Woody Allen's half-nerdy, half-swinging refetishization of "CASABLANCA," Play it Again, Sam.

Perhaps each generation gets the CASABLANCA remake it deserves. Steven Spielberg's Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) -- which, in a self-conscious attempt to be "movies," knowingly reshuffled elements of CASABLANCA and "CASABLANCA" -- heralded America's reborn confidence and self-absorption. Sidney Pollack's quickly-forgotten Havana (1990) -- which proposed Robert Redford as the cynical expatriate and Lena Olin as the Swedish dame of mystery, transporting CASABLANCA to the Pearl of the Antilles on the eve of the Castro revolution -- is redolent of our current confusion and decline.

17.1 Intertextual Analysis

When people in their fifties sit down before their television sets for a rerun of Casablanca, it is an ordinary matter of nostalgia. However, when the film is shown in American universities, the boys and girls greet each scene and canonical line of dialogue ("Round up the usual suspects," "Was that cannon fire, or is it my heart pounding?" -- or even every time that Bogey says "kid") with ovations usually reserved for football games. And I have seen the youthful audience in an Italian art cinema react in the same way. What then is the fascination of Casablanca?

The question is a legitimate one, for aesthetically speaking (or by any strict critical standards) Casablanca is a very mediocre film. It is a comic strip, a hotch-potch, low on psychological credibility, and with little continuity in its dramatic effects. And we know the reason for this: The film was made up as the shooting went along, and it was not until the last moment that the director and script writer knew whether Ilse would leave with Victor or with Rick. So all those moments of inspired direction that wring bursts of applause for their unexpected boldness actually represent decisions taken out of desperation. What then accounts for the success of this chain of accidents, a film that even today, seen for a second, third, or fourth time, draws forth the applause reserved for the operatic aria we love to hear repeated, or the enthusiasm we accord to an exciting discovery? There is a cast of formidable hams. But that is not enough.

Here are the romantic lovers -- he bitter, she tender -- but both have been seen to better advantage. And Casablanca is not Stagecoach, another film periodically revived. Stagecoach is a masterpiece in every respect. Every element is in its proper place, the characters are consistent from one moment to the next, and the plot (this too is important) comes from Maupassant--at least the first part of it. And so? So one is tempted to read Casablanca the way T. S. Eliot reread Hamlet. He attributed its fascination not to its being a successful work (actually he considered it one of Shakespeare's less fortunate plays) but to something quite the opposite: Hamlet was the result of an unsuccessful fusion of several earlier Hamlets, one in which the theme was revenge (with madness as only a stratagem), and another whose theme was the crisis brought on by the mother's sin, with the consequent discrepancy between Hamlet's nervous excitation and the vagueness and implausibility of Gertrude's crime. So critics and public alike find Hamlet beautiful because it is interesting, and believe it to be interesting because it is beautiful.

On a smaller scale, the same thing happened to Casablanca. Forced to improvise a plot, the authors mixed in a little of everything, and everything they chose came from a repertoire of the tried and true. When the choice of the tried and true is limited, the result is a trite or mass-produced film, or simply kitsch. But when the tried and true repertoire is used wholesale, the result is an architecture like Gaudi's Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. There is a sense of dizziness, a stroke of brilliance.

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But now let us forget how the film was made and see what it has to show us. It opens in a place already magical in itself -- Morocco, the Exotic -- and begins with a hint of Arab music that fades into "La Marseillaise." Then as we enter Rick's Place we hear Gershwin. Africa France, America. At once a tangle of Eternal Archetypes comes into play. These are situations that have presided over stories throughout the ages. But usually to make a good story a single archetypal situation is enough. More than enough. Unhappy Love, for example, or Flight. But Casablanca is not satisfied with that: It uses them all. The city is the setting for a Passage, the passage to the Promised Land (or a Northwest Passage if you like). But to make the passage one must submit to a test, the Wait ("they wait and wait and wait," says the off-screen voice at the beginning). The passage from the waiting room to the Promised Land requires a Magic Key, the visa. It is around the winning of this Key that passions are unleashed. Money (which appears at various points, usually in the form of the Fatal Game, roulette) would seem to be the means for obtaining the Key. But eventually we discover that the Key can be obtained only through a Gift -- the gift of the visa, but also the gift Rick makes of his Desire by sacrificing himself For this is also the story of a round of Desires, only two of which are satisfied: that of Victor Laszlo, the purest of heroes, and that of the Bulgarian couple. All those whose passions are impure fail.

Thus, we have another archetype: the Triumph of Purity. The impure do not reach the Promised Land; we lose sight of them before that. But they do achieve purity through sacrifice -- and this means Redemption. Rick is redeemed and so is the French police captain. We come to realize that underneath it all there are two Promised Lands: One is America (though for many it is a false goal), and the other is the Resistance -- the Holy War. That is where Victor has come from, and that is where Rick and the captain are going, to join de Gaulle. And if the recurring symbol of the airplane seems every so often to emphasize the flight to America, the Cross of Lorraine, which appears only once, anticipates the other symbolic gesture of the captain, when at the end he throws away the bottle of Vichy water as the plane is leaving. On the other hand the myth of sacrifice runs through the whole film: Ilse's sacrifice in Paris when she abandons the man she loves to return to the wounded hero, the Bulgarian bride's sacrifice when she is ready to yield herself to help her husband, Victor's sacrifice when he is prepared to let Ilse go with Rick so long as she is saved.

Into this orgy of sacrificial archetypes (accompanied by the Faithful Servant theme in the relationship of Bogey and the black man Dooley Wilson) is inserted the theme of Unhappy Love: unhappy for Rick, who loves Ilse and cannot have her; unhappy for Ilse, who loves Rick and cannot leave with him; unhappy for Victor, who understands that he has not really kept Ilse. The interplay of unhappy loves produces various twists and turns: In the beginning Rick is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilse leaves him; then Victor is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilse is attracted to Rick; finally Ilse is unhappy because she does not understand why Rick makes her leave with her husband. These three unhappy (or Impossible) loves take the form of a Triangle. But in the archetypal love-triangle there is a Betrayed Husband and a Victorious Lover. Here instead both men are betrayed and suffer a loss, but, in this defeat (and over and above it) an additional element plays a part, so subtly that one is hardly aware of it. It is that, quite subliminally, a hint of male or Socratic love is established. Rick admires Victor, Victor is ambiguously attracted to Rick, and it almost seems at a certain point as if each of the two were playing out the duel of sacrifice in order to please the other. In any case, as in Rousseau's Confessions, the woman places herself as Intermediary between the two men. She herself is not a bearer of positive values; only the men are.

Against the background of these intertwined ambiguities, the characters are stock figures, either all good or all bad. Victor plays a double role, as an agent of ambiguity in the love story, and an agent of clarity in the political intrigue -- he is Beauty against the Nazi Beast. This theme of Civilization against Barbarism becomes entangled with the others, and to the melancholy of an Odyssean Return is added the warlike daring of an Iliad on open ground.

Surrounding this dance of eternal myths, we see the historical myths, or rather the myths of the movies, duly served up again. Bogart himself embodies at least three: the Ambiguous Adventurer, compounded of cynicism and generosity; the Lovelorn Ascetic; and at the same time the Redeemed

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Drunkard (he has to be made a drunkard so that all of a sudden he can be redeemed, while he was already an ascetic, disappointed in love). Ingrid Bergman is the Enigmatic Woman, or Femme Fatale. Then such myths as: They're Playing Our Song; the Last Day in Paris; America, Africa, Lisbon as a Free Port; and the Border Station or Last Outpost on the Edge of the Desert. There is the Foreign Legion (each character has a different nationality and a different story to tell), and finally there is the Grand Hotel (people coming and going). Rick's Place is a magic circle where everything can (and does) happen: love, death, pursuit, espionage, games of chance, seductions, music, patriotism. (The theatrical origin of the plot, and its poverty of means, led to an admirable condensation of events in a single setting.) This place is Hong Kong, Macao, I'Enfer duJeu, an anticipation of Lisbon, and even Showboat.

But precisely because all the archetypes are here, precisely because Casablanca cites countless other films, and each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, the resonance of intertextuality plays upon the spectator. Casablanca brings with it, like a trail of perfume, other situations that the viewer brings to bear on it quite readily, taking them without realizing it from films that only appeared later, such as To Have and Have Not, where Bogart actually plays a Hemingway hero, while here in Casablanca he already attracts Hemingwayesque connotations by the simple fact that Rick, so we are told, fought in Spain (and, like Malraux, helped the Chinese Revolution). Peter Lorre drags in reminiscences of Fritz Lang; Conrad Veidt envelops his German officer in a faint aroma of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari -- he is not a ruthless, technological Nazi, but a nocturnal and diabolical Caesar.

Thus Casablanca is not just one film. It is many films, an anthology. Made haphazardly, it probably made itself, if not actually against the will of its authors and actors, then at least beyond their control. And this is the reason it works, in spite of aesthetic theories and theories of film making. For in it there unfolds with almost telluric force the power of Narrative in its natural state, without Art intervening to discipline it. And so we can accept it when characters change mood, morality, and psychology from one moment to the next, when conspirators cough to interrupt the conversation if a spy is approaching, when whores weep at the sound of "La Marseillaise." When all the archtypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two cliches make us laugh. A hundred cliches move us. For we sense dimly that the cliches are talking among themselves, and celebrating a reunion. Just as the height of pain may encounter sensual pleasure, and the height of perversion border on mystical energy, so too the height of banality allows us to catch a glimpse of the sublime. Something has spoken in place of the director. If nothing else, it is a phenomenon worthy of awe.

Film writers often express bewilderment when faced with Casablanca's enduring appeal or, more specifically, with their own slightly embarrassed affection for the old Warner Brothers relic. "Some undefinable quality in Casablanca seems to make it better with each viewing," write Don Whitemore and Philip Alan Cecchettini in their essay on Michael Curtiz, the prolific director of Casablanca, while Harvey Greenberg calls his essay on the film "If It's So Schmaltzy, Why Am I Weeping?" In his famous gloss on the film, Andrew Sarris throws up his hands and calls it an "accident," singling out the work of "lightly likable" Curtiz as "the most decisive exception" to his auteur theory. Richard Schickel is probably not alone in declaring Casablanca to be his favorite film, even though acknowledging its limitations as "a somewhat better-than-average example of what the American studio system could do when it was at its most stable and powerful."

Even the film's cult status is problematic. Casablanca reached the full flowering of its culthood only in the 1960s when Harvard students regularly attended Humphrey Bogart film festivals during finals week. More than a decade before The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Casablanca initiates would shout "The Germans wore gray; you wore blue" and "Is that cannon fire, or is it my heart pounding?" along with the projected images of Rick (Bogart) and Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman). Casablanca needed twenty years to become a cult item, perhaps because it did not take the usual route to that status. The film's success within the industry -- it won the 1943 Academy Award for best picture -- was helped in no small part by the Allied invasion of North Africa, which preceded the film's initial release by a few days, and the meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill in Casablanca, which took place during the film's national release. Later, more "conventional" cult films like

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Rocky Horror, Pink Flamingos, and Eraserhead had much less auspicious beginnings. How can a popular wartime melodrama, promoted initially as home-front propaganda, continue to find such devoted audiences?

For Umberto Eco, the key to Casablanca is its "glorious incoherence, " producing enough contradictory material to support new meanings for each new audience. Not only does Casablanca contain several archetypal situations, writes Eco:

"When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths. Two cliches make us laugh, but a hundred cliches move us because we sense dimly that the cliches are talking among themselves and celebrating a reunion."

If Eco had watched more products of the American studio system, he might have observed that, from the beginning, Hollywood films have constituted a never-ending reunion of archetypes. We suspect that the film's appeal has more to do with its ability to tap into the unconscious concerns that regularly drive audiences to the movies. Psychoanalytic theory provides the royal road to understanding the American cinema, especially the films of the "classical" period that began with the acceptance of sound films around 1930 and culminated at about the time that Casablanca was made in 1942. But since psychoanalysis has in the last two decades ceased to be a monolithic method for film scholars, we have adopted a pluralist approach, deploying a range of psychoanalytically based methodologies around Casablanca. We share the view that "a psychoanalytic reflection on any phenomenon is incisive to the extent that it employs more than one dimension." The "star" performances of Bogart and Bergman, the music of Max Steiner, the romantic tensions of the narrative, even the film's handling of American politics can be approached through psychoanalytic thought. We are as interested in illustrating the heterogeneity of psychoanalytic film theory as we are in offering a thorough reading of Casablanca.

17.2 Oedipus in North Africa

A wealth of Oedipal material awaits anyone wishing to interpret the film along classical Freudian lines. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, Rick Blaine is an outcast from his home country. At least in the fantasies of Capt. Renault, Rick may have fled because he killed a man. In fact, as Greenberg has observed, Renault's speculations have a great deal of Oedipal resonance. Because Rick will not divulge the real reasons that brought him to Casablanca, Renault wonders if Rick absconded with the sacred money of the church or if he ran off with a senator' s wife. Renault says that the romantic in him would like to believe that Rick took a man's life. Rick's response that he left America because of a combination of all three can be read as more than a glib piece of verbal sparring. Greenberg suggests that the sacrosanct stolen treasure [is] the wife of a preeminent older man; her husband is the one murdered -- and by the love thief. Thus, the essence of the "combination" of offenses is the child's original desire to kill his father and possess his mother. In Casablanca's one flashback, Rick's Parisian interlude with Ilsa can be understood as the realization of this desire to possess: the blissful union with an all-good, nurturing woman completely unattached (at least in Rick's mind) to a threatening paternal figure.

We doubt that any other actress could have fulfilled this role quite as completely as Bergman, whose screen image projects the most desirable qualities of mother and lover. Whenever Curtiz's camera closes tightly on her face, she appears to be as innocent and nurturing as she is sensual and compliant. Rick was not the only one who responded to Bergman's face in this manner: The American media worked itself into a frenzy in 1949 when Bergman bore a child out of wedlock to Roberto Rossellini, after years of being portrayed in the press as the ideal wife and mother, Bergman so thoroughly flouted American mythology that she was denounced on the floor of the U.S. Senate, and a legislator in the Maryland state senate introduced a bill to condemn Stromboli, Bergman's first film with Rossellini.

Rick's flashback at first depicts a dream-like paradise of prewar, pre-Oedipal Paris, where he toasts Ilsa amid romantic settings. The lovers create a dyed that comes to its inevitable end with the arrival of Nazi armies, a nightmare image of the jealous, castrating father. Ilsa, as nurturing mother, has even warned Rick that the Nazis will take special pains to look for him. Later on, in

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Casablanca, Rick enters a more advanced stage of Oedipal development when he comes face to face with Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid). Although some viewers may consider Henreid's Laszlo something of a cold fish, there is no question that the intellectual/freedom-fighter manages to be more heroic, virtuous, understanding, and forgiving than the most idealized hero of romantic fiction. Laszlo's entrance presents Rick with a typical conflict of the Oedipal-phase male child. Does he challenge and attempt to replace his rival, or does he renounce the forbidden object of his love and identify with his father?

Unlike Oedipus, whose entire, undisplaced story has never really been taken up by Hollywood, Rick negotiates the Oedipal phase with success. He renounces his incestuous object of desire and identifies with father/Laszlo, Ilsa's original mate whose place Rick could usurp only temporarily. When he guns down the evil Nazi Major Strasser (Conrad Veidt), Rick kiss the principal enemy of his father surrogate, thereby becoming a man himself. Alternately, we might also regard the killing of Strasser as the displacement of Rick's Oedipal rage onto a less stigmatizing individual, but one who is nevertheless associated with the pre-Oedipal disruption brought about when the Nazis entered Paris. Like Ernest Jones's Hamlet, Rick is an indecisive, passive individual until he renounces mother, identifies with father, and kiss the villain. In terms of the film's political/ Oedipal nexus, Rick's decision to fight the Nazis corresponds with his realization that the paradise he has lost was an illusion sustained only by a refusal to acknowledge the existence of father. Casablanca resembles most Hollywood films of the classical period in its highly involving combination of myth and politics with melodrama.

Another aspect of Rick's dilemma is that the man he wishes to replace is a figure of unimpeachable integrity and virtue, thus complicating his efforts to integrate his positive regard for Laszlo with his murderous wishes toward him. Similarly, it is difficult for Rick to view this forgiving and saintly leader of the resistance as a castrating, punitive father who will retaliate against Rick for his lustful yearning toward llsa. Because of Rick's difficulty in integrating these representations of himself and Laszlo, he appears to regress from the task of integration that accompanies the Oedipal phase. The result is a splitting of the father figure into the benevolent Laszlo on the one hand and the sadistic Major Strasser on the other. Even the ultimate identification with Laszlo at the end of the film comes at the expense of his murdering the disavowed and split-off "bad" aspects of the internalized father. One could argue, then, that resolution of the Oedipal conflict is only partial since a true integration of "good" and "bad" aspects of the father has not been achieved.

17.3 "Here's Looking. . ."

These classically psychoanalytic readings of Casablanca are not typical of the theoretically oriented writing that currently fills most academic film journals. By isolating the characters as case histories, this application of Freudian theory casts the viewer in the role of ideal analyst, completely free from any countertransferential reaction to the images on the screen. As Shoshana Felman has observed, the actual experience of text puts the reader/viewer in the dual position of analyst and analysand, attempting to take charge of the story at the same time that the story takes charge of its consumer. The Lacanian- inflected psychoanalysis that has dominated film theory in the academy for several years now is usually presented as the alternative to a classically Freudian film criticism. Too often in the lacanalysis of films, however, will-of-the-wisp theoretical positions are read back into films with such iron rigidity that some of the most salient aspects of a film are entirely overlooked. As Kaplan argues, we must hold applied psychoanalysis to the same conceptual standards as clinical psychoanalysis. Most notably, Lacanians tend to ignore the specificity of actors: Bogart and Bergman, for example, are almost texts unto themselves, and any thorough reading of Casablanca must account for how their star qualities, their histories, and the meanings encoded in their cinematic images transform the films in which they appear. We undertake a Lacanian reading of Casablanca to illustrate one of several possibilities in the application of psychoanalysis to the Hollywood cinema.

A major similarity between lacanalysis and classical psychoanalysis is an attention to Oedipal triangles. Raymond Bellour, especially eminent among Lacanian theorists, has suggested that the

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Oedipus story is the masterplot of all Hollywood narratives. A Lacanian reading of Casablanca would focus not so much on the dynamics among the characters but on how the viewer is constructed within a larger discursive field that positions the viewer in a circuit of looks.

Richard Corliss has suggested that "Rick's famous toast--`Here's looking at you, kid'--can be read as meaning, `Here's trying to look into your soul, kid, to figure out who you really are.'" A Lacanian would have no difficulty conceptualizing the remark somewhat differently, in terms of how the viewer is positioned through Rick, its surrogate. So long as the audience is in control of the gaze, looking at Ilsa but also at everyone else, it need not acknowledge the range of differences that the classical realist text works so hard to conceal. The possibility that someone or something may be looking at Rick raises the possibility of difference and the possibilities of castration that marks the entry of the subject into the symbolic register. As long as the viewer controls the look, it can safely remain in the imaginary register where there is no difference between itself and mother.

Significantly, when Rick's looking toast is interrupted in the flashback by Gestapo loudspeakers, Sam (Dooley Wilson) warns him that the Germans will soon be in Paris, "and they'll come lookin' for ye." The invading Nazis represent not only the castrating father but the castrating gaze of the Other as well. The coincidence of the Nazis' arrival with the baffling disappearance of Ilsa leaves Rick as an object in someone else's plot, his previously omniscent gaze reduced to a limited point of view. Similarly, the Oedipal trajectory that leads Rick to the reconciliation with Laszlo and the elimination of Strasser restores him to a sense of origin and identity offered by the father. Rick surrenders Ilsa to Laszlo only after he has completely regained control over the narrative, writing a script to which he holds the only copy. As a result, he has regained the right to utter the looking toast once again. His newly found father, unjealous and supportive to a fault, then tells him, "This time I know our side will win."

17.4 ". . . at You, Kid"

Beginning in 1975 with the publication of Laura Mulvey's extraordinarily influential essay, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," Lacan' s theses on the look and castration have been central to feminist film theory. According to Mulvey and the many writers who have followed in her wake, the patriarchal order of the Hollywood cinema provides two basic solutions to the fear activated in men by women' s implied threat of castration: Either the woman's lack is part of her punishment for some wrongdoing, usually sexual transgression, or she is fetishized so that a portion of her body (breasts, hair, face, legs, bottom, even the entire body) becomes important enough to compensate for the lack of a penis. Male viewers can then derive voyeuristic pleasure from a cinema that provides fetishized images of women to exorcise male castration anxiety. The most commonly cited example here is Busby Berkeley, who directed all those production numbers of Warner Brothers musicals in which entire armies of women are fetishized, their body parts reduced to geometric patterns.

The plot of Casablanca consistently emphasizes the sufferings of Ilsa, carefully placing the burden of transgression on her more than on the two male leads. Both Rick and Laszlo have loved her unselfishly, but she has been unfaithful to both. Although the film finds narrative means for repressing her guilt, justifying her conduct in terms of a legitimate romantic dilemma, there is no question that she has deceived Laszlo through her silences as much as she has deceived Rick by concealing her marriage to Laszlo. As Greenberg has observed, there is little sense in the Laszlos' decision to keep their marriage a secret in order to protect Ilsa from the Gestapo. It would be just as logical for the Germans to interrogate a lover as a wife, perhaps even more logical. Ilsa has no real justification for not telling Rick of her marriage, just as she has no sound reason for concealing her affair with Rick from the infinitely forgiving Laszlo.

Significantly, Ilsa's sins are those of omission rather than commission, resulting from the absence of voice rather than from too much. Kaja Silverman has extended Mulvey's work on the role of women in the visual register of the cinema to a study of woman's cinematic voice. Classical cinema does not stop at confining women to an inferior function in which a male-driven diegesis stops so

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that the woman may be exhibited. In addition, the voice of a woman is seldom given the powerful position of voice-over narration. With rare and problematic exceptions such as Hitchcock's Rebecca, extradiegetic voiceover is inevitably male in Hollywood films, including Casablanca with its voice-of-god newsreel voice in the prologue. The subordination of women in patriarchal cinema has even been extended to situations in which heroines are quite literally deprived of voice, the most often cited example being Johnny Belinda. Appropriately, at the end of Casablanca, Ilsa has very little to say to either Rick or Laszlo, her lying silences giving way to a continuing renunciation of voice after the crucial love scene "up a flight" in which she asks Rick to do the thinking--and speaking- -for both of them.

The film's sadistic treatment of Ilsa takes a substantial toll in tears, often revealed in tight closeups of her fetishized face. The almost kittenish sexuality of Ingrid Bergman's face, combined with her country-girl wholesomeness, provides the male viewer I with an object of aesthetic perfection sufficient to ward off the thought of castration. Significantly, the first Mt. Rushmore closeup of Bergman in Casablanca takes place as she listens, lost in thought, to Sam playing "As Time Goes By." Mulvey points out that musicals are typical of the patriarchal order of classical cinema in their careful separation of performance numbers--often featuring scantily clad females--from the diegesis so that the viewer can divert all his attention to contemplating the female body. There is always a risk in interrupting the diegesis, however, because the involving flow of the story effectively stops. Mulvey mentions the "buddy movie," in which the eroticized display of women is entirely eliminated, as one solution to this problem. The long closeup of Bergman's face as she listens to the music is perhaps an even better solution, integrating a moment of fetishized display into a diegetic sequence that prepares us for the climactic reunion of Rick and Ilsa.

17.5 "Moonlight and Love Songs Never Out of Date"

Until recently, little work had been done on the importance of background music in classical cinema. Claudia Gorbman is one of a handful of critics who have productively brought psychoanalytic theories of music into film study. She cites a number of Lacanian writers who have associated music with a pre-Oedipal stage in which the child lives in a "sonorous envelope" dominated by the pleasingly rhythmic sound of the mother's heart, and later by the soothing, musical sound of her voice. By promoting "benign regression" to the blissful time before the child senses that it is separate from the mother, movie music "invokes the (auditory) imaginary. "Furthermore, music is free from linguistic signification and other kinds of representation, and thus it can more easily bypass defense systems and penetrate to the unconscious. Gorbman accepts the arguments of Metz and others that dominant cinema attempts to erase the signs of its workings by casting the viewer as the subject rather than the object of the film' s enunciation. "Music greases the wheels of cinematic pleasure by easing the spectator's passage into subjectivity."

Although she does not dwell on Casablanca, Gorbman devotes an entire chapter to the work of Max Steiner, the prolific composer who scored Casablanca, in order to illustrate "classical Hollywood practice." After establishing a set of principles for the use of music in Hollywood films (invisibility, "inaudibility," signifier of emotion, narrative cuing, continuity, unity, and the legitimate violation of any principle at the service of another), Gorbman undertakes a discussion of "the epic feeling" of music that is especially relevant to the appeal of Casablanca. Remarking on the anthropological analysis of musical elements in rituals that bind together human communities, she notes how music in classical cinema can be put to use for the pleasureful creation of the sense of commonality. The most obvious example of this phenomenon occurs diegetically in Casablanca when Laszlo leads the non-German patrons of Rick's Cafe Americain in a performance of "La Marseillaise," eliciting patriotic tears even from the sexually collaborationist Yvonne (Madeleine Le Beau). The extradiegetic music in Casablanca is carefully constructed to elicit appropriate emotions from the audience, usually the same emotions that the film attributes to Rick. The most striking example is the string orchestra voicing of "As Time Goes By" that is superimposed on Sam's diegetic piano after Rick insists on hearing the song. Steiner's music intrudes "inaudibly" at this crucial moment in order to seal us into Rick's -- and the film's--imaginary, the pre-Oedipal scenes in Paris before the arrival of the Germans and the departure of Ilsa.

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Citing an example from Steiner's score for Curtiz's Mildred Pierce, Gorbman has written, "the appropriate music will elevate the story of a man to the story of Man." Much the same can be said for the long closeup of Bergman as she listens to "As Time Goes By." With Ilsa's face providing additional validation, Sam's interpretation of the lyrics elevates a love song to a song about Love. Surprisingly, the song was almost excised from the film. "As Time Goes By" was written by Herman Hupfeld and first performed in 1931 in a Broadway show called Everybody's Welcome. The song is central in the unproduced play on which the script for Casablanca is based. When shooting was completed and an edited print of the film was presented to Steiner, he objected to the use of "As Time Goes By" and asked to substitute a song of his own composition. Steiner said that he disliked the song, but he also knew that he would surely benefit from the royalty checks if his own song became popular. At first, producer Hal Wallis consented to cut the scene in which Bergman requests "As Time Goes By" by name and to shoot additional scenes in which Steiner's song would be used. But since Ingrid Bergman had by this time received a rather severe haircut for her role in For Whom the Bell Tolls, Wallis realized that a new scene with Bergman and Wilson was out of the question. Steiner subsequently learned that he would have to work with the original scene and hence with "As Time Goes By."

It is as difficult to imagine Casablanca without "As Time Goes By" as it is to imagine the film with Ronald Reagan, Ann Sheridan, and Dennis Morgan, the leads who were originally projected for the film. In its day, the film gained an element of nostalgic power by using a well-known song. Many in the audience may have associated a romantic experience of their own with the music, thus adding an additional level of audience subjectivity to Ilsa's, and later Rick' s, reaction to the song. For a moment, Ilsa and the viewer return to an earlier time, but the audience has the larger-than-life face of an idealized maternal figure to facilitate regression to a moment even more pleasant than the one recalled by the heroine. Although more contemporary audiences are likely to associate the song with the same era as the film, the music is still crucial in associating the experience of the film with a simpler, more romantic era to which the viewer can bliss fully return.

17.6 America Dreaming

Psychoanalytic thought is relevant to Casablanca's political agenda as well as to the film's expression of American ideology. We are most concerned here with the extent to which the "dream work" of the film censors or displaces political material that may be intrinsic to American mythology but incompatible with the war effort. Michael Wood was one of the first critics to observe that Rick is portrayed as a patriot ultimately dedicated to fighting the Nazis even though he represents a well-established breed of American heroes, who are more suspicious of compromising entanglements with friends than with the predictable hostility of enemies. According to Wood, the well-known poster of Bogart as Rick, "staring into the middle distance, a giant of heroic self-pity in his eyes . . . is a picture of what isolation looks like at its best: proud, bitter, mournful, and tremendously attractive. "When Rick hands over Ilsa to Laszlo, he tells her, "where I' m going, you can't follow," and yet if Rick and Laszlo now share the same cause, why is it suddenly so essential that she follow Laszlo and not Rick?

In A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, Robert B. Ray categorizes Casablanca as "the most typical" American film. Ray uses Casablanca as a tutor text for what he calls the "formal paradigm" of Classical Hollywood as well as the "thematic paradigm" that addresses the conflict between isolationism and communitarian participation. Thematically, the film is typical in its appropriation of an official hero (Laszlo), who stands for the civilizing values of home and community, and an outlaw hero (Rick), who stands for ad hoc individualism. Although these mythological types at first appear to be at odds, they share a common purpose by the end, just as they do in films as generically dissimilar as Angels with Dirty Faces, Shane, and Star Wars.

Formally, Casablanca abundantly illustrates the importance of a number of "centering" techniques that create the illusion of realism while at the same time disguising the complex apparatus that lies behind each shot. Although Ray does little to develop a Lacanian reading of Casablanca, he relies upon the Lacanian-inflected writings of the Screen critics to develop his thesis of the formal

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paradigm. Ray, however, is less interested in castration and the gaze than he is in adapting psychoanalytic thought to a theory of how "the concealment of the necessity for choice" determines the sequence of shots in classical cinema. By pinning the viewer's consciousness to Rick' s, most of what happens takes its logic from his point of view. The fusion of Rick and audience begins when we first catch a glimpse of nothing more than Rick's hand as it signs a check. Ray observes that the shot is striking because the hand comes directly out of our space, as if a (right-handed) viewer were to reach up to the screen and sign the check himself. Shortly after this shot, the entire body of Rick emerges from the viewer's space as he walks into the frame to confront the arrogant German who tries to force his way into Rick's inner sanctum.

Earlier, the personal magnetism of Rick seems to exert an inexorable pull on the camera. After being told that "everyone comes to Rick' s" and having seen the sign with his name above the cafe door, the viewer enters the cafe and is drawn steadily toward Rick as the camera drifts always to the left in a series of tracking shots. The camera pauses first to close in slightly on Sam, allowing him to be centered against a background that loses a bit of the definition that deepfocus cinematography usually grants to establishing shots in this and most other classical Hollywood films. The tracking shots eventually arrive at Rick's table where he is engaged in a solitary game of chess. The audience is then granted its first good look at Bogart's face, a visage that Casablanca cultists have called "existential." Ray points out that this concealing of the necessity for choice also governs the thematic paradigm in Casablanca. The film invites the audience to identify with Rick rather than Laszlo even though official American wartime sentiments are consistently voiced by Laszlo. Rick regularly insists upon unmediated self-interest ("I stick my neck out for nobody," "I'm the only cause I'm interested in"), a position that Ferrari (Sidney Greenstreet) explicitly identifies with a discredited American tradition: "My dear Rick, when will you realize that in this world today isolationism is no longer a practical policy?" [emphasis added]. Casablanca is typical of classical Hollywood in its willingness to confront, at least initially, its audience's most important concerns, in this case, "the deep-seated, instinctive anxiety that America' s unencumbered autonomy could not survive the global commitments required by another world war." Although the film never puts Rick in a position to retract his innately American reluctance to give up his independence, he ultimately does exactly what Laszlo--and the United States government--would have him do. Of course, Rick's decision to fight the Nazis is related to his feelings for Ilsa rather than a change of heart about being an isolationist. By means of this well- established Hollywood pattern of reconciliation, Casablanca could support the war effort without disturbing the foundations of American myth.

Ray acknowledges a debt to an essay by Charles Eckert on the 1937 gangster melodrama Marked Woman. Eckert argues that the corrupt, conspicuously affluent movie gangsters of 1930s Hollywood provided Depression-era audiences with ideologically sanctioned objects for the hatred they felt toward the rich. Although Eckert uses Marxist and Levi-Straussian methodologies to uncover the class conflict and myth-making that is submerged in Marked Woman, he is also interested in how Freudian concepts of the dream work can explain the process by which politically proscribed class hatred is displaced into familiar conventions of melodrama. We should also mention Brian Henderson's work on John Ford's The Searchers (1956) that reveals how the film's dialectic on the assimilation of Indians is also a displacement for American concerns about black integration in the months just after the "separate but equal doctrine" was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1954. Although Eckert and Henderson have both cautioned against reductive readings that ignore the overdetermined polysemy of Hollywood films, they have both acknowledged the importance of psychoanalysis in their larger semiotic project.

Casablanca's audience must never be asked to choose between Rick and Laszlo because everything in the film has prepared them to choose Rick, who represents the rejection of America's involvement in world politics. Instead, the film relieves the audience of the necessity of choice by displacing the film's political conflict into melodrama, where familiar emotions overwhelm ideas. To the extent that films resemble dreams, the film's latent political content--whether or not America should enter the war--appears in the manifest content as whether or not Rick should help Laszlo. Although

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Victor Laszlo is always in Rick's shadow, he stands for the values of the father and the prevailing American belief in 1942 that freedom is worth fighting and dying for. By censoring the theme of American reluctance to give up its autonomy, the film spares the audience the agony of siding against the values of the father, condensing the Oedipal resolution to another shared experience between Rick and the viewer.

What Makes a Cult Film? Once a cult is established, it can often sustain itself by means of its own inertia. After becoming a camp item in the 1960s, Casablanca attained the status of a classic by an alternative system of canon- building. Usually, a work of art finds its validation in the academy. Even though popular film is currently an accepted subject of university study, films like Casablanca need not establish their importance by impressing faculty committees as masterpieces. Although it existed briefly as a television series during the 1955-56 season, Casablanca did not become a fetish object until the Rick/ Bogie poster became popular and Woody Allen subsequently wrote the play (and movie) Play It Again, Sam. During the weeks in which this paper was written, allusions to the film have twice appeared in popular TV shows: a full-dress, five-minute parody of Casablanca was the dream of Bert Viola (Curtis Armstrong) in an episode of Moonlighting; and on Miami Vice, a lovable crook attempted to corrupt Detective Sonny Crockett (Don Johnson) by telling him that a suitcase full of contraband was their "letters of transit," but Crockett replied, "this is not the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Now that it has been canonized, Casablanca is sure to continue as a universal signifier of romantic love, doing the right thing, and painful sacrifice. As for the qualities that made Casablanca a cult film and have made its appeal "never out of date," we can point to all the psychologically resonant aspects of the film discussed in this paper. Probably the most crucial ingredients in the film's success are (1) the star presence of Bogie and Bergman; (2) the subliminal but nostalgically potent music, both diegetic and extradiegetic; (3) the satisfyingly resolved Oedipal material; and (4) the reassuring message that the American outlaw hero (and by extension, all Americans) can be true to his instincts even in a world war. This last message may seem specific to the 1943 audience, but movies have been quite successful in keeping old myths alive, and when reconfigured for the Era of Reagan and Bush, these myths can be more vital than ever. Star Wars was the first in a cycle of "disguised Westerns" that has achieved extraordinary popularity by reviving the outlaw hero/official hero plot. Since then, Beverly Hills Cop I and II, Top Gun, Rambo III, and Lethal Weapon I and II have recycled the same basic myth with enormous success. As for the audience today, Casablanca has an extra level of appeal, offering a sense of control to repeat viewers. Just as "As Time Goes By" eased the 1943 viewer into a nostalgic imaginary, the film itself now grants the viewer benign regression to a lost moment when right and wrong were clear cut and going off to war could be a deeply romantic gesture.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

(*i*) Ingard Bergman is the ..... .

(*a*) kind woman (*b*) wise woman

(*c*) enignatic woman (*d*) None of these

(*ii*) Casablance was made is ..... .

(*a*) 1942 (*b*) 1940

(*c*) 1943 (*d*) 1941

17.7 Summary

- If any Hollywood movie exemplifies the 'genius of the system,' it is surely Casablanca - a film whose success was founded on almost as many types of skill as varieties of luck. (It's also ironic that aspiring screenwriters take Casablanca's script as a text; rewritten many times, the film was virtually made up as its makers went along.) Mixing genres with wild abandon, Casablanca has become a cult film precisely because, as Umberto Eco suggests, 'it is not one movie. It is movies.'" More than this, Casablanca is the bedrock of western

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mythology, a film that unapologetically plays with the very myths and beliefs that fuel our own Western society - the very world we live in. Umberto Eco is quite cheeky, but unreservedly astute about the role Casablanca has played in our own understanding of the world, and the reason why it has reached the heights of legend...

- ...[Casablanca] opens in a place already magical in itself - Morocco, the Exotic - and begins with a hint of Arab music that fades into â€œLa Marseillaise." Then as we enter Rick's Place we hear Gershwin. Africa, France, America. At once a tangle of Eternal Archetypes comes into play. These are situations that have presided over stories throughout the ages. But usually to make a good story a single archetypal situation is enough. More than enough. Unhappy Love, for example, or Flight. But Casablanca is not satisfied with that: It uses them all. The city is the setting for a Passage, the passage to the Promised Land. But to make the passage one must submit to a test, the Wait (â€œthey wait and wait and wait," says the off-screen voice at the beginning). The passage from the waiting room to the Promised Land requires a Magic Key, the visa. It is around the winning of this Key that passions are unleashed. Money (which appears at various points, usually in the form of the Fatal Game, roulette) would seem to be the means for obtaining the Key. But eventually we discover that the Key can be obtained only through a Gift - the gift of the visa, but also the gift Rick makes of his Desire by sacrificing himself. For this is also the story of a round of Desires, only two of which are satisfied: that of Victor Laszlo, the purest of heroes, and that of the Bulgarian couple. All those whose passions are impure fail.
- Thus, we have another archetype: the Triumph of Purity. The impure do not reach the Promised Land; we lose sight of them before that. But they do achieve purity through sacrifice - and this means Redemption. Rick is redeemed and so is the French police captain. We come to realise that underneath it all there are two Promised Lands: One is America (though for many it is a false goal), and the other is the Resistance - the Holy War. That is where Victor has come from, and that is where Rick and the captain are going. On the other hand the myth of sacrifice runs through the whole film: Ilsa's sacrifice in Paris when she abandons the man she loves to return to the wounded hero, the Bulgarian bride's sacrifice when she is ready to yield herself to help her husband, Victor's sacrifice when he is prepared to let Ilsa go with Rick so long as she is saved.
- Into this orgy of sacrificial archetypes (accompanied by the Faithful Servant theme in the relationship of Bogey and the black man Dooley Wilson) is inserted the theme of Unhappy Love: unhappy for Rick, who loves Ilsa and cannot have her; unhappy for Ilsa, who loves Rick and cannot leave with him; unhappy for Victor, who understands that he has not really kept Ilsa. The interplay of unhappy loves produces various twists and turns: In the beginning Rick is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilsa leaves him; then Victor is unhappy because he does not understand why Ilsa is attracted to Rick; finally Ilsa is unhappy because she does not understand why Rick makes her leave with her husband. These three unhappy (or Impossible) loves take the form of a Triangle. But in the archetypal love-triangle there is a Betrayed Husband and a Victorious Lover. Here instead both men are betrayed and suffer a loss, but, in this defeat an additional element plays a part, so subtly that one is hardly aware of it. It is that, quite subliminally, a hint of male or Socratic love is established. Rick admires Victor, Victor is ambiguously attracted to Rick, and it almost seems at a certain point as if each of the two were playing out the duel of sacrifice in order to please the other. In any case, as in Rousseau's Confessions, the woman places herself as Intermediary between the two men. She herself is not a bearer of positive values; only the men are.
- But precisely because all the archetypes are here, precisely because Casablanca cites countless other films, and each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, the resonance of intertextuality plays upon the spectator. Casablanca brings with it, like a trail of perfume, other situations that the viewer brings to bear on it quite readily"

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17.8 Key-Words

1. Simulacrum : (L. 'to make like') in the postmodernism of Jean Baudrillard the simulacrum is defined in terms of the substitution of the sign of the real for the real itself, in terms of a copy without origin.
2. Sjuzhet : (Russian 'plot') term used by the Russian formalist critics and borrowed by certain narratologists to denote the way in which a story is told, its 'discourse' or telling, as opposed to the events of the narrative, the fabula or story.

17.9 Review Questions

1. Write a brief analysis of Umberto Eco Casablanca.
2. Is Casablanca a Cult movie? Discuss.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) (*c*) (*ii*) (*a*)

17.10 Further Readings

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