PGEG S4 01

Exam Code : LCT 1

Literary and Critical Theory I

SEMESTER IV

ENGLISH

BLOCK 2

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SEMESTER 4

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE 1: LITERARY AND CRITICAL THEORY I

BLOCK 2: THEORITICAL APPROACHES II

DETAILED SYLLABUS

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BLOCK 2: INTRODUCTION

This **Block** contains a total of five units, the details of which are as the following:

Unit 6: In this unit, we shall discuss Psychoanalytic Criticism that adopts the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses.

Unit 7: In this unit, we shall deal with the idea of Phenomenological criticism, which appears to be an important segment in literary studies. The German thinker and philosopher Edmund Husserl established phenomenology as a philosophical perspective in analysing human consciousness and its effectiveness in getting into touch with different objects. It championed the cause of things and phenomena as experienced in one's consciousness.

Unit 8: In this unit, we shall discuss Reader Response that gained importance in around 1980s. At the centre of Reader Response Theory are the responses of readers to a text over a given period of time. As literary theory, Reader Response focuses on the reader (or "audience") and their experience of a literary work, in contrast to other schools and theories that focus attention primarily on the author or the contents or the form of the work.

Unit 9: In this unit, we shall deal with Reception Theory, which refers to the school of criticism that explores the many and often divergent ways in which literary works are received following their initial publication. Hans Robert Jauss gave birth to the concept of 'aesthetic distance' to explain the differences between the immediate reception of a work and its contemporary profile.

Unit 10: In this unit, we shall try to discuss Marxist criticism in which *social class* and *class relations* function as central instruments of analysis. Marxist criticism and theory as an intellectual perspective provides a wholesome counterbalance to our propensity to see ourselves and the writers that we read as completely divorced from the socio-economic circumstances.

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We strongly advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books

in the “FURTHER READING” which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know the world of literature and criticism is too big, we strongly advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you read the original texts of the authors prescribed as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 6: PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Introducing Psychoanalytic Criticism

6.4 Major Trends

- 6.4.1 Classical Freudian Criticism
- 6.4.2 Jungian Criticism
- 6.4.3 Lacanian Criticism

6.5 Reception of Psychoanalytic Theory

6.6 Let us Sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.9 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the nature and function of psychoanalytic criticism
- identify the various trends within the scope especially those initiated by Freud, Jung and Lacan
- discuss the wide-ranging reception psychoanalytic criticism enjoys
- discuss the implications psychoanalytic criticism effects in literary studies

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the Block. In this unit, we shall discuss Psychoanalytic Criticism in some detail. Psychoanalytic criticism adopts the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. One may psychoanalyze a

particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche. As we finish reading the unit, we shall be able to understand the various facets of psychoanalytic criticism.

6.3 INTRODUCING PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

Psychoanalytic criticism is one of the distinctive branches of study gaining widespread circulation as time passes on. However, the passage of time did not reduce its significance and applicability provided its adaptations being made, albeit by taking recourse to various fields of study. For instance, Jacques Lacan's linguistic reading of Sigmund Freud's formulations points out the continuation of the school of thought. At times, other disciplines including Feminism take Freudian observations into account, though not always in their positive framework; rather in the alleged bias, Freud had made in conditioning his thought processes. This is also a pointer towards the extent Freudian psychoanalysis enjoys in the academics and the wider circle of socio-cultural context as well.

It is understood that psychoanalytic criticism made its presence felt in the 1920s with no looking back since its inception. Of course, its major premises and procedures are traced back to Viennese neurologist Sigmund Freud. His treatment of neurosis and hysteria brought out certain key aspects relating to human psyche and its hitherto untouched reality. In his epoch-making study, Freud points out that mental illness, symptoms, and even normal life remain inexplicable, potent cause being frequent interference from the unconscious mind of human beings. Indeed, Freud's major theories such as Repression and the Unconscious, Infantile Sexuality, Oedipus Complex, among others, constitute major space in psychoanalytic criticism. With these novel ideas and projections, newer vistas of thinking processes came into effect and the certainty of everything assumed has been subject to scanner.

If Freud gives much importance to sexuality and repressed motives as deciding factors conditioning general course of action in human beings, later thinkers notably Carl Gustav Jung see archetypes of the collective or

personal unconscious as founding aspects of artistic creations and other issues. For the Jungians, the nature of art is a matter inseparably connected to aesthetics, and mere psychiatry fails to unfold the real value of literature. Though greatly influenced by Freud's formulations, Jung emerged as a distinctive thinker sidelining the centrality of sex and other related issues. Any discussion on Freud and Jung remains incomplete, especially in context of the late 20th century, unless French critic and philosopher Jacques Lacan is taken into account. Indeed Lacan's linguistic reading of Freud has done a job many fold. It not only extends Freud's relevance, but also introduces symbolic order into psychoanalysis. The lingual dimension to psychoanalysis introduces the three elementary registers such as the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real, which Lacan found of immense significance in unfolding various facets to his area of interest. These ideas were given much publicity by Lacan maintaining close ties with Saussure's linguistics, structural anthropology and post-structural theories. In fact, Lacan's adherence to Freudian psychoanalysis extends its bounds and encompasses fields as diverse as film studies, feminist theory and philosophy, and, above all, literary criticism.

There is no denying the fact that psychoanalytic criticism is the least appreciated of all major disciplines emerged among the academics and thinkers. Though mostly controversial, psychoanalytic criticism seems very effective a tool especially in interpretative analysis. Coming into terms with this, the school bears much implication in literary studies. Indeed, it would be a misnomer to refer to a few select texts on which psychoanalytic criticism could be levied. Generally, this distinctive school may be conveniently applied to any text. It depends upon the interest and perspective an analyst maintains in approaching a given text. Interestingly, psychoanalytic criticism engages a great variety of areas pertaining to a text that include the author, the characters, the audience, and also the hidden dynamics the text inherits. However, all these major areas may not be given equal treatment by an analyst. Sometimes a particular area is given due focus while at times more than one aspect draw the attention of the concerned. Whatever the case be, psychoanalytic criticism exerts far-reaching impact on literary studies and comes up with many a good, but interesting observation

regarding the chosen text. Literary studies apart, psychoanalytic criticism turns out functional in understanding the wider circle of philosophy, religion and culture.

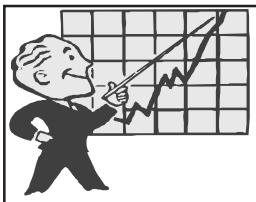
It goes without saying that psychological dimension to literature is not new a phenomenon. Since the time of Aristotle, it has been a recurring motif, and most of the thinkers have taken recourse to this with their respective design and purpose. Although Sigmund Freud is regarded the pioneer in the field, with whom the theory of the 'unconscious' was of wide-ranging bearing, his was not a maiden venture too. For instance, thinkers like Schlegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche also gave emphasis upon the notion of the "unconscious". What Freud did was the inculcation of a systematic study and an introduction of a new language into the said area. Another important aspect to Freud's formulation is the challenge it poses to the certainty of everything that is usually taken for granted. This situates Freud, though controversially, in the postmodernist context as well, particularly in respect of the improbability of definite meaning. In fact, Freud's observations defy the Enlightenment postulation about the rational bearing of human beings in getting access to various matters and their associated knowledge.

It is very true that psychoanalytic criticism came into prominence in the 1920s, and there is no looking back since its inception. Cantering Sigmund Freud's basic premises and projections, psychoanalytic criticism is not identical to psychological criticism that emerged in the early decades of the 19th century. Dealing with the state of mind and the framework of personality of a given author, psychological criticism turned out an antidote to the pragmatic and mimetic views earlier schools of study strictly prescribed. However, psychoanalytic criticism comprises a broader space engaging the motives of an author, of readers, of fictional characters, relation of the text to its author's biography, role of gender, analysis of symbols, and function of language. While doing all this, the distinctive school takes recourse to observations made by various thinkers in the concerned field. Along with Freud, influential thinkers like Alfred Adler, Carl Gustav Jung, among others, gave a new orientation, and succeeding practitioners owed a great deal to their ideas and views.

Psychoanalytic criticism views literature and other art forms as the imagined or fantasised satisfaction of wishes that are usually denied in reality by a series of factors. An individual might have myriad attitudes and intention in normal course of life, which finds it difficult to get fulfilled because of various social norms and standards affecting the concerned and other people. These remain unfulfilled, but do not die out altogether. Instead, they take the repressed mode in what is called the "unconscious" state of mind. One's pursuit of literary undertaking and other art forms provide a space and the repressed but powerful feelings access a kind of satisfaction. Following the mandate of Freud, psychoanalytic thinkers believe that artists, poets, novelists, dramatists, and other creative personalities use creativity as a tool of therapy for their neurotic tension. Of course, the satisfaction one's creativity provides is not of the usual nature; rather it proceeds through a number of mechanisms such as Condensation, Displacement, and Symbolism. Moreover, residual traces of earlier stages also make their presence felt in the unconscious. Any instance of the present stage may ignite the repressed, and the same constitute a fantasy of satisfaction. The main task of the psychoanalytic critic is to unfold the effect literary text produces on the readers keeping in view the latent determinants conditioning suppressed meanings. Indeed the role played out by a psychoanalytic critic is of much importance since the issues being harping upon relate to the mind of human beings, which does not seem so easy a space one could discern.

It is seen that psychoanalytic criticism came into prominence in the 1920s, and any trend making its presence felt in the period is more or less related to the World War I. With no exception to this, Freud noticed the devastation caused by the War and came out refreshed with realisation about the darker aspect of human psychology, and his thrust upon the death instinct present in every human being. At this juncture, Freud published many a good writing that included "On Narcissism", "Mourning and Melancholia", and also the series of lectures under the banner of psychoanalysis. In all this, he pointed out the instinctive appeal of human beings for which they stay undone, but subject to the role played out by the

given instinct. Psychoanalytic criticism owes a great deal to these formulations, especially those that unveil various facets of human mind. Though succeeding thinkers inculcated much elaboration and redefinition, basic concepts were not altered altogether. For instance, Freud's major postulations relating the three functional aspects of the mind namely the id, ego, and superego, along with other theories have exerted deep influence on the practitioners of the school. However, it is worth remembering that the emergence of structural and post structural theories gave a new boost to psychoanalytic criticism and also to Freudian studies. Be it in the Marxist, Feminist, Derridean, or Foucauldian parlance, basic concepts of Freud and a few of his close allies upon which psychoanalytic criticism stands are given a re-look; at times critique of the concepts is also a reality. Interestingly, historians often question the personal, scientific and philosophical credentials of psychoanalysis and its theoretical applicability to literary texts and other areas. These approaches, in fact, point out the influence of the distinctive school of study on the academics and associated concerned. Despite its inception decades back, psychoanalytic criticism as well as psychoanalysis has not gone into oblivion as time passes on.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 1: How would you relate Sigmund Freud to psychoanalytic criticism?

Q 2: What space does psychoanalytic criticism occupy in recent critical trends?

6.4 MAJOR TRENDS

Psychoanalytic criticism witnessed major trends in its critical domain. Indeed each of the trends is not completely different from the earlier one; rather they provide useful insight into proper understanding of the school. They share certain major ideas while at the same time point out their non-conformity and come up with distinctive viewpoints. All this has made study interesting and fruitful as well. Hence it is imperative that a few of the major trends including those enunciated by Sigmund Freud, Carl

Gustav Jung, and Jacques Lacan are given due focus and some sort of justification.

6.4.1 Classical Freudian Criticism

In psychoanalytic criticism, Sigmund Freud's concepts and views played out an effective role. It is in recognition of his pioneering contribution to the field of psychoanalysis that the school of psychoanalytic criticism introduces Freudian criticism as an inseparable part, which has made an invaluable contribution to many a good area. A neurologist by profession, Freud developed therapeutic technique to treat hysteria and neurosis. During research, he observed that mental illness, symptoms and even normal course of life are simply inexplicable because of frequent intervention from the 'unconscious mind'. However, the unconscious mind usually remains inaccessible, it is not absent from its impact upon the individuals. Even the patients suffering from neurotic disorder and hysteria are unquestionably subject to the powerful effect of the unconscious. Hence, Freud wanted the patients to say everything that comes to mind, and this helps to have access to the hidden motifs and inner happenings of the patients. This also warrants the study of dreams, jokes etc, since repressed feelings relating to sexuality and other potent instinctive appeals find their royal road to these developments. Consequently, a kind of symbolic satisfaction results in the concerned individual.

With his collaborators including Theodor Reik, Otto Rank, Ernest Jones, Wilhelm Stekel, among others, Freud made extensive study on the human mind and broadened the scope of psychoanalysis, which in succeeding times came of great help. Major theories like the Repression and the Unconscious, Infantile Sexuality, Oedipus Complex etc enunciated a new vista of learning about human psyche. In his epoch-making texts such as *Interpretation of Dreams, The Subtleties of a Faulty Action,* among many others, Freud discusses the key theories. For instance, his

in-depth analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in respect of Oedipal elements is still fresh with psychoanalytic critics. Freud's primary belief was that creative writings are the product of unconscious processes and a literary work is analogous to a daydream as in both there is the wish-fulfilment of the concerned individual. Moreover, Freud's major thrust upon the mental apparatus being conditioned by agencies namely the 'id', 'ego' and 'superego' also did exert immense influence upon the psychoanalytic critics.

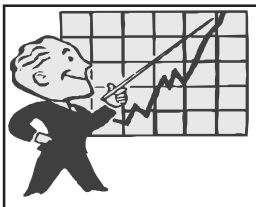
6.4.2 Jungian Criticism

Carl Gustav Jung was another influential thinker whose ideas and concepts play a decent role in the domain of psychoanalytic criticism. It is true that Jung started his venture under the stewardship of Freud, but in later days his were the postulations especially those on depth-psychology accorded him a place unlike that of his master. Though a faithful ally to Freud particularly at the early stage, Jung had split from his master by 1913 waging protest against his insistence on the centrality of sex, suspicion of religious ideals, and authoritarian methods. Indeed Jungian criticism departs radically from psychoanalytic criticism on various fronts. Unlike psychoanalytic criticism, the Jungians gave emphasis on what is called the "collective unconscious" of human beings. As opposed to the individual unconscious, collective unconscious is seen as the repository of archetypes. The Jungians regard art not as neurosis; rather a matter of aesthetics and literary works are to be judged by methods appropriate to the given art form. Like the myths, great literature always inherits archetypes as inseparable entities, and this is what the Jungians adhere to in their critical pursuits. Another important figure in the Jungian thinking, Alfred Adler also saw human beings as social beings motivated by social needs and related aspirations. Northrop Frye, an influential thinker in the line opined that psychiatry hardly judges the aesthetic value of literature.

Going by all this, what comes to notice is that the Jungians extended the bounds of study engaging the larger concerns of collective life as well as social life.

6.4.3 Lacanian Criticism

Jacques Lacan's ideas and views revolutionised the clinical practice of psychoanalysis exerting major impact upon fields as diverse as literary criticism, film studies, feminist theory and philosophy. Indeed Lacan made linguistic reading of Freud saying that truth could be accessed only through language. The three "elementary registers" such as the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real are effective tools in developing perception of reality. Of these, the Symbolic is an important aspect since it is because of this order that the analysis no longer remains in the custody conditioned by the interaction between the two egos, i.e. that of the analyst and the analysed. It is in the Symbolic that Lacan's much touted term the "big Other" rests on while in the Imaginary that the "little other" has its stay. Influenced by Freud, Saussure, Roman Jakobson, and Hegel, Lacan also made extensive study on the idea of the unconscious, but not purely on the prescribed lines of Freud. Instead, he harnessed the larger concerns of society, particularly those of law, morality, religion and conscience. Using Saussure's linguistic acumen, structural anthropology and poststructural theories, Lacan dismantled the imaginary sense of completeness combined with de-cantering the subject, loss of unified psychic life and also the primacy of the signifier over the signified. Lacan's observations were so far-reaching that many of the succeeding thinkers such as the Marxist, Louis Althusser and the Feminist, Julia Kristeva came under his influence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 3: Would you say Freudian and Jungian critical thoughts as identical? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 4: What relation did Jacques Lacan maintain to psychoanalytic theory? Illustrate your argument referring to his major theoretical postulations.

6.5 RECEPTION OF PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN LITERARY STUDIES

Psychoanalytic criticism has been an influential rendition in the field of literary criticism. Though the school came into effect in 1920s, it never goes into oblivion as time progresses and newer trends of study appear at the scene. Of course, succeeding thinkers' novel approach to the trend with an eye open to contemporary thinking makes it more appealing and functional as well. For instance, Jacques Lacan's approach to the theory in close resemblance to Saussure's linguistics, structural anthropology and poststructural theories points out the reception it gets among the critics. It is also the pointer towards the adaptability it inherits, indeed for better understanding of subject matter and other issues. Another important area of interest regarding widespread popularity of psychoanalytic criticism is its practitioners, who have added many a good, but significant aspects to the said theory. Instead of following Freud's observations in letter, they come out with distinctive ideas that have extended its bounds and scope.

As Freud observes, there is a close connection between literary work and human mind. Although he regards literary work as a means of wish-fulfilment, one cannot ignore the bond that exists in the creative mechanism. He believes that artists, poets, novelists, dramatists, and other creative genius use their creativity as a faithful means of therapy, and the release of their neurotic tension is intended. Of course, it is not simply the idea of releasing neurotic concerns; rather unfolding inner workings of the mind, which remain untouched keeping in view the prohibition of certain social norms and standards, is what is facilitated in psychoanalytic analysis. As such, some sort of radicalism always accompanies this distinctive approach, but such a conditioning comprises an interesting side because of the exposition of many a good truth related to various issues and subject matter. Freud's analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and Shakespeare's

Hamlet to see their Oedipal elements is quite appealing since the obsessive relation between mother and son causes difficulties that are of different colouring and nature. Although social laws do not allow having interpretation of this forbidden truth, psychoanalysis deals with this and comes up with novel ideas and postulation. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* also relates the troubled relationship between protagonist Paul Morel and his mother. It is because of his mother's obsessive and possessive instinct that he hardly develops relation with the women of his choice. This turns out very much complex since the concerned self is dissected between one's choice and the mother's obsession resulting in killing her by increasing the dose of morphine. The incident is fatal, but it releases Paul from the Oedipus complex. In Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, the life of Meursault is recounted with the lens of psychology. His psychological constraints and attendance at mother's funeral with no trace of shedding tears, which goes against traditional norms, constitute an interesting phase in the novel. Psychological variables in the characters of Arthur Miller's plays comprise an interesting study for scholars and practitioners in the field. As the principal character, Willie Loman is affected with regression of pleasure principle, the course of his life experiences drastic turns, and the tragic overtones rise up many fold. Even his son Happy's affairs with women combined with views and observations relating to female sex seem an offshoot of Oedipus complex. Walt Whitman's *The Sleepers* or some of the poems by W.H. Auden are seen to have been influenced by a large number of psychoanalytic theories.

In literary studies, psychoanalytic criticism seems to be a remarkable side that unveils interesting issues and themes relating to human mind. As it is known that human mind is a complex phenomenon that one can hardly come to its grasp, an approach like that of psychoanalytic criticism or literary pursuit goes a long way in giving some clue, though not entirely its original nature, about the mind. However, partial interpretation of the mind and its literary accomplishment are unquestionably an important segment in understanding concerned individuals. Of course, psychoanalytic criticism does not remain untouched at the hands of critics. It is seen that historians most often question Freud's personal and scientific integrity. Also, the so-

called philosophical credentials come under scanner. Such complaints fall short of posing damage to the stature of psychoanalytic criticism. That psychoanalytic criticism enunciates many a good positive but interesting aspects cannot be ruled out given the popularity it enjoys among academicians as well as its practitioners.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 5: How does psychoanalytic criticism affect literary studies? What are the positive sides embedded in psychoanalytic criticism?



6.6 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, it may be said that psychoanalytic criticism is one of the most widely used critical approaches to literary texts. Since its inception in the early 20th century, it has been a preferred zone for most of the scholars. The passage of time does not find it going obsolete; rather it continues to hold its sway, and this is what points out the adaptability the distinctive school sustains. If Freud's are the observations functioning as platform, succeeding thinkers' respective views and statements are no less significant in the direction. As such, the critical school gets enriched with the contribution being made by each of the successors. If Freud gives major thrust upon the working of the unconscious in his psychoanalytic analysis, Lacan in the later part of the 20th century introduces the symbolic order into psychoanalysis. Indeed his linguistic reading of Freud gives a new orientation to psychoanalytic theory. With such a rich amalgam of thinkers and their theoretical stance, many a good number of people have tried their hand in presenting various aspects to life and society. To substantiate this, one may refer to the texts in which the authors seem to have followed some of the influential facets to the complex human psyche.



6.7 FURTHER READING

Bowie, Malcolm. (1991). *Lacan.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

de Berg, Henk. (2003). *Freud's Theory and Its Use in Literary and Cultural Studies: An Introduction.* Rochester, NY: Camden House.

Dolnick, Edward. (1998). *Madness on the Couch- Blaming the Victim in the Heyday of Psychoanalysis.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wright, E. (1984). *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory and Practice.* New York: Methuen.

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Sigmund Freud's concepts and theories played a pivotal role in psychoanalytic criticism… …it is true that the school came into prominence in the 1920s… …but it took recourse to Freudian formulation of the human mind… …many of his predecessors gave major thrust upon the "unconscious"… …Freud materialised a solid base and systematic study… …Freud impacted wide-ranging effect upon the critical scene… …logical interpretation of dream and repressed feelings… …even practitioners of other schools of criticism take recourse to Freudian concepts.

Ans to Q 2: Psychoanalytic criticism enjoys a decent space in recent critical discourses… … despite its inception in the early 20th century, it does not appear obsolete a development… …newer dimensions to the key concepts of psychoanalytic criticism come into effect… … emergence of critical schools such as structuralism and poststructuralism turned out a blessing in imbibing psychoanalytic terms… …thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault brought out many facts to psychoanalysis… …the feminists too maintain a close bond… …their stance proves the wider impact of psychoanalytic criticism and the analysis of human mind.

Ans to Q 3: Though related to psychoanalytic criticism, Freudian and Jungian schools of thought cannot be categorised as identical… …each of them has distinctive ways of perceiving human psyche and the art… …if Freud saw art being structured along sexual lines, Jung regarded it as an offshoot of archetypes… …instead of focusing on individual traits that Freud found of utmost importance, Jung considered "collective unconscious" as stepping stone… …also the Freudians take recourse to literary creations as wish-fulfilment of the author… …but the Jungians accept the nature of art as a matter of aesthetics…

Ans to Q 4: Jacques Lacan initiated linguistic reading of Freudian psychoanalysis… …his observation relates that people may access to truth only through language… …his frequently quoted saying, "The unconscious is structured like a language"… …draws recognition among the academics… …major formulations being the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real… … … …many schools of study got influenced… …even practitioners like Louis Althusser, Julia Kristeva, among many others, owe much to Lacan.

Ans to Q 5: Psychoanalytic criticism is an influential segment in literary studies… …with the core issues relating to human mind being of major thrust, psychoanalytic critics discern the inner workings of the mind of characters and also of the authors… …as some of them regard artistic works as wish-fulfilment of the authors, some others consider aesthetic values in line of unfolding the hidden activities of the mind… …provided the mind being a complex phenomenon, psychoanalytic approach to literary studies turns out interesting.



6.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the major changes psychoanalytic criticism effects in literary studies? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 2: Discuss the major thinkers and their contribution in the field of psychoanalytic criticism.

Q 3: How did Jung and Lacan differ from Freudian psychoanalysis despite their affiliation with the said school of thought?

Q 4: What are the major theories Sigmund Freud gave major thrust upon? How did they deconstruct earlier theories of study?

Q 5: How did psychoanalytic criticism impact literary studies? What space does psychoanalytic criticism occupy in the domain of literary criticism? Discuss with illustrations.

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UNIT 7: PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Introducing Phenomenological Criticism

7.4 Major Thinkers

7.5 Reception of Phenomenological Criticism

7.6 Let us Sum up

7.7 Further Reading

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.9 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- write on the basic formulations relating to phenomenology
- identify the major thinkers impacting the course of Phenomenology and their contributions
- discuss the changes in ideas that came with each of the thinkers
- discuss the use of phenomenology in literary studies

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have discussed Psychoanalytic criticism. In this unit, we shall deal with the idea of Phenomenological criticism, which appears to be an important segment in literary studies. It goes without saying that this school of criticism is unfailingly related to the Geneva School of critics whose theoretical and practical approach formulated a base succeeding practitioners owed a greater deal in their pursuit of literary studies. However, the consolidated phase the Geneva critics and other followers experienced did not come overnight since the preceding thinkers and their observations were indeed the real signposts in giving a decent shape. Of those, mention may be made of German thinker and philosopher Edmund Husserl who established phenomenology as a philosophical

perspective in analysing human consciousness and its effectiveness in getting into touch with different objects. In his way to phenomenology, what Husserl did was the utter rejection of traditional dualism centering strict separation between subject and object, a development that had been dominating the whole of Western philosophy since the time of Descartes.

Instead of focusing strong subject-object divide, Husserlian philosophy championed the cause of things and phenomena as experienced in one's consciousness. It is consciousness that matters a lot with utter rejection of pre-suppositions or other pre-conceived assumptions that are usually given topmost priority on most of the occasions. For Husserl, describing the "Lebenswelt", his most popular phrase meaning the "lived world" becomes very much crucial in phenomenological approach. Indeed experiencing the lived world independently of any prior affiliation comprises major space for most of its followers. With Husserl founding the basic premises of phenomenology, the trend was adopted by another German philosopher Martin Heidegger whose diversified use of phenomenological observations turned out effective in Hermeneutics or Existential Phenomenology to a great extent. However, it is not true that phenomenology was only confined to Germany; rather it found its noble postulation in most of the countries. For instance, adoption of phenomenology by French thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sartre or Polish thinker Roman Ingarden points out the far-reaching impact the distinctive branch of study exerts across the nations.

7.3 INTRODUCING PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITICISM

As phenomenology developed with the tag of heterogeneity, various pertinent issues including inter-subjectivity, embodiment, sociality, language, historicity, and interpretation come under its purview, and they have acquired a new dimension in their applicability. If Husserl's transcendental phenomenology heralded a new temperament, it is Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology or Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology that facilitated the introduction of diversified themes and issues. This is a pointer towards the multi-faceted aspects phenomenology

inherits and this phenomenon is of much appeal for the academics and other scholars. Of course, its application to literary studies bears special relevance since it takes both the author and reader into account particularly in respect of their consciousness and its role in formulating the text and discerning the intended meaning as embedded. Indeed the approach warrants "active" participation of the author and reader and the act strives to concretize the schematic aspect in the text. With the Polish theorist Roman Ingarden's adaptation of phenomenological concepts in his approach to the analysis of literature, phenomenological criticism hoisted itself as a preferred zone for most of the practitioners. Ingarden's formulations were further developed by another influential thinker, Wolfgang Iser whose observations on the idea of superior texts having the possibility of making us re-think about preconceptions that are usually assigned to reading practice has done a commendable job in accelerating the pace of the movement. Of course, the Geneva school of critics imparted the consolidated base to the critical school with such a dignity that was simply incredible. Indeed succeeding critical pursuits, especially the Reader Response criticism owed a greater deal to phenomenology and its basic formulations.

Phenomenological criticism relates the method of analyzing a text without presuppositions about ontology or epistemology. Sidelining presuppositions, inferences and judgments, a phenomenologist gives major thrust upon consciousness and its active role in framing meaning once objects appear to it. Keeping this major formulation in mind, the Geneva School of critics approached literary texts as a fictional world created out of the lived world of the author and their engagement of the author's consciousness is a defining trait. Of course, phenomenological criticism is not to be understood as similar to other critical schools like Formalism or New Criticism that are very much objective in their approach to literature. However, a twentieth century development, phenomenological criticism maintains some sort of affinity with the romantic Expressive Criticism, which takes a literary work as a revelation of its author's personality. It is awareness of the personality as revealed in the text that conditions the value of literature.

With the Geneva School of critics, phenomenological criticism achieved an orientation that was remarkable because it opened up a novel approach to studying literature and its values. Distinguished scholars such as Marcel Raymond, Albert Beguin, Jean Pierre Richard, Jean Rousset, Georges Poulet, and J. Hillis Miller tried their hand in giving a shape to this school of criticism. However, it is to be mentioned that the phenomenological approach made by the Geneva critics was not completely new since people like Hans Georg Gadamer and other notable practitioners recognised understanding language as a conscious activity, something that is very much connected with phenomenological perception. In the 1930s, Roman Ingarden, a Polish theorist par excellence, made adaptation of phenomenological concepts in understanding and responding a literary text. For Ingarden, a literary work consists of the intentional acts of consciousness, and the intentional acts are directed towards an object. It is through active reading on the part of the reader that the potential segments embedded in the text come to one's purview. Focus on active reading turns out operational because it addresses the indeterminate aspects of the text as well. As such, the concretisation of the schematic text easily finds its way to reading practice. Ingarden's formulations were further developed by Wolfgang Iser, a German theorist making his presence felt in the later part of the twentieth century. Iser observes that superior texts compel the readers to re-think about pre-conceptions that are usually assigned to reading practice. Indeed one's reading practice performs an important role in connection with filling up gaps embedded in the text. Iser's formulations played a major role in the development of Reader Response criticism that came into prominence in the second half of the twentieth century.

Widely known as "critics of consciousness", the Geneva School of critics treated a literary text as an embodiment of the author's expression of consciousness, a proposition phenomenology accords the topmost priority. Keeping this in mind in the analysis of literary texts, the Geneva critics imbibed many a good, but interesting concept of Husserl, Heidegger, and other phenomenologists in their critical domain. In their view, the "cogito" of the author makes its presence felt throughout the text, and the contents

correlate the consciousness in a befitting manner. Various events and objects, characters, imagery, and the distinctive style in writing turn out faithful renditions in which the author's consciousness projects itself, and it is through reading that the projection inherits the desired meaning. One of the major concerns for phenomenological critic is to place together various passages of a single work and, through proper analysis, find out the unity of the creative mind. The logic behind putting together various passages within the single text is that they provide us with myriad problems, difficulties, attitudes, and obsessions and these are the sides related to human beings and their psychological propositions. It deserves mention that the criticism of consciousness that has been an inseparable part of phenomenology reached its height of circulation in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the trend fell upon critical days in succeeding periods with the advent of developments like cultural semiotics, Poststructuralism and Deconstruction. Although they are opposed to phenomenological postulations, indirectly they help sustain some of the key concepts, albeit in contestatory parlance. Of course, other critical modes such as Reader-Response criticism and Reception Aesthetics follow a few vital developments connected with phenomenological approach to literary texts.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 1: What are the basic formulations of Phenomenological criticism? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 2: How would you connect the Geneva School of critics to Phenomenological criticism?

7.4 MAJOR THINKERS

The following are the major thinkers of Phenomenological criticism

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

A German philosopher and well-known mathematician, was a pioneer of the school of phenomenology giving emphasis upon subject position to

which objects appear with the whole set of knowledge and information. In strict opposition to studying the external world, Husserl's was the stance championing subjectivity and human consciousness as of utmost significance. The bracketing of the external world is what Husserl calls "phenomenological reduction", which constitutes a major space in phenomenology. Though an empiricist at the early stage nurturing great admiration for the writings of J. S. Mill, Husserl, interestingly, critiqued the formulations of empiricism relating the limits set by transcendental consciousness. In his unique fashion, Husserl went back to the potent questions that had interested thinkers including Descartes. For Husserl, there is a complex series of concepts engaged in the perception of phenomena, and this is something that rules out the possibility of having objectively verifying knowledge. Hence, he rejected the representational parlance of reality pointing out the lacuna early empiricists including Locke, Berkley, and Hume materialised placing too many pre-suppositions upon the brunt of experience. In his critique of historicism and psychologism, Husserl circulated the logic of intentionality as a defining trait in one's approach to various events or phenomena. Be it the idea of intentionality or subjectivity, Husserl's position exerted wide-ranging influence on the Geneva School of criticism, Reception theories of Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, and perhaps most significantly on Martin Heidegger.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Heidegger was another influential practitioner of phenomenology starting his career as student of Husserl. However, Heidegger did not continue as a faithful follower to Husserlian philosophy in letter and spirit wholeheartedly. With his publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger challenged Husserl's phenomenological ideals primarily on the basis of their being descriptive percolation. In his outright rejection of human beings as mere spectators of objects, Heidegger observes that there is no division between subject and object. What he took for granted was the acknowledgement of existence as being in the world. Phenomenological reduction and transcendental ego that comprised an important aspect in

Husserl's philosophy experienced strong opposition from Heidegger. Challenging Cartesian dualism, Heidegger gave topmost priority to the concept of being, being in the world, and encounter with various entities in the world, being with spatiality and temporality, among many other vital issues. In showing being as an inseparable entity, Heidegger introduced the significant concept of "Dasein" that refers to being there, indeed being in the world. The phenomenon of being in the world is unitary which must be seen as a whole. In fact, Heidegger presents the world in two contexts—one of the common, while the other of the subjective experience. It is in connection between the two that the world hood of the world makes its presence felt.

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

Jean Paul Sartre was an influential French thinker giving major thrust upon existentialism as an important segment in the life of human beings, which achieved a new orientation in the twentieth century. His deep interest in the lectures delivered by Husserl at the Sorbonne and close reading of the works of Heidegger formulated a solid base for his philosophical speculations. Of many a good of his thought-provoking observations, Sartre's prompt response to one's consciousness deserves special mention, and this perhaps turns out elemental to his connection with phenomenology. For Sartre, consciousness is an activity to be distinguished from what it intends. Indeed consciousness is free to do anything, and this distinctive characteristic provides myriad knowledge and information with the concerned individuals. However, this noble venture becomes much effective as it is directed at the world. In addition, imagining the world other than what it is comprises another important aspect to Sartre's philosophical stance. Though consciousness is an inseparable entity in an individual, it is not identical with the self. As the self is an ongoing project in the world, consciousness is, as mentioned earlier, an activity directed at the world. With his usual radical position, Sartre announced that humans are "condemned to be free". Be it in his famous lecture entitled "Existentialism is a Humanism" or his frequently referred text *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre showcased some of his influential views that proved themselves unique

too. For instance, he distances himself from Husserlian philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*, despite being immensely influenced by Husserl himself in his formative years.

Merleau Ponty (1908-61)

Merleau Ponty was a French philosopher who championed both existentialism and phenomenology in his observations. Widely known for his works on ontology, embodiment and perception, Ponty's acumen was no less significant in the fields of art, history, nature, language and politics. Influenced by thinkers like Henri Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger, Max Scheler, and Sartre, Ponty extended the bounds of phenomenology seeking to integrate the discipline with psychoanalysis, Gestalt psychology, Marxism and Saussurian linguistics. Given his wide-ranging studies, later poststructuralist icons such as Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Derrida saw Ponty as an effective influence on their stance. What Ponty observed were the problems of perception and also those of embodiment for the clarification of relation between the mind and body. His prime objective was to identify an alternative to intellectualism or idealism on one hand, and empiricism or realism on the other by pointing out their pre-suppositions about the world. In his eye, intellectualist accounts inspired by Kantian philosophy do not hold much water since they could hardly deliver the essence of things and issues. To describe the phenomenology of perception, one's approach to traditional empiricism and rationalism is faulty that fails considerably to do the needful in the said category.

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-95)

Levinas is at times called the Heidegger of the French language. Though the observation is too simplistic since both the thinkers differ from each other ontologically, it is a pointer towards the position and dignity Levinas enjoyed in the field of philosophy and other modes of serious study. In fact, the style of writing Heidegger and Levinas shared has gone a long way in placing them at the level of close connection. Levinas turned out very much influential in phenomenology since he gave a radically ethical orientation to it, something that had been missing with the death of the German philosopher, Max Ferdinand Scheler. As such, his basic concern was with

an ethical "face-to-face" relation with the Other. Reiterating the influence of the Bible upon him, Levinas observed that subjectivity is not for itself; rather for the other. Hence, it warrants that one should have responsibility for the other as well. For Levinas, ethics is not a system of values; it is based on man's relationship to the infinite Being. Indeed his publication of *Totality and Infinity* makes an in-depth study of the idea of the Being and the complex issues involved in it. Besides, his untiring effort at the separation between ontology and metaphysics by purging the former off its privileged position is another significant rendition in his philosophical enquiry. It is to be noted that Levinas' insightful position did not come overnight since the impact created by the Hebrew Bible, Russian classics including those of Pushkin, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, and the lectures by Husserl and Heidegger comprised an incredible space in his formative phase.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 3: How would you analyze the phenomenological observations made by Husserl and Heidegger? Do you find the two thinkers identical in their philosophical pursuits?

Q 4: What was the approach made by succeeding practitioners of phenomenology? Give a reasoned answer.

7.5 RECEPTION OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN LITERARY STUDIES

Phenomenological criticism has been widely adopted in studying literature and culture as well. Like most other critical schools, it opened up new vistas of learning and understanding various themes and issues as they come upon one's purview. As the concept of the life-world (Lebenswelt) is one of the core sides to phenomenology, and this was what Husserl sought beyond the layers of idealisation, literary texts always strive to remain within its bounds. Indeed different facets to the so-called life-world find their easy access to literature, and this interesting side characterises the well-

deserving search of the phenomenologists in their approach. In addition to the life-world, questions of space and place have always been at the heart of phenomenological enquiry. Much of literary creations and their studies have taken to this particular aspect and the phenomenological postulations of the said areas get a deserving treatment. When Merleau Ponty observes that "phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner of thinking", he points out the subjective experience of the world, which is very much similar to what one accumulates in a given literary text. For postulation of such an important aspect, phenomenological criticism occupies a distinctive position in the critical circle.

Phenomenological critics view literature quite diversely, and the great variety in their distinctive mode inculcates the extended bounds of the school. As such, aspects of application, aesthetic reflection, existential themes and problems, among many others, draw the attention of the critics of this school. Of these, the problems of one's existence as accomplished in the text are of immense interest for the critics. Gosetti-Ferencei's monograph published in 2007 may be conveniently cited in connection with presenting existential problems human beings face in society. There are scores of literary creations in which phenomenological viewpoints may be applied, and such a conditioning establishes the relevance of the distinctive mode. Cormac McCarthy's award-winning novel *The Road* has been studied from the perspective of Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy. Going by the ethical dimension to the Other, Levinas' formulation is well executed in the said text. Following his philosophy, one comes up with the realisation that one is able to explore ethical values against the backdrop of violence and seek the depth of evil from the vantage point of ethical philosophy. The ethical dimension to phenomenology that had been a major thrust in Levinas' philosophical enquiry finds its prompt accomplishment in the said novel by McCarthy.

Given the interesting dimension materialised by phenomenological criticism, especially the pro-active role-played out by one's consciousness in accumulating knowledge for the concerned; the critical circle seemed very much receptive to the development. Apart from the practitioners

imbibing phenomenological concepts in their pursuits of learning, other critical developments such as the Reader Response criticism and Reception theories have approached phenomenology. This points out the relevance of the school of thought in the later part of the twentieth century as well. With a focus on the experience of the reader, phenomenology becomes a preferred mode for the critics concerned with studying the process of reading required in a given text. Wolfgang Iser's major focus on the importance of reading process owed much to the developments conditioned by phenomenology. Of course, phenomenological criticism failed to hold its soil once the arrival of cultural semiotics, poststructuralist and postmodernist theories was pronounced. Their critique of phenomenology was based on its being adaptive to the unified subjectivity coupled with utter ignorance of the social and ideological dimensions of various issues. Fortunately, recent works particularly those penned down by influential thinkers such as Michel de Certeau and Paul Carter have gone a long way in imparting a new orientation to the study of phenomenology and its application.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 5: What is your understanding about the use of phenomenological criticism in studies of literature?



7.6 LET US SUM UP

We have learnt from this unit that Phenomenological criticism occupies a distinctive space in the domain of literary criticism, which has been given due impetus with the passage of time. Thanks to the Geneva School of critics for their renewed interest in analyzing literary texts from the vantage point of phenomenological concepts and observations, and this has turned out handy in giving a new orientation to the school of thought. With their major thrust upon the works of literature as a fictional world engaging the author's consciousness, the Geneva critics directed their

attention to many a good, but effective development enunciated by Husserl, Heidegger and a few other phenomenologists. As the text, an engagement with the unique mode of consciousness, is all-important for a phenomenologist in his or her pursuit of literature and culture, some might assume the trend being in close proximity to Formalism and New Criticism. However, such a proposition is too simplistic because both the text-oriented schools of criticism are objective in spirit while phenomenological criticism is very much subjective. Defying presuppositions, inferences and judgments, phenomenological criticism gives priority to the "cogito" of the individual author and the way it correlates with different aspects in the text. Despite such an interesting engagement, phenomenological criticism could not continue its hold with the arrival of cultural semiotics, poststructuralism, and postmodern theories. Their point of dissent at phenomenological criticism is its preference for a unified subjectivity and its apparent bracketing of the social and ideological dimensions related to various issues. Of course, it is good to see the trend being continued under the banner of Reader Response criticism and Reception Theory. Moreover, groundbreaking works that have come into effect in recent times equally exert much impact on giving a new tempo to phenomenological criticism. In this connection, mention may be made of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay,* among others.



7.7 FURTHER READING

Bassie, Ashley. (2012). *Expressionism*. New York: Parkstone International. e-Book.

Chanter, Tina. (1995). "Levinas and the Question of the Other." *Ethics of Eros.* New York: Routledge.

Dahl, Espen. (2010). *Phenomenology and the Holy: Religious Experience after Husserl.* London: SCM Press.

Harland, Richard. (1999). *Literary Theory from Plato to Barthes- An Introductory History.* London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Parsons, Charles. (2012). *From Kant to Husserl: Selected issues.* Cambridge MA- Harvard University of Press.

Zahavi, D. (2005). *Subjectivity and Selfhood.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Phenomenological criticism inspects a text with no consideration into pre-suppositions… …ontological or epistemological inferences and judgments are sidelined… … the consciousness of the author matters a lot… …as phenomenological criticism is subjective in its postulation, it stands in opposition to other contemporary critical modes such as Formalism and New Criticism which are very much objective in their approach… … Phenomenological criticism traces resemblance to the nineteenth century critical school, Expressive Criticism… …as the author's consciousness turns out effective in the text, that of the reader is no less significant.

Ans to Q 2: The Geneva School of critics that came into prominence in the 1950s and 1960s… …Phenomenological criticism achieved a consolidated position… …owing much to Russian Formalism and Phenomenology, the critics of the school approached works of literature as faithful renditions of the author's consciousness in relation to the lived world… … the Geneva critics incorporated a number of concepts and viewpoints formulated by phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, and a few others… …the phenomenological approach to literature made by the Geneva critics was not completely new since theorists like Hans Georg Gadamer and Roman Ingarden capitalised some of the basic tenets of the school of philosophy.

Ans to Q 3: They are two most influential thinkers and practitioners of Phenomenology in the early part of the 20th century… …Husserl's preferred "phenomenological reduction", an idea of transcendental consciousness setting limits to all possible knowledge etc. gave a deserving orientation to Phenomenology… …Heidegger, a disciple of

Husserl had his own way of approaching phenomenology… ...his rejection of strict subject-object divide, dissent at the reduction theory of Husserl placed Heidegger at an advantageous position as a phenomenologist… …he introduced the concept of "Dasein" referring to being there, being in the world is of utmost significance.

Ans to Q 4: Succeeding thinkers made invaluable contribution to phenomenology… …although their approach considerably varied from one another, what turned out good was the extension of scope and area within the discipline… …when Husserl championed the place of consciousness because of its active role in providing knowledge, Sartre regarded it as an activity free to do anything in the world… …he gave so much focus on the independent nature of consciousness that he differentiated it from intentional acts as well… …another successor Maurice Ponty's outright rejection of traditional empiricism and rationalism combined with the critique of Kantian philosophy came out handy in understanding the problems of the phenomenology of perception… …Emmanuel Levinas' ethical orientation formed an interesting side to phenomenology.

Ans to Q 5: Phenomenological criticism bears special relevance in studying literary texts… …with the Geneva critics, the distinctive mode of criticism attained a consolidated base… …be it the concept of the life-world or consciousness on the part of the author or philosophical enquiry into place and space, phenomenology accords the top most priority, and literary creations are seen to have been within the limits of these areas… … though phenomenological criticism is subject to criticism with the advent of cultural semiotics, poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, its reception has not dried out completely… … various schools including the Reader Response criticism and Reception theories take to phenomenological concepts and viewpoints in a befitting manner.



7.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How would you situate phenomenological criticism in the annals of literary criticism? What is the novelty of expression the critical school brought into effect?

Q 2: Discuss the major thinkers who came out influential in facilitating a solid base of phenomenology. What are the new ideas the thinkers initiated in their approach to phenomenology?

Q 3: Do you find Husserl and Heidegger following the same course of ideas in their approach to phenomenology? What are the points of similarities and differences the prominent thinkers sustained?

Q 4: What is the close bond you observe between phenomenology and existentialism? Discuss in light of formulations enunciated by Sartre and a few others associated with the field.

Q 5: Elucidate the concept of the "Other" in phenomenological parlance. To what extent does the concept affect the practitioners of phenomenology?

Q 6: What are the implications phenomenological criticism conditions in literary studies?

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UNIT 8: READER RESPONSE THEORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Introducing Reader Response Theory

8.3.1 Major Theorists

8.3.2 Important Concepts

8.4 Reception of Reader Response Theory

8.5 Let us Sum up

8.6 Further Reading

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

8.8 Possible Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the important points in Hermeneutics
- trace the growth and development of Reader Response Theory
- discuss Reader Response Theory as an important trend in Literary Theory
- make a list of the major theorists of Reader Response who contributed immensely to the field of theory
- assess the reception of Reader Response in subsequent critical periods

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the third unit of the Block. This unit will introduce us to the theoretical approach commonly known as Reader Response that gained importance in around 1980s. At the centre of Reader Response Theory are the responses of readers to a text over a given period of time. As literary theory, Reader Response focuses on the reader (or “audience”) and their experience of a literary work, in contrast to other schools and theories that focus attention primarily on the author or the contents or the form of the

work. Modern reader-response criticism began in the 1960s and 70s, particularly in the US and Germany, in works of Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, and others. We shall note that Reader-response theory recognises the reader as an active agent who imparts "real existence" to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. Reader-response criticism argues that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates his or her own, possibly unique, text-related performance. It stands in total opposition to the theories of Formalism and the New Criticism, in which the reader's role in re-creating literary works is ignored. New Criticism had emphasised that only that which is within a text is part of the meaning of a text. No appeal to the authority or intention of the author, nor to the psychology of the reader, was allowed in the discussions of orthodox New Critics. By the time we finish reading this unit, we should be in a position to discuss Reader Response in terms of its different important aspects and the different theorists.

8.3 INTRODUCING READER RESPONSE THEORY

Reader Response Studies begin with the assertion that the study of literature cannot overlook the role of the reader. This kind of study has a long history. Is origin can be traced in Plato's concerns regarding poetry in his famous *Republic*, in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and in the 18th century discourse on beauty and the sublime. However, contemporary Reader Response studies distinguish itself from this tradition, as it concentrates more on the text and the reader. It can be assumed that modern Reader Response theory begins with Husserlian **Phenomenology**, continues through what you already know as the "linguistic turn" and finally became entangled with Post structuralism, Marxism, and New Historicism.

In his book *Cartesian Meditations* (1929), Edmund Husserl characterised phenomenology as a "criticism of consciousness" or a study of "transcendental self experience". By this, Husserl wanted to mean that it studied the nature, the acts, and the structures of a "transcendental" or constituting consciousness. One notable omission in Husserl's extensive

writings was an account of aesthetics in general and of the act of reading in particular. **Roman Ingarden**, the Polish phenomenologist, found a solution to this omission in his *The Literary Work of Art*. What interested him about the literary work was the way in which it opened up a previously neglected dimension of Husserlian thought.

Wolfgang Iser, one of the founding members of the **Constance School** of Reader Response criticism, greatly expanded on the work of Roman Ingarden. Despite his originality, Iser argues, Ingarden remained tied to a classical aesthetics, which privileged and sought out the organic unity of the text. He further stated that the 'indeterminacy' of the text is irreducible. He thus shifts our attention to the "disjunctions" which make the indeterminacy of the text unavoidable. Iser describes two kinds of indeterminacy: "blanks" (or "gaps") and "negations." Blanks and negations disrupt the normal flow of reading and prompt the reader to make connections, fill in the gaps, or resolve the contradictions. Crucially, the imaginative filling of gaps does not bring us closer to an ideal unity of the work. Rather it opens up further gaps. The structure of indeterminacy changes with each subsequent reading. According to Iser, reading always takes place in a temporal horizon in which the reader makes connections between what has happened, what could happen, and what is happening at the moment. The text for Iser is a set of rules; the reader is a power of synthesis. It is a space of play between text and reader in which the two meet up, interact, and mutually create the work as an effect. The second major figure of the Constance School, **Hans Robert Jauss** too focuses on the role of readers in the constitution of the literary work, but, almost exclusively, he emphasised the effect that historically and sometimes politically determined conventions of reading have on our interpretations of a given text. These conventions, which can be generic, stylistic, and even thematic, form what Jauss calls a "horizon of expectations." He argues that it is the shifting nature of this horizon that should be the proper object of literary studies.

Jean Starobinski, Marcel Raymond, Albert Beguin, Jean-Pierre Richard, and Georges Poulet, among others, make up the second major

school of reader-response theory, the "Geneva School." They shared a common concern to continue the Husserlian project of a criticism of consciousness – a description of the field of transcendental experience – but unlike the members of the Constance School, they tended to distance themselves sharply from the Husserlian concepts and methodologies, and in some cases, even rejected outright the designation "Husserlian." Poulet was one of the more prominent members of the Geneva School. In his famous essay "Phenomenology of Reading," Poulet suggested that the unread text was no different from any other material object. If a book is different from other objects, however, it is because the moment we pick it up and begin reading, the book as object disappears and we become immersed in another world of words, images, and ideas. What really fascinates Poulet is that once we enter this world of images and ideas we cannot say that the ideas we think are ours.

You will note that the appearance of Reader Response Theory in England and the United States differs from the continental versions of the Constance and Geneva Schools in two important ways. **First**, in its early days, it was developed in relation to new developments in psychology, not the radicalisation of Husserlian Phenomenology. Later in the century, Norman Holland transformed Freudian psychology into a literary theory, arguing that the meaning of a text is produced in the reader's unconscious compensations for the ways in which that text challenges their sense of identity or their "identity theme." **The second way** in which Reader Response criticism differed in England and America was that the critical orthodoxy it attempted to overturn was not a canonical historicism as in France and Germany, but the opposite: new criticism's rejection of historical and biographical approaches in favour of the formal unity of the text. I. A. Richards's impressive blend of psychology, linguistics, and ethics would have seemed to have got a reader-based theory of literature off to a good start.

LET US KNOW



Phenomenology:

From our reading of Unit 1 of this Block, we have learnt that Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness. As a discipline, it is distinct from but related to other key disciplines in philosophy such as—ontology, epistemology, logic, and ethics. Phenomenology in the early 20th century can be traced in the works of the philosophers like Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau Ponty and others. Phenomenological issues of intentionality, consciousness, and first-person perspective have been prominent in recent philosophy of mind.

Contemporary critical theory, following the works of the various Reader Response Theorists, offers a rich panoply of types of readers—**ideal readers**, **super readers**, **implied readers**, **virtual readers**, **real readers**, **historical readers**, **resisting readers**, **critical readers**, and so on. In reading a novel, one can sometimes extrapolate from it an **implied reader**, a figure whom the text seems to be addressing and who occasionally functions as a character in the work (for example, the characters to whom Marlow tells his story in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness).* An **implied reader** differs both from a **virtual reader**, to whom the text is vaguely addressed by the author, and from a **historical reader,** who actually reads the text at the time of its publication. The hypothetical perfect decoder of the work, who knows everything necessary to make sense of it, is the **ideal reader**; but the most original and innovative texts require a **superreader**, a special reader endowed not only with extensive linguistic and literary knowledge but also with superior aesthetic sensibility. Both the **critical** and the **resisting** reader, situated in definite historical moments and possessing strong values and interests, find themselves opposing and interrogating texts (imagine an average American today reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf),* **Real readers** are people whose actual responses to novels, plays, poems, and other texts have been recorded by theorists and, in some cases, analysed for their individual styles and for the personal psychological quirks

that they reveal. Theories of meaning accompany these accounts of various readers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Which are the two major Schools of Reader Response Theory? Who are the theorists associated with these Schools?

Q 2: What are the different types of readers one finds in Reader Response Theory?

8.3.1 Major Theorists

In the previous section, you are introduced to the important theorists of Reader Response criticism. In this section, you will get to read about them in some detail.

Roman Ingarden (1893-1970)

Ingarden was a Polish phenomenologist, ontologist and aesthetician. His aesthetic theories were influenced by his teacher Edmund Husserl. Ingarden focussed less on the basic structures of consciousness than on the ontology of objects, their essential structure and status. His complex studies of the **ontology** of the literary work of art, offer a critical philosophical analysis of its "strata" and structures. His main idea was to find out the object of literary study: how it is "given to consciousness" and what kinds of knowledge we can expect of aesthetic experience. His primary philosophical concern was with the realism/idealism problem and he saw in aesthetics, in the category of the work of art.

Ingarden summarises his basic ideas in his Introduction to *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Every literary work, he stated, is a multilayered formation composed of four heterogeneous "strata" which are like the following:

(a) "word sounds" and phonetic formations of a higher order, for example, rhythms, alliteration, the melody of sentences, and so on;

(b) "meaning units" ranging from the meaning of individual words to that of sentences and whole paragraphs;

(c) "schematised aspects" through which the objects of the work are presented (e.g., visual or auditory or psychological facets).

(d) the stratum of "represented entities" (the "state of affairs," as he called them – the objects, events, and other elements forming the work's characters, plot, setting, and so on).

Ingarden addressed many aspects of reading and understanding works of art, which typically remain unconscious. He provided many avenues for literary critics to explore. His analysis of 'literary time' and of the temporal sequentiality of the written text has enabled analyses of how reading is directed by, but also creates, the work. Similarly, the ways individual reading needs to overcome the indeterminacies of the text explains the plurality of "interpretations" of a work. Ingarden has been a major attraction for the critics who proclaim self conscious fictionality in a text.

Stanley Fish (1938-)

Stanley Eugene Fish is an American literary theorist. He is a major figure associated also with Postmodernism. He is also viewed as being a major influence in the rise and development of Reader Response Criticism. Educated at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University, he taught English for many years at Johns Hopkins University. His early work was on medieval literature and on the poet John Skelton in particular. His second book *Surprised by Sin* (1967) argued that the "center of reference" of Paradise Lost was not Adam or Satan, but, rather, the reader of the poem, and that the purpose of the work was to "educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as a fallen man" by recreating in the "mind of the reader the drama of the Fall, to make him Fall again, exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity". This argument, inspired by theorists like Wolfgang Iser and Roman Ingarden, was the basis for a new school of criticism in the US, often referred to as Reader Response because it focused on the effects that a literary text renders on readers.

Fish went on to develop what he called **Affective Stylistics,** a way of thinking about interpretation that lent more weight to the way readers construct meaning in texts. Affective Stylistics, a decisive move away from Formalism and the New Critical assumption that the text was an autonomous object, is a way of thinking about texts "without the assumption that the text and reader can be distinguished from one another and that they will hold still". In his remarkable essay, "Is there a text in this class?" Fish argues that the literary text in fact does not exist until it is read. A poem is just some markings on a page until readers activate it and lend it meaning. Communities of readers learn competencies that enable them to ascribe meaning to particular words or images in a text.

Fish also argues that critics as well as readers are part of, and indeed shaped by, **Interpretative Communities—a concept** that has some affinity to what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls "language games." These Interpretive Communities also determine what are "acceptable" and "unacceptable" interpretations. He believes that values such as truth and justice are the products of interpretive communities rather than being trans-historical or universal. As he put it in his essay "Interpreting the Variorum," "the choice is never between objectivity and interpretation but between an interpretation that is unacknowledged as such and an interpretation that is at least aware of itself."

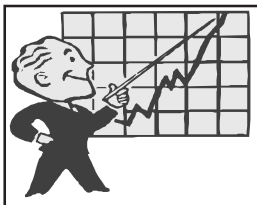
Wolfgang Iser (1926–2007)

Wolfgang Iser is a German literary theorist and critic. He became influential in the English-speaking world in the 1970s when Reader Response criticism emerged as an alternative to New Criticism. He later wrote extensively about creativity and about literature from a philosophical anthropological perspective. In 1981, Stanley Fish pointed out that Iser's "The Implied Reader and The Act of Reading", were widely studied in graduate courses on literary theory during the 1980s. Like some other English and European literary intellectuals who lived through World War II, Iser eschewed

politics and history as determining frames for understanding literature and literature's place in culture. That choice was in itself a political act, since it put him at odds with Marxist literary theory, which was important throughout Europe in the post war era. He argued that literature provides evidence and an arena for the exercise of human plasticity, a self-transforming capacity within us that we experience when we read literary works.

Iser was influenced by the **Hermeneutics** of Hans-Georg Gadamer, with whom he studied, but his influential writings concerning the reading process draw significantly on the interpretation of Roman Ingarden who instead borrowed his ideas from Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology. Iser's investigation of reading does not concern subjective reactions, because phenomenology focuses on mental acts as processes that occur generally, not on the level of personal responses.

His inaugural lecture at Konstanz in 1969, "Indeterminacy and the reader's response in prose fiction," was soon presented at the English Institutes in the US, and published in *Aspects of Narrative*, edited by J. Hillis Miller. Iser's claim that "indeterminacy is the fundamental precondition for reader participation" provides the key to his books that appeared in English in the 1970s. The chapters of his famous book *The Implied Reader* survey widely across prose narrative in English from Bunyan to Scott, and Thackeray to modernist fiction. The chapters on Joyce were particularly influential, suggesting that Iser's theory of reading, with its emphasis on gaps that the reader fills, is well suited for interpreting modernist narrative, which is more dissonant, fragmented, and experimental than realistic writing. The last chapter of the book in its English version, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," moves beyond the previous essay toward the theoretical model of *The Act of Reading.* Here, he distinguishes his approach from the literary phenomenology of Georges Poulet, who understood reading as the author taking over the reader's consciousness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Mention the important concepts in Roman Ingarden?

Q 4: Mention the important concepts popularised by Stanley Fish.

Q 5: Discuss Wofgang Iser as a Reader Response critic.

8.3.2 Important Concepts

In the previous section, we are already introduced to these concepts. The following is an attempt to discuss them more specifically.

Implied Reader and Implied Author:

The concepts "implied author" and "implied reader" were introduced into literary criticism by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). He set out to examine what he calls "the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers". This concern for the reader led Booth to re evaluate the conventions associated with authorship and reading; specifically, to identify the authors and readers implied by the reading process. The implied author and implied reader are figures imagined or "inferable" by the reader or critic based on formal and rhetorical elements of the text.

The idea of the **implied reader** was systematically theorised by Wolfgang Iser who relied less on a separate category of reader on the idea of a reader defined by the very structure of reading itself. However, the concept of the implied reader, that has enjoyed considerable theoretical attention, occupies a structurally analogous position to the **implied author**, by functioning as a mediating presence between a narratee or listener in a story and the real, individual reader of a text. In the narratological conception of the implied reader, which complements Booth's implied author, the emphasis is laid on the image of the reader 'implied' or 'intended' by the text itself. The implied reader is thus distinguished from an

audience, reader, or narratee that exists within the narrative. This definition of the implied reader is closely related and sometimes indistinguishable from other narratological concepts, such as Michael Riffaterre's "superreader," Jonathan Culler's "ideal reader," and Umberto Eco's "model reader," that seek to describe how texts assume, demand, and imply readers equipped with specific linguistic competencies, kinds of knowledge, and experience. The implied reader, Iser intends to state, incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualisation of this potential through the reading process.

Along with early Reader Response theorists like Stanley Fish, Iser helped to redefine the nature of the reader's engagement with texts and textuality. The ambivalence and indeterminacy so often attributed by the Poststructuralists to the text could now be regarded as an essential component of the reading process. In *The Act of Reading* (1978), in which Iser developed further the role of the reader that he had first outlined in *The Implied Reader* (1974), the emphasis falls less on the nature of the reader implied in the reading practice than on the nature of the reader's aesthetic response while reading. Iser's implied reader exists in a less determined relationship to the text and stresses instead the cognitive act of reading. For Iser, the implied reader exists in the mind of the reader and is formed in the dynamic point of contact between the singularity of the individual act of reading and the formal indeterminacies of the text. In this sense, the conception of the implied reader is an important attempt to produce a theory that accounts for both the structuring effect of reading and the autonomy and specificity of the individual reader's response.

Interpretive Community:

It is a concept developed by Stanley Fish. Fish proposes that a reader's interpretation of a text is governed by the interpretive community or communities that govern the cultural assumptions about how one reads, meaning, interpretation, value and so on. For

Fish, one is never outside one's interpretive community because one cannot define the limits of any presumed community as such; moreover, the impossibility of assigning limits to an interpretive community is impossible because such communities, in communicating with one another, are porous and malleable.

Affective Stylistics:

Affective Stylistics is a critical method, which is based on the idea that a work's meaning, is to be found not in its formal architecture but in the sequence of interpretive decisions, which the text elicits in its readers. This method became prominent through the 1970 manifesto "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" written by Stanley Fish. The central tanet of Affective Stylistics is that **the meaning of a work inheres in the experience of its reading**. Contradicting Formalist views of the work as a unified structure; Fish examines the parts of the text as they succeed each other in time, concentrating on what the sequence of words does to the reader who are trying to make sense of it. Mostly, Fish used this term to describe necessary reliance of the critics upon his or her affective responses to stylistic elements in the text. Fish opined that the literary text is never self sufficient as it is created in parts by the interpretive strategy that the reader deploys. The work and its result are one and the same thing. What a text is what a text does.

Fish has positioned his "affective stylistics" as a theoretical antidote to a dogmatic formalism. Fish admits that attention to the emotional whims of readers does indeed end in impressionism and relativism. However, he makes two important points in addition to this. **First**, he argues that the reader's contribution is not at all limited to whimsical connotations grounded in personal experience. This is because the reader does not come after the text. For Fish, the reader creates the text in the first place. Interpretation is not a second order activity, which one undertakes after an objective and independent description of a poem. Interpretation is always unavoidably there from the start, at the level of our very perception

of the poem. **His second** point is that this in no way implies that interpretation is arbitrary, relative, or impressionistic. The relative stability of interpretations, the fact that we can agree and disagree about an interpretation, and the fact that we can say one interpretation is better than another are all accounted for by Fish's concept of the "interpretative community." These trans-subjective communities determine which "interpretative strategies" are legitimate and which are not. Further, they change over time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What are the important concepts of Reader Response?

8.4 RECEPTION OF THE READER RESPONSE THEORIES

There have been several important criticisms of Reader-based theory, both practical and theoretical. The American critic Jane Tompkins (1988) has pointed out that while most Reader Response critics claimed to break radically with the New Critical assumptions, in practice they still held strongly to two of the most central of those assumptions: that the text is the centre and ground of all critical activity, and that the role of the critic is simply to explicate the text. Most of the theoretical criticisms address the nature of the subject employed by various critics and even whether the category of the subject is even necessary. Theorists such as Stanley Fish, conceive of the notion of a Reader Response criticism in terms of a text's psychological effects. While other thinkers such as Norman Holland and David Bleich have defined Reader Response in terms of the text's self-reflexive and ultimately subjective possibilities.

Marxist critics, for example, have argued that Reader Response criticism overlooks the role of ideology both in the production of meaning and in our most general relations to texts. For example, Wolfgang Iser opines that language acts on the reader directing his or her response. What seems to be missing in his account, according to many Marxist critics, is the degree

to which language and the subject position are ideologically determined or even produced. Language simply appears as a set of pre given rules, and the subject as an innocent space, which these rules organize. Scholar from German democratic republic such as Robert Weimann, Manfred Naumann and Rita Schober objected to some of the propositions of Jass and Iser. They suggested Marxist alternatives because they believed that the most productive East West post war dialogue in literary theory involved both the issues of Reception and Response.

With its focus on meaning as an 'event' that takes place in mental acts of reading, Reader-Response criticism directly challenges the idea that readers' emotions are not pertinent to the making of meaning. However, here, it is also important to note that Reader-response criticism is not concerned with the fallacy that Wimsatt and Beardsley describe. Rather, a critic like Stanley Fish, in his theory of Affective Stylistics, redefines the reader's affect as something far more complex and linguistically grounded than the common notion of psycho-physiological emotional response. The first decade of the 20st century has seen a number of innovative developments in the growing interdisciplinary field called Affect Theory. Affect theorists like Sianne Ngai and Jane Thrailkill draw on cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy in order to analyze rigorously the emotive import of a literary text. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work forges connections between performance theory and affect, suggesting that the conjunction has pedagogical and political as well as critical implications. In this work, we see the legacy of New Criticism, which, far from being superseded, has provided the foundation for new, interdisciplinary theories of reading and criticism.



8.5 LET US SUM UP

By this time, we have learnt that Reader Response gained importance in around 1980s. At the center of Reader Response Theory is the response of readers to a text over a given period. Reader Response critics contend that literary works do not function as self-contained and

autonomous objects, but rather as realities that become established by the readers who consume them. By now, we have noted the major theorists of Reader Response who contributed immensely to the field of theory. We have also familiarised ourselves with the important concepts popularised by the theorists in question.



8.6 FURTHER READING

Edgar, Andrew & Peter Sedgwick. (2002). *Cultural Theory: The Key Thinkers.* London: Routledge.

Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins and Kenneth Womack. (Eds.). (2002). *Key Concepts in Literary Theory.* Edinburgh University Press.

Leitch, Vincent B. (Ed.). (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism.* New York. W. W. Norton & Company.

Makaryk, Arena. (Ed.). (1993). *The Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars and Terms.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.



8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Firstly, the "Constance School" which includes Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser… …secondly, the "Geneva School" which includes such critics as Hans Georg Gadamer and Roman Ingarden.

Ans to Q 2: Ideal readers… …super readers… …implied readers… …virtual readers… … real readers… …historical readers… …resisting readers… …critical readers and so on.

Ans to Q 3: His main idea was to find out the object of literary study: how it is "given to consciousness"… … in his Introduction to *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, he stated that every literary work, is a multilayered formation composed of four heterogeneous "strata"… …his analysis of 'literary time', and of the temporal sequentiality of the written text has enabled analyses of how reading is directed by, but also creates, the work.

Ans to Q 4: Stanley Fish is viewed as being a major influence in the rise and development of Reader Response Criticism… …Affective Stylistics, a way of thinking about interpretation that lent more weight to the way readers construct meaning in texts…. … Interpretative Communities who determine what are "acceptable" and "unacceptable" interpretations.

Ans to Q 5: Wolfgang Iser is a German literary theorist and critic… …he was influenced by the Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer… …his views on the reading process draw significantly on the interpretation of Roman Ingarden… ...he propounded the concept of *The Implied Reader.*

Ans to Q 6: Implied Reader and Implied Author… …Interpretive Community.. …Affective Stylistics



8.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Reader Response Studies begin with the assertion that the study of literature cannot overlook the role of the reader. Discuss.

Q 2: Marxist critics, for example, have argued that Reader Response criticism overlooks the role ideology. Discuss.

Q 3: What do you understand by the term Reader Response? Illustrate with references to the major theorists of Reader Response.

Q 4: In what ways, did Reader Response transform literary studies from an author centric approach to a reader- centric discourse. Discuss.

Q 5: Mention the important theorists of Reader Response and discuss their specific contributions.

Q 6: How are the concepts of the reader and the author viewed in Reader Response? Discuss with particular reference to the concepts of Implied Reader and Implied Author.

Q 7: Write a note on the concept of Affective Stylistics.

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UNIT 9: RECEPTION THEORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Introducing Reception Theory

9.4 Major Theorists

9.5 Let us Sum up

9.6 Further Reading

9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.8 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss Reception Theory as an important trend in Literary Theory
- trace the growth and development Reception Theory
- make a list of the major theorists of Reception
- examine the concepts popularised by the theorists in question
- assess the reception of Reception Theory in subsequent critical periods

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit, which needs to be studied along with the previous unit on Reader Response, shall introduce us to the theoretical approaches commonly known as Reception Theory gaining importance in around 1980s. Reception Theory, refers to the school of criticism that explores the many and often divergent ways in which literary works are received following their initial publication. Hans Robert Jauss gave birth to the concept of 'aesthetic distance' to explain the differences between the immediate reception of a work and its contemporary profile. Jauss argues that this notion intersects with a given reader's **horizon of expectations** or the textual elements that impact the reader's expectations regarding the text in question. There are two principal schools of thought attached to Reception Theory. Firstly, the

"Constance School" which includes Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, maintains that the reader, who draws upon his or her individual experiences during the act of reading, should function as the literary critic's primary concern. Secondly, the "Geneva School" which includes such critics as Hans Georg Gadamer and Roman Ingarden, on the other hand, contends that a series of 'essential conditions', or a given reader's expectations about the present and the future, inevitably influencing our reading experiences. By the time we finish reading this unit, we shall be able to gain a better perspective regarding Reception Theory.

9.3 INTRODUCING RECEPTION THEORY

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, along with the Reader Response critics, the professors and students at the University of Constance in West Germany turned to the reading and reception of a literary text instead of to the production of a text or a close examination of the text itself. Although developed by the Constance School in Germany, this theory was not well known in the English-speaking world till 1980s when most of the works of Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser were published. The Constance School became popular at a period of great political turbulence in West Germany. Throughout the whole Germany, the university students agitated for educational reforms and questioned educational methods and traditional standards. The experimental University of Constance was at the forefront of such reformist moves and fostered an atmosphere of new ideas in literary theory and aesthetics. One of the leading Reception theorists Jauss proposed that one could truly understand literature as a process by recognising the role of the consumer or the reader. Interaction between author and public replaces literary biography as the basis for literary historiography. The historical significance of a literary work is established not by the qualities of the work or by the genius of the author but by the chain of receptions from generation to generation. Thus, Jauss envisions a kind of historiography that would play a mediating role between the past and the present. Subsequently, past meanings are understood as part of the prehistory of present experience.

Terry Eagleton in his "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory" states the following about the idea of Reception Theory: (pp 64-68) Please go through it carefully to understand the concepts better.

Hermeneutics, as we have seen, tends to concentrate on works of the past: the theoretical questions it asks arise mainly from this perspective. This is hardly surprising, given its scriptural beginnings, but it is also significant: it suggests that criticism's main role is to make sense of the classics. It would be difficult to imagine Gadamer grappling with Norman Mailer. Along with this traditionalist emphasis goes another: the assumption that works of literature form an 'organic' unity. The hermeneutical method seeks to fit each element of a text into a complete whole, in a process commonly known as the 'hermeneutical circle': individual features are intelligible in terms of the entire context, and the entire context becomes intelligible through the individual features. Hermeneutics does not generally consider the possibility that literary works may be diffuse, incomplete and internally contradictory, though there are many reasons to assume that they are. It is worth noting that E. D. Hirsch, for all his antipathy to Romantic organicist concepts, also shares the prejudice that literary texts are integrated wholes, and logically so: the unity of the work resides in the author's all-pervasive intention. There is in fact no reason why the author should not have had several mutually contradictory intentions, or why his intention may not have been somehow self-contradictory, but Hirsch does not consider these possibilities.

The most recent development of Hermeneutics in Germany is known as 'reception aesthetics' or 'reception theory', and unlike Gadamer, it does not concentrate exclusively on works of the past. Reception theory examines the reader's role in literature, and as such is a fairly novel development. Indeed one might very roughly periodise the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the 19th century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years. The reader has always been the most underprivileged of this trio strangely, since without him or her there would be no literary texts at all. Literary texts do not exist on

bookshelves: they are processes of signification materialized only in the practice of reading. For literature to happen, the reader is quite as vital as the author. What is involved in the act of reading? Let me take, almost literally at random, the first two sentences of a novel: ‘’’What did you make of the new couple?” The Hanemas, Piet and Angela, were undressing.’ (John Updike, *Couples.)* What are we to make of this? We are puzzled for a moment, perhaps, by an apparent lack of connection between the two sentences, until we grasp that what is at work here is the literary convention by which we may attribute a piece of direct speech to a character even if the text does not explicitly do this itself. We gather that some character, probably Piet or Angela Hanema, makes the opening statement; but why do we presume this?

The sentence in quotation marks may not be spoken at all: it may be a thought, or a question, which someone else has asked, or a kind of epigraph placed at the opening of the novel. Perhaps, it is addressed to Piet and Angela Hanema by somebody else, or by a sudden voice from the sky. One reason why the latter solution seems unlikely is that the question is a little colloquial for a voice from the sky, and we might know that Updike is in general a realist writer who does not usually go in for such devices; but a writer’s texts do not necessarily form a consistent whole and it may be unwise to lean on this assumption too heavily. It is unlikely on realist grounds that the question is asked by a chorus of people speaking in unison, and slightly unlikely that it is asked by somebody other than Piet or Angela Hanema, since we learn the next moment that they are undressing, perhaps speculate that they are a married couple, and know that married couples, in our suburb of Birmingham at least, do not make a practice of undressing together before third parties, whatever they might do individually….

The process of reading, for reception theory, is always a dynamic one, a complex movement and unfolding through time. The literary work itself exists merely as what the Polish theorist Roman Ingarden calls a set of ‘schemata’ or general directions, which the reader must actualise. To do this, the reader will bring to the work certain ‘pre-understandings’, a dim context of beliefs and expectations within which the work’s various features

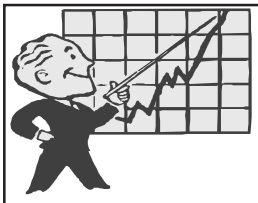
will be assessed. As the reading process proceeds, however, these expectations will themselves be modified by what we learn, and the hermeneutical circle moving from part to whole and back to part will begin to revolve.

Striving to construct a coherent sense from the text, the reader will select and organise its elements into consistent wholes, excluding some and foregrounding others, 'concretising' certain items in certain ways; he or she will try to hold different perspectives within the work together, or shift from perspective to perspective in order to build up an integrated 'illusion'. What we have learnt on page one will fade and become 'foreshortened' in memory, perhaps to be radically qualified by what we learn later.

Reading is not a straightforward linear movement, a merely cumulative affair: our initial speculations generate a frame of reference within which to interpret what comes next, but what comes next may retrospectively transform our original understanding, highlighting some features of it and backgrounding others. As we read on we shed assumptions, revise beliefs, make more and more complex inferences and anticipations; each sentence opens up a horizon which is confirmed, challenged or undermined by the next. We read backwards and forwards simultaneously, predicting and recollecting, perhaps aware of other possible realisations of the text, which our reading has negated. Moreover, all of this complicated activity is carried out on many levels at once, for the text has 'backgrounds' and 'foregrounds', different narrative viewpoints, alternative layers of meaning between which we are constantly moving.

Wolfgang Iser, of the so-called Constance school of reception aesthetics, whose theories I have been largely discussing, speaks in *The Act of Reading* (1978) of the 'strategies' which texts put to work, and of the 'repertoires' of familiar themes and allusions which they contain. To read at all, we need to be familiar with the literary techniques and conventions, which a particular work deploys; we must have some grasp of its 'codes', by which is meant the rules, which systematically govern the ways it produces its meanings. Recall once more the London Underground sign I discussed in the Introduction:

'Dogs must be carried on the escalator.' To understand this notice I need to do a great deal more than simply read its words one after the other. I need to know, for example, that these words belong to what might be called a 'code of reference' - that the sign is not just a decorative piece of language there to entertain travellers, but is to be taken as referring to the behaviour of actual dogs and passengers on actual escalators. I must mobilise my general social knowledge to recognise that the sign has been placed there by the authorities, that these authorities have the power to penalize offenders, that I as a member of the public am being implicitly addressed, none of which is evident in the words themselves. I have to rely, in other words, upon certain social codes and contexts to understand the notice properly. But I also need to bring these into interaction with certain codes or conventions of reading - conventions which tell me that by 'the escalator' is meant *this* escalator and not one in Paraguay, that 'must be carried' means 'must be carried *now',* and so on. I must recognise that the 'genre' of the sign is such as to make it highly improbable that the ambiguity I mentioned in the Introduction is actually 'intended'. It is not easy to distinguish between 'social' and 'literary' codes here: concretising 'the escalator' as 'this escalator', adopting a reading convention, which eradicates ambiguity, itself depends upon a whole network of social knowledge.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Which are the two principal schools of Reception?

Q 2: How does Terry Eagleton periodise the history of literary theory? And what does he state about the reader?

9.4 Major Theorists

The following are the most important theorists of Reception theory.

Hans Robert Jauss (1921-)

Hans Robert Jauss, a German academic, was one of the important figures of the Constance School and is best known for his aesthetics of reception. In 1967, he drew the attention of the literary theorists with his

inaugural address at Constance entitled “What is and for what purpose does one study literary history?” Here he outlined the main principles of his aesthetics of reception, which sought to combine the best features of two opposite schools of criticism: Russian Formalism and Marxist Criticism. From the former, he took the insight that perception is fundamental to our encounter with a text, from the later, he found that literature is thoroughly historical and can only be understood as a product of historical meditations. Thus, Jauss placed the perceiving subject at the center of a literary historiography that seeks to locate the text in a larger artistic, social, and political context. He became famous with his ideas on “Horizon of Expectations”. His works became well known to the English-speaking world around 1980s when they were translated into English.

Hans Robert Jauss is best known for promoting the importance of Reception history in literary interpretation. Countering the assumption that we confront texts as self-sufficient entities, on their own merits and in their own terms, Jauss stressed how the expectations that we bring to reading govern our response and aesthetic judgment. For example, while reading James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), a student probably starts with the assumption that it is a literary masterpiece, unlike a bestseller chosen for casual reading. And this hypothetical student might know that Joyce is considered one of the most influential modernist novelists who popularised the concept of **Stream of Consciousness**. Our present-day experience of *Ulysses* differs from that of Joyce’s own day, in part, because Stream of Consciousness has become a familiar technique-what was innovative to his first readers has been assimilated into literary practice. It is interesting to note that such expectations-sometimes to be fulfilled, sometimes to be surprised-shape our thinking as we open the pages of *Ulysses.*

You must have noticed that the Constance School draws on the philosophical traditions of aesthetics inaugurated in 18th-century German philosophy by Alexander Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich Von Schiller of hermeneutics. It also draws on the theory of interpretation, propounded, in the 19th century by Chiller and Wilhelm, and the twentieth by Martin Heidegger and Gadamer, and from Phenomenology, developed

by Edmund Husserl who emphasises perception and the interaction of subjects and objects. In particular, Hans Robert Jauss's work employs Gadamer's concept of historical "horizons" and the changing nature of interpretation and aesthetic judgment over time. Like Iser, Jauss sees the literary work as an event rather than a fixed object, a view that reflects the influence of Phenomenology. His "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" aims to revitalise literary study by examining the history of reception. While proclaiming the importance of literary history, Jauss severely criticises its accepted forms, which center on individual authors, genres, or current ideas. Jauss expanded literary history to encompass readers and the background against which a work is received. Shifting the focus away from authors and works, Jauss argues that an audience does not receive a literary work simply on its own merits; it is received and judged against the background of other works of art as well as against the background of the everyday experience of life. This background he terms the "horizon of expectations"

LET US KNOW



For Jauss, it is only through studying the history of a work's reception that one can fully understand it. He presents seven key points in this regard which are as follows.

1. Reception history influences both the writing and reading of literary works.
2. A literary historian can ascertain a non subjective, objectifiable aspects of expectations that a reader brings to the text.
3. These form a "horizon" that determines interpretations.
4. Reception works dialogically through a process of question and answer, at each point in time.
5. Expectations change, and literary history properly records this evolution.
6. Literary historians and philologists can look at reception both over time and at one moment, and

7. Literary history constitutes a "special history" that dialogically relates to "general history," largely through the revision of moral ideas.

In order to re-define interpretation and historiography, Hans Robert Jauss employs the notion of "Horizon of Expectation" which refers to a system or structure of expectations that are literary, cultural and social. However, Jauss's theory is an adaptation of the notion of 'horizon' established most prominently by his teacher Hans Georg Gadamer who took 'horizon' as a fundamental tenet for the hermeneutical situation. Jauss proposed that literary scholarship should try to determine the "horizon of expectations" for any particular work and then try to measure the distance between the two. Only those works that violate or break the "horizon of expectation" confirm artistic merit. One can find examples of aesthetic distance in the array of reactions to a given work by its initial audience, literary critics, and by other writers and scholars. Thus, the aesthetic of reception suggests newness or deviation from an established standard as both a criterion for evaluation and as the force for change in literary history. After establishing the "horizon of expectation", the critic can proceed to determine the artistic merit of a given work by measuring the distance between the work and the horizon. If the expectations of the reader are not 'disappointed' or 'violated' then the text will be of second rate; if it breaks through the "horizon of expectation", it will be considered an example of high art.

Wofgang Iser (1926–2007)

We have already discussed Iser in the previous section. Along with his contributions in Reader Response Theory, he is also best known for his work on Reception theory. His theory is best represented in the book *The Act of Reading* (1976). In the preface to his book Iser states:

"As a literary text can only produce a response when it is read, it is virtually impossible to describe this response without also analyzing the reading process. Reading is therefore the focal point of this study, for it sets in motion a whole chain of activities that depend both on the text and on the exercise of certain basic human faculties. Effects and responses

are properties neither of the text nor of the reader; the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process."

What interests Iser most is how and under what conditions a text has meaning for a reader. To examine the relation between the reader and the text he looks at the qualities in the text that makes it readable or which influence our reading and at those features of the reading process essential for understanding a text. He was strongly influenced by the Phenomenology of Roman Ingarden and Edmund Husserl and by the Hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer.

Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002)

One of the most famous disciples of Martin **Heidegger,** Gadamer is probably best known in the English-speaking world for his book *Truth and Method* (1960). In this work Gadamer presents his theory of 'philosophical hermeneutics'. Hermeneutics, the theory of textual interpretation and analysis, has its origins in the interpretation of legal and biblical texts. In general terms, hermeneutics seeks to offer an analysis of the nature of textual interpretation and, in relation to this, the nature of understanding. In line with this, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics attempts to elucidate the conditions that are essential to any act of understanding. In other words, Gadamer is not interested in providing us with a 'methodology' that can be applied rigidly to a variety of texts (e.g. literary or philosophical) in order to decode their meaning. Indeed, the concept of 'method', according to Gadamer, hinders a proper understanding the nature of truth: truth, in effect, is opposed to method. Against the claims of method, Gadamer's aim is to articulate the nature of understanding in general. The starting point for Gadamer's project is Heidegger's claim that understanding is an abiding and universal condition of human existence. To be human, for Gadamer, is to be one who is endowed with understanding. We necessarily engage in interpretation simply in terms of our being the kind of entity that we are.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What is meant by Reception Theory? Who are the main theorists of Reception Aesthetics?

Q 4: What do you mean by the term "Horizon of Expectation"?



9.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that Reception Theory refers to the school of criticism that explores the many and often divergent ways in which literary works are received following their initial publication. Hans Robert Jauss gave birth to the concept of 'aesthetic distance' to explain the differences between the immediate reception of a work and its contemporary profile. Jauss argues that this notion intersects with a given reader's 'Horizon of Expectations', or the textual elements that impact the reader's expectations regarding the text in question. There are two principal schools of thought attached to Reception Theory— "Constance School" and "Geneva School". By now, we must have identified the major theorists of Reception who contributed immensely to the field of theory. We have also noted the important concepts popularised by the theorists in question.



9.6 FURTHER READING

Eagleton, Terry. (1996). "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory," in *Literary Theory an Introduction.* Blackwell Publishing.

Edgar, Andrew & Peter Sedgwick. (2002). *Cultural Theory: The Key Thinkers.* London: Routledge.

Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins & Kenneth Womack. (Eds.). (2002). *Key Concepts in Literary Theory.* Edinburgh University Press.

Leitch, Vincent B. (Ed.). (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism.* New York. W. W. Norton & Company.

Makaryk, Arena. (Ed.). (1993). *The Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars and Terms.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.

9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Constance School of Jauss and Wolfgang Iser who maintained that the reader, who draws upon his or her individual experiences during the act of reading, should function as the literary critic's primary concern… …Geneva School of Hans Georg Gadamer and Roman Ingarden, who opined that a series of 'essential conditions', or a given reader's expectations about the present and the future, inevitably influence the reading experience.

Ans to Q 2: The three stages ate: a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years… …according to Eagleton, the reader has always been the most underprivileged of this trio strangely, since without him or her there would be no literary texts at all.

Ans to Q 3: It developed during the late 1960s and early 1970s… …the professors and students at the University of Constance in West Germany turned to the reading and reception of a literary text instead of to the production of a text or a close examination of the text itself… …Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser were the most significant reception theorists… …Jauss proposed that one can truly understand literature as a process by recognising the role of the consumer or the reader.

Ans to Q 4: Hans Robert Jauss employs the notion of "Horizon of Expectation"… … refers to a system or structure of expectations that are literary, cultural and social… …Jauss proposed that literary scholarship should determine the "horizon of expectations"… …only those works that violate or break the "horizon of expectation" confirm

artistic merit…. …after establishing the "horizon of expectation", a critic can proceed to determine the artistic merit of a given work.



9.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: In what ways, has Reception Theory transformed literary studies from an author centric approach to a reader-centric discourse? Discuss.

Q 2: Who are the important theorists of Reception Aesthetic? Discuss the history of Reception in terms of their works.

Q 3: Which are the important concepts in Reception Theory? Give a detailed answer.

Q 4: Write in your own words what Terry Eagleton states about Reception Theory.

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UNIT 10: MARXIST CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Introducing Marxist Criticism

10.4 Major Phases of Marxism and the Theorists

- 10.4.1 Soviet Socialist Realism
- 10.4.2 Lukács and Brecht
- 10.4.3 The Frankfurt School and After: Adorno and Benjamin
- 10.4.4 'Structuralist' Marxism: Goldmann, Althusser, Macherey
- 10.4.5 'New Left' Marxism: Williams, Eagleton, Jameson

10.5 Let us Sum up

10.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

10.7 Further Reading

10.8 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- trace the growth and development of Marxist criticism and theory
- discuss Marxist criticism as an important trend in 20th century Literary Theory
- makea list of the major Marxist critics/theorists who contributed immensely to the field of theory
- assess the reception of Marxist criticism in the interpretation of literary works

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of Block 2 of the course on Literary and Critical Theory I. In this unit, we shall try to discuss Marxist criticism in which *social class* and *class relations* function ascentral instruments of analysis. Marxist criticism and theory as an intellectual perspective provides a wholesome

counterbalance to ourpropensity to see ourselves and the writers that we read as completely divorced from the socio-economic circumstances. As we finish reading this unit, we shall be able to reflect on Marxist criticism and theory in sufficient detail.

10.3 INTRODUCING MARXIST CRITICISM [Adapted from Hans Bertens]

The German philosopherKarl Marx (1818-1883), and a German sociologist Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), jointly founded the school of thought known as Marxism. Marx was the son of a lawyer but spent most of his life in great poverty as a political exile from Germany living in Britain. Engels too had left Germany in 1842 to work in Manchester for his father's textile firm. They both met after Marx had read an article by Engels in a journal towhich they contributed. They called their economic theories 'Communism' (rather than 'Marxism'), designating their belief in the state ownership of industry, transport, etc., rather than private ownership. Marx and Engels announced the advent of Communism in their seminal joint work *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means ofproduction, distribution, and exchange.

Marxism is seen as a 'materialist' philosophy and it tries to explain things without assuming the existence of a world or of forces beyond the natural world around us, and the society we live in. It looks for concrete, scientific, logical explanations of the world of observable facts. In this regard, it opposes 'idealist' philosophy, which 'does' believe in the existence of a spiritual 'world elsewhere' and would tend to offer, for instance, religious explanations of life and conduct. However, whereas other philosophies merely seek to understand the world, Marxism seeks to change it. Marxism sees progress as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes. This view of history as class struggle (rather than as, for instance, a succession of dynasties, or as a gradual progress towards the attainment of national identity and sovereignty) regards it as 'motored' by the competition for economic, social, and political advantage.

In the context of Marxism, the exploitation of one social class by another is seen in modern industrial capitalism, particularly in the 19th century. The result of this exploitation is 'alienation',a state which occurs when the worker is 'deskilled' and made to perform fragmented, repetitive tasks in a sequence of whose nature and purpose he or she has no overall grasp and control. By contrast, in the older 'pre-industrial' or 'cottage industry' system of manufacture, home and workplace were one and the worker completed the whole production process in all its variety, and was in direct contact with those who might buy the product. These 'alienated' workers have undergone the process of 'reification',which is a term used in Marx's major work, *Das Kapital,* but not developed there. It concerns the way, when capitalist goals and questions of profit and loss are paramount, workers are bereft of their full humanity and are thought of as 'hands' or 'the labour force', so that, the effects of industrial closures are calculated in purely economic terms. People, in a word, become 'things'.

The Marxist model of society is constituted by a **base** (the material means of production, distribution, and exchange) and a **superstructure,** which is the 'cultural' world of ideas, art, religion, law, and so on. The essential Marxist view is that the latter things are not 'innocent', but are 'determined' (or shaped) by the nature of the economic base. This beliefabout culture, known as **economic determinism***,* is a central part of traditional Marxist thinking. However, Marx and Engels themselves did not put forward any comprehensive theory of literature. As very cultured and highly educated Germans, Marx and Engels had that reverence for 'great' art and literature which was typical of their class, and there is an obvious desire in such pronouncements to emphasise the difference between art and propaganda. All the same, Marxist literary criticism maintains that a writer's social class, and its prevailing 'ideology' (outlook, values, tacit assumptions, half-realised allegiances, etc.) have a major bearing on what is written by a member of that class. Therefore, instead of seeing authors as primarily autonomous 'inspired' individuals whose 'genius' and creative imagination enables them to bring forth original and timeless works of art, the Marxist sees them as constantly formed by their social contexts in ways, which they themselves

would usually not admit. However, we shall do well if we ponder upon the different types of Marxist criticism as can be read in terms of the following.



LET US KNOW

According to Marx, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on thecontrary, their social being that determines their consciousness." He also once stated, "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point isto *change* it."

Both statements were intentionally provocative. By contradicting widelyaccepted doctrines, Marx was trying to put people's thought into reversegear. Even if we reject a privileged status for literature, there remains thequestion of how far literature's historical development is independent ofhistorical development in general.

'Leninist' Marxist Criticism

In the1920s, during the early years after the Russian revolution, the official Soviet attitude to literature and the arts was very enlightened and 'experimental', and characteristically modern forms of art were encouraged. The 1930s saw reaction throughout the whole of Soviet society, and the State began to exert direct control over literature and the arts as well as everything else. At the first Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934, liberal views were outlawed and a new orthodoxy imposed, based on the writings of Lenin rather than those of Marx or Engels. In 1905, Lenin had argued that literature must become an instrument of the party. 'Literature', he argued, 'must become Party literature…Literature must become part of the organised, methodical, and unified labours of the social-democratic party'. Experimentation was effectively banned in Leninist Marxism.

Engelsian Marxist Criticism

From the 1930s, however, a rich variety of 'Engelsian' Marxist criticism flourished. The group now called the 'Russian Formalists' had flourished in the 1920s, until disbanded by the Party, even though their work is not strictly Marxist in spirit. The most prominent members of the group

were Victor Shklovsky, Boris Tomashevsky, and Boris Eichenbaum whose ideas included the need for close formal analysis of literature. They held the view that the language of literature has its own characteristic procedures and effects, and is not just a version of ordinary language. Victor Shklovsky propounded the idea of 'defamiliarisation' or 'making strange' which claimed that one of the chief effects of literary language is that of making the familiar world appear new to us, as if we were seeing it for the first time, and thus laying it open to reappraisal.

The influence of Althusser

Much recent Marxist thinking on literature has been influenced by the work of the French Marxist theoretician Louis Althusser (1918-1990). Ideologyis a key term for Althusser, as for all Marxists. It is a broad concept variously defined within Marxism. Althusser however defined ideology as the following:Ideology is a system (possessing its logic and proper rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society. This Althusserian distinction is closely related to the notion of 'hegemony', which was given prominence by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1934) who contrasts 'rule', which is direct political control, which uses force when necessary, and 'hegemony', which is 'the whole lived social process as practically organised by specific and dominant meanings, values and beliefs of a kind which can be abstracted as a "world-view" or "class outlook"'.



LET US KNOW

What do Marxist Critics do? [Adapted from Peter Barry]

1. They make a division between the 'overt' (manifest or surface) and 'covert' (latent or hidden) content of a literary work and then relate the covert subject matter of the literary work to basic Marxist themes, such as class struggle, or the progression of society through various historical stages, such as, the transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism. Thus, the conflicts in *King Lear* might be read as

being 'really' about the conflict of class interest between the rising class (the bourgeoisie) and the falling class (the feudal overlords).

2. Another method used by Marxist critics is to relate the context of a work to the social-class status of the author. In such cases, an assumption is made that the author is unaware of precisely what he or she is saying or revealing in the text.

3. A third Marxist method is to explain the nature of a whole literary genre in terms of thesocial period, which 'produced' it. For instance, *The Rise of the Novel,* by Ian Watt, relates the growth of the novel in the eighteenth century to the expansion of the middle classes during that period. The novel 'speaks' for this social class, just as, for instance, Tragedy'speaks for' the monarchy and the nobility, and the Ballad 'speaks for' for the rural and semi-urban'working class'.

4. A fourth Marxist practice is to relate the literary work to the social assumptions of the time in which it is 'consumed', a strategy which is used particularly in the later variant of Marxist criticism known as cultural materialism.

5. A fifth Marxist practice is the 'politicisation of literary form', that is, the claim that literary forms are themselves determined by political circumstance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is the Marxist philosophy different from other philosophies?

Q 2: How would you explain the concept of alienation?

Q 3: How is an author viewed in Marxist Literary Criticism?

Q 4: What was Lenin's view on literature?

10.4 MAJOR PHASES OF MARXISM AND THE THEORISTS [Adapted from Raman Seldon]

In this section, we shall discuss the development of Marxist criticism and theory in some detail. The following are some of the different phases of

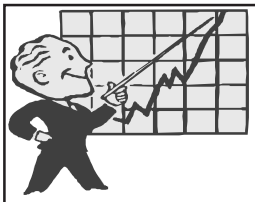
Marxist thoughts as discussed by Raman Selden in his book*A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory.*

10.4.1 Soviet Socialist Realism

As the doctrine expoundedby the Union of Soviet Writers (1932–4),Socialist Realism appealed to certain of Lenin'spre-Revolutionary statements. The theory addressed certain major questions about the evolution of literature, its reflection of class relations and its function in society.The Revolution of 1917 encouraged the Formalists to continue developing a revolutionary theory of art. Subsequently, there emerged at the same time an orthodox Communist view, which frowned upon Formalism and regarded the 19th century tradition of Russianrealism as the only suitable foundation for the aesthetics of the new Communist society. The 'modernist' revolutions in European art, music and literature, which occurred around 1910 (through the works of Picasso, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Joyce, Woolf, and T. S. Eliot), were to be regarded by Soviet critics as the decadent products of late capitalist society. The modernist rejection of traditional realism paradoxically left Socialist Realism as the leading custodian of bourgeois aesthetics. We shall note that the combination of 19th-century aesthetics and revolutionary politics remained the essential recipe of Soviet theory. The principle of 'partinost' (commitment to the working-class cause of the Party) is derived almost exclusively from Lenin's essay 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' (1905). While this was a reasonable demand to make in the precarious circumstances of 1905, it took on a much more despotic significance after the Revolution, when the Party controlled publishing.

Socialist Realism was considered a continuation and development of bourgeois realism at a higher level. Bourgeois writers are judged not according to their class origins or explicit political commitment, but by the extentto which their writings reveal insights into the social developments of their time. The Soviet hostility to

modernist novels can best be understood inthis context. Karl Radek's contribution to the Soviet Writers' Congress in1934 posed the choice 'James Joyce or Socialist Realism?' During a discussion, Radek directed a vitriolic attack against another Communist delegate, Herzfelde, who had defended Joyce as a great writer. Joyce's preoccupation with the sordid inner life of a trivial individual indicates his profound unawareness of the larger historical forces at work in modern times. He concludes, 'if I were to write novels,I would learn how to write them from Tolstoy and Balzac, not from Joyce.'This admiration for 19th-century realism was understandable. Balzac, Dickens, George Eliot, Stendhal and others developed a sophisticated literary form, which explores the individual's involvement in the complex network of social relations. Modernist writers abandoned this project and began to reflect a more fragmented image of the world, which was often pessimistic and introverted, exploring the alienated individual consciousness in retreat from the 'nightmare of history' which is modern society. Andrey Zhdanov, who gave the keynote speech at the 1934 Congress, reminded writers that Stalin had called upon them to be the 'engineers of the human soul'. At this stage, the political demands upon writers became brutally insistent. Engels was clearly doubtful of the value of overly committed writing, but Zhdanov dismissed all such doubts: 'Yes, Soviet literature is tendentious, for in epochs of class struggle there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, not tendentious, allegedly non-political.'



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What was the foundation of Socialist Realism?

Q 6: Why did socialist realism reject modernist literature?

10.4.2 Lukács and Brecht

Georg Lukács is perhaps the first major Marxist critic, as his work is inseparable from orthodox Socialist Realism, and then from the views of his 'opponent' the dramatist/theorist Bertolt Brecht in their debate about realism. It can be argued that Lukács anticipated some of the Soviet doctrines, but he developed the realist approach with great subtlety. He inaugurated a distinctively Hegelian style of Marxist thought, treating literary works as reflections of an unfolding system. A realist work must reveal theunder lying pattern of contradictions in a social order. His view is Marxist in its insistence on the material and historical nature of the structure of society. Rejecting the 'naturalism' of the then recent European novel, Lukács returns tothe old realist view that the novel reflects reality, not by rendering its mere surface appearance, but by giving us 'a truer, more complete, more vividand more dynamic reflection of reality'.

In a series of works, especially *The Historical Novel* (1937) and *Studies in European Realism* (1950), Lukács refines and extends his theory, and in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1957), he advances the Communist attack on modernism. He refused to deny Joyce the status of atrue artist, but asked to reject his view of history, and especially the wayin which Joyce's 'static' view of events is reflected in an epic structure, whichis itself essentially static. For Lukács, this failure to perceive human existence as part of a dynamic historical environment infects the whole of contemporary modernism, as reflected in the works of writers such as Kafka,Beckett and Faulkner. These writers, he argues, are preoccupied with formal experiment–with montage, inner monologues, the technique of 'streamof consciousness', the use of reportage, diaries, etc. All this formalistic virtuosity is the result of a narrow concern for subjective impressions, aconcern which itself stems from the advanced individualism of late capitalism.Instead of an objective realism, we have an *angst*-ridden visionof the world.

The fullness of history and its social processes are narrowed down to the bleak inner history of absurd existences. This 'attenuation of actuality' is contrasted to the dynamic and developmental view of society to be found in the great 19th-century novelists and in their latter-day heirs like Thomas Mann, who, though not 'socialist', achieve a genuinely 'Critical Realism'.

During his brief stay in Berlin during the early 1930s, he found himself attacking the use of modernist techniques of montage and reportage in the work of fellow radicals, including the outstanding dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Bertolt Brecht's early plays were radical, anarchistic and anti-bourgeois,but not anti-capitalist. After reading Marx in about 1926, his youthful iconoclasm was converted to conscious political commitment, although he always remained a maverick and never a Party man. Around 1930, he was writing the so-called *Lehrstücke*, didactic plays intended for working-class audiences, but he was forced to leave Germany when the Nazis took power in1933. He wrote his major plays in exile, mainly in Scandinavian countries. Later, in America, he was brought before the McCarthy Committee for un-American Activities and finally settled in East Germany in 1949. He had trouble too with the Stalinist authorities of the GDR, who regarded him as both an asset and a liability.

His opposition to Socialist Realism certainly offended the East German authorities. His best-known theatrical device, the alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*), recalls the Russian Formalists' concept of 'defamiliarisation'. Socialist Realism favoured realistic illusion, formal unity and 'positive' heroes. He called *his* theory of realism 'anti-Aristotelian', a covert way of attacking the theory of his opponents. Aristotle emphasised the universality and unity of the tragic action, and the identification of audience and hero in empathy, which produces a'catharsis' of emotions. Brecht rejected the entire tradition of 'Aristotelian' theatre and opined that the dramatist should avoid a smoothly interconnected plot and anysense of inevitability or universality.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What was Georg Lukac's view on realist novels?

10.4.3 The Frankfurt School and After:Adorno and Benjamin

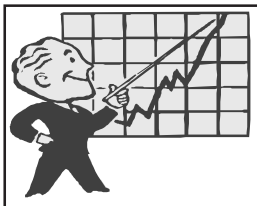
While Brecht and Lukács held conflicting views of realism, the Frankfurt School of Marxist aesthetics rejected realism altogether. The Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt practised what it called 'Critical Theory', which wasa wide-ranging form of social analysis grounded in Hegelian Marxism and including Freudian elements. The leading figures in philosophy and aesthetics were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Exiled in 1933,the Institute was relocated in New York, but finally returned to Frankfurt in 1950 under Adorno and Horkheimer. They regarded the social system as a totality in which all the aspects reflected the same essence. Their analysis of modern culture was influenced by the experience of fascism, which had achieved hegemonic dominance at every level of social existence in Germany. In America, they saw a similar 'one-dimensional' quality in the mass culture and the permeation of every aspect of life bycommercialism.

Art and literature have a privileged place in Frankfurt thinking. Adorno criticisedLukács' view of realism, arguing that great literature does not, nor needs to, directly address social reality. In Adorno's view, art's detachment from dominant reality gives it its special significance and power. Modernist writings are particularly distanced from the reality to which they allude and this allows them the space to critique conformist trends in theirworld. While popular art forms are forced to collude with the economic system which shapes them, 'autonomous' works have the power to 'negate' the reality to which they relate. Because modernist texts reflect the alienate dinner lives of individuals, Lukács attacked them as 'decadent' embodiments of

late capitalist society and evidence of the writers' inability to transcend the atomistic and fragmented worlds in which they were compelled to live. Adorno argues that art cannot simply reflect the social system,but acts within that reality as an irritant, which produces an indirect sort of knowledge: 'Art is the negative knowledge of the actual world.'

Walter Benjamin, a friend of Adornoand Brecht was the most idiosyncratic Marxist thinker of his generation. His association with the Frankfurt School was fleeting. He depended on its journal for a small income but had alsoto contend with Adorno's editorial strictures upon his ideas and writing.His early 'academic' criticism, devoted to Goethe and to German Baroquedrama, is legendarily obscure, and much of his cultural journalism istantalisingly enigmatic. His life's work and major achievement was the 'Arcades Project', a fascinating exploration of the emerging commercial culture of Paris,'capital of the 19th century', which remained unfinished at his death (but was published in translation in the late 1990s). Benjamin's best-known essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', argues that modern technical innovations (above all, photography and cinema) have profoundly altered the status of the 'work of art'. Once, artistic works had an 'aura' deriving from their uniqueness. This was especially true of the visual arts, but was true also of literature. The new media shatter the quasi-religious ethos of the supposed uniquely original (as if 'sacred') work of art. To a greater and greater extent the *reproduction* of art objects (by means of photography or radio transmission) means that they are actually designed for reproducibility; and in the emergence of cinema we discover 'copies' without an 'original'. Here, Benjamin argued, was the technical basis of a new ethos of artistic production and consumption, one in which awe and deference would give way to a posture of analysis and relaxed expertise, in which art, no longer steeped in 'ritual', would be opened to politics.

Benjamin's companion essay, 'The Author as Producer', on the politics of artistic practice, was written principally with Bertolt Brecht's theatre inmind, and has made its own distinctive, but probably now less regarded,contribution. Here, Benjamin argued that while new technology might have revolutionary potential, there was no guarantee of its revolutionary effect. It was necessary for socialist writers and artists to realise this potential in their work. Benjamin rejects here too the idea that revolutionary art is achieved by attending to the correct subject matter. Instead of being concerned with a work of art's position within the social and economic relations of its time, he asks the question: what is 'the function of a work within the literary production relations of its time'? The artist needs to revolutionise the *artistic* forces of production of his or her time.In addition, this is a matter of *technique*, although the correct technique will arise inresponse to a complex historical combination of social and technical changes.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What is the significance of Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"?

Q 9: How did the Frankfurt thinkers view art and literature?

10.4.4 'Structuralist' Marxism: Goldmann, Althusser, Macherey

The intellectual life of Europe during the 1960s was dominated by Structuralism. Marxist criticism was not unaffected by this intellectual environment. Both traditions believe that individuals cannot be understood apart from their social existence. Marxists believe that individuals are 'bearers' of positions in the social system and not free agents. Structuralists consider that individual actions and utterances have no meaning apart from the signifying systems, which generate them. However,structuralists tend to

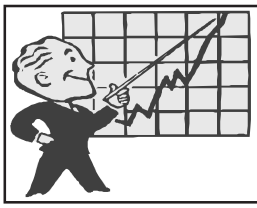
regard these underlying structures as timeless and self-regulating systems, but Marxists see them as historical, changeable and fraught with contradictions.

Lucien Goldmann, a Romanian theorist based in France, rejected the idea that texts are creations of individual genius and argued that they are based upon 'trans-individual mental structures' belonging to particular groups (or classes). These 'world-views' are perpetually being constructed and dissolved by social groups as they adjust their mental image of the world inresponse to the changing reality before them. Such mental images usually remain ill defined and half-realised in the consciousness of social agents, but great writers are able to crystallise world-views in a lucid and coherent form.His later work, especially *Pour unesociologie du roman* (1964), appears to resemble that of the Frankfurt School by focusing on the 'homology' between the structure of the modern novel and the structure of the market economy. He argues that by about 1910 the transition from the 'heroic' age of liberal capitalism to its imperialist phase was well under way. Therefore, the importance of the individual within economic life was drastically reduced.

We have already referred to Louis Althusser in the previous section. This French Marxist philosopher has had a major influence on Marxist literary theory especially in France and Britain. According to Althusser, a great work of literature does not give us a properly conceptual understanding of reality but neither does it merely express the ideology of a particular class. He draws upon Engels' arguments about Balzac and declares that art 'makes us *see*', in a distanced way, 'the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art,and to which it alludes'. Althusser defines ideology as 'a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'.The imaginary consciousness helps us to make sense of the world but also masks or represses our real relationship to it. For example, theideology of 'freedom' promotes the belief in the freedom of all, including

labourers, but it masks the real relations of liberal capitalist economy. Adominant system of ideology is accepted as a common-sense view of things by the dominated classes and thus the interests of the dominant class are secured. Art, however, achieves 'a retreat' (a fictional distance deriving fromits formal composition) from the very ideology, which feeds it. In this way,a major literary work can transcend and critique the ideology in which itis nevertheless 'bathed'.

Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966) was the first extended Althusserian discussion of art and ideology. Rather than treat thetext as a 'creation' or a self-contained artefact, he regards it as a 'production'in which disparate materials are worked over and changed in the process.These materials are not 'free implements' to be used consciously to create a controlled and unified work of art. Irrespective of prevailing aesthetic norms and authorial intentions, the text, in working the pre-given materials, is never fully 'aware of what it is doing'. It has, so to speak, an'unconscious' – a notion explored in terms of a text's repressed historical narrative in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious.* In effect, this is an account of the way ideology enters and deforms a would-be unified text. Ideology is normally lived as if it were totally natural, as if its imaginary and fluid discourse gives a perfect and unified explanation of reality. Once it is worked into a text, all its contradictions and gaps are exposed. The realist writer intends to unify all the elements in the text, but the work that goes on in the textual process inevitably produces certain lapses and omissions which correspond to the incoherence ofthe ideological discourse it uses: 'for in order to say anything, there are otherthings *which must not be said*'. The literary critic is not concerned to showhow all the parts of the work fit together, or to harmonise and smooth over any apparent contradictions. Like a psychoanalyst, the critic attends to thetext's unconscious – to what is unspoken and inevitably repressed.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: What is Louis Althusser's concept of Ideology?

10.4.5 'New Left' Marxism: Williams, Eagleton, Jameson:

Marxist theory in the United States has been dominated by the Hegelian inheritance of the Frankfurt School (the journal *Telos* was the standard-bearer of this tradition). The revival of Marxist criticism in Britain was fuelled by the 1968 'troubles' and by the ensuing influx of continental ideas (*New Left Review* was an important channel). As a Marxist critic, Raymond Williams began with a critical reassessment of the main English tradition of critical cultural thought (*Culture and Society 1780–1950*,1958). He embarked on a radical theoretical construction of the whole domain of social meaning–'culture' as 'a whole way of life'. This general perspective was developed in particular studies of drama, the novel, television, and historical semantics as well as further theoretical work. Williams's general project – the study of all forms of signification in their actual conditions of production–was always emphatically historical and materialist. Yet, it was only in 1977, with the publication of a developed statement of his theoretical position that he began to characterise his workas 'Marxist' (*Marxism and Literature*, 1977). What most importantly defined this position was the use of the concept of 'hegemony' developed by the Italian philosopher and political activist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Hegemony, Williams explained, related the 'whole social process' to structures of power and influence and thus to patterns of domination, subordination and opposition. It went beyond the formal operation of ideology and beyond the idea of social control as manipulation or indoctrination to see relations of power as 'in effect a saturation of the whole process ofliving', as operating by 'consent' and at such a depth that the hegemonic order of a class society passes as 'common sense' and 'the way things are'.

In *Criticism and Ideology*, Eagleton, like Althusser, argued that criticism must break with its 'ideological prehistory' and become a 'science'. The central problem is to define the relationship between literature and ideology, because in his view texts do not reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an *effect* of the 'real'. The text may appear tobe free in its relation to reality (it can invent characters and situations at will), but it is not free in its use of ideology. 'Ideology' here refers not to formulated doctrines but to all those systems of representation (aesthetic,religious, judicial and others) which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience. The meanings and perceptions produced in the text area reworking of ideology's own working of reality. This means that the textworks on reality at two removes. Eagleton goes on to deepen the theoryby examining the complex layering of ideology from its most general pretextual forms to the ideology of the text itself. He rejects Althusser's view that literature can distance itself from ideology; it is a complex reworking of already existing ideological discourses. However, following Macherey, the literary result is not merely a reflection of other ideological discourses but a special *production* of ideology. For this reason,criticism is concerned not with just the laws of literary form or the theory of ideology but rather with 'the laws of the production of ideological discourses as literature'.

In America, where the labour movement has been partially corrupted and totally excluded from political power, the appearance of Fredric Jameson a major Marxist theorist is an important event. In *Marxism and Form* (1971), he explores the dialectical aspect of Marxist theories of literature. After a fine sequence of studies (Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Bloch, Lukács and Sartre), he presents the outline of a 'dialectical criticism'. Jameson believes that in the post-industrial world of monopoly capitalism the only kind of Marxism which has any purchase on the situation is a Marxism which explores the 'great themes of Hegel's philosophy–the relationship of part to

whole, the opposition between concrete and abstract, the concept of totality, the dialectic of appearance and essence, the interaction between subject and object'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: Explain Raymond William's concept of Hegemony?



10.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that all Marxist critics agree that in the study of literature, the social dimension is absolutely indispensable. Writers can never completely escape ideology and their social background so that the social reality of the writer will always be part of the text. A central question in Marxist approaches to literature concerns the reliability of literary texts as social 'evidence'. For example, if Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and George Eliiot's *Middlemarch* are conditioned by the capitalist society of Victorian England what then are we going to find in these novels: a true picture of Victorian England, or an ideologically distorted reflection? In short, is it possible for writers, or for literary texts to present history as a never-ending struggle between antagonistic classes foreconomic and social gains and to present contemporary reality as only the latest instance of that struggle? Over time, Marxist critics have given different answers to this question, although most have been inspired by the notion–first formulated by Friedrich Engels in 1888–that the meaning of a literary work must be seen as independent of the political (and ideologically coloured) views of its author.



10.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Marxism is a 'materialist' philosophy… …unlike the 'idealist' philosophy, which believes in the existence of a spiritual 'world

elsewhere' Marxism believes in the forces beyond the natural world… …other philosophies merely seek to understand the world, Marxism seeks to change it… …it sees progress in society as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes.

Ans to Q 2: 'alienation' occurs when the worker is 'deskilled' and made to perform repetitive tasks in a sequence… …in the 'pre-industrial' or 'cottage industry' system of manufacture, home and workplace were one and the producer was in direct contact with those who might buy the product… …the 'alienated' workers negatively represents the capitalist goals where questions of profit and loss are paramount.

Ans to Q 3: It maintains that a writer's social class and its prevailing 'ideology' have a major bearing on what is written… …the author is not an autonomous 'inspired' individuals whose 'genius' and creative imagination enables to bring forth original and timeless works of art… …he is constantly being formed by the social contexts.

Ans to Q 4: 'Literature', he argued, 'must become Party literature...Literature must become part of the organised, methodical, and unified labours of the social-democratic party'. Experimentation was effectively banned in Leninist Marxism.

Ans to Q 5: As the doctrine expoundedby the Union of Soviet Writers (1932–4), Socialist Realism appealed to certain of Lenin's pre-Revolutionary statements. The theory addressed certain major questions about the evolution of literature, its reflectionof class relations and its function in society.

Ans to Q 6: According to the socialist realists authors like Balzac, Dickens, George Eliot, Stendhal explored the individual's involvement in the complex network of social relations… …the Modernist writers however abandoned began to reflect a more fragmented image of the world, which was often pessimistic and introverted, exploring the alienated individual consciousness in retreat from the 'nightmare of history' of the modern society.

Ans to Q 7: Rejecting the 'naturalism' of the then recent European novel, Lukács returns tothe realist view that the novel reflects reality, not by

rendering its mere surface appearance, but by giving us 'a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality.'

Ans to Q 8: Benjaminargues that modern technical innovations have profoundly altered the status of the 'work of art'… …artistic works are known for their uniqueness… …new media shatter the quasi-religious ethos of the supposed uniquely original work of art… …they are actually designed for reproducibility.

Ans to Q 9: Art and literature have a privileged place in Frankfurt thinking… …Adorno criticised Lukács' view of realism… …art's detachment from dominant reality gives it its special significance and power… …'autonomous' works have the power to 'negate' the reality to which they relate… …Adorno believed that art cannot simply reflect the social system, but acts within that reality… …'Art is the negative knowledge of the actual world.'

Ans to Q 10: Althusser defines ideology as 'a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'. The imaginary consciousness helps us to make sense of the world but also masks or represses our real relationship to it.

Ans to Q 11: Hegemony, Williams explained, related the 'whole social process' to structures of power and influence and thus to patterns of domination, subordination and opposition. It went beyond the formal operation of ideology and beyond the idea of social control as manipulation or indoctrination to see relations of power.



10.7 FURTHER READING

Seldon, Roman. (1985). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Great Britain: The Harvester University Press.

Bertens, Hans.(2001). *Literary Theory: The Basics* London: Routledge.

Barry, Peter. (2009). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* (3rd Edn) Manchester: Manchester University Press.

10.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the growth and development of Marxist Criticism and theory.

Q 2: What are the basic premises of Marxism? How did it influence literary activities?

Q 3: What does a Marxist critic usually do? Discuss in detail.

Q 4: Provide a detailed account of Soviet Socialist Realism. How did it influence literary practices of the time?

Q 5: The Soviet hostility to modernist novels can best be understood inthis context of Soviet socialist realism. Discuss.

Q 6: Discuss the contribution of the Frankfurt school towards the development of the Marxist aesthetics.

Q 7: Discuss ideology and hegemony as the two important concepts in Marxist criticism.

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Barry, Peter. (2009). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* (3rd Edn) Manchester: Manchester University Press.

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Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KKHandiqui State Open University
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(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? | | | |
2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

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