

Contemporary Theories of Literary Criticism: An Overview

The critical theories assumed a considerable importance in the realm of literary and cultural studies in the last two decades. The theories have grown into an independent and well-disciplined study. If we look back one hundred years, literary scholarship was equated with philology. The philological tradition in literary scholarship should have been inherited from the Germanic tradition in the nineteenth century.

T.S.Eliot and I.A.Richards veer its course away towards criticism at the turn of twentieth century. The era of criticism, in turn, gave room to the era of theory in the latter part of second half of twentieth century. Theory is of continental origin. Its philosophy is rooted in existentialism.Hence ,it makes a clear break from liberal humanism.

The term ‘theory’ should remind us that its primary concern is not with the interpretation of specific works, but with human discourse in general. There is a view that theory has changed the very nature of English studies in the world. It has become indispensable discipline in higher education. The readers feel helpless because it is so jargon –ridden these days.The anthologies available in the market contain the difficult and tangled writings of these theorists. Students who are not initiated into these systems, find themselves floundering.

There are critical and complex questions to solve:

Why is it necessary for us to learn theories? Do they, in any way, help us in understanding literature better? Do they not stand in the way of our personal response to literature? Why should anyone bother about them? These are some relevant questions which merit consideration. There is so much of discussion of non-literary matters, so much discussion of problems whose relation of literature is almost non-existent. We tend to raise the question whether it is necessary at all to get to know the theories.

In literary studies, theory does not mean an account of nature and function of literature, or methods of study alone. ReneWellek's useful book, often prescribed for research scholars *Theory of Literature*, might lead us to think along these lines. It is a body of thinking and writing which is pretty hard to define. Working from outside the field of literary studies, by thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Althusser have been taken up by people from literary studies because their analysis of language, mind, history offer and persuasive insights into textual criticism and cultural matters. The genre theory comprises works of anthropology, art, history, film studies, science and social studies. These works are helpful, besides being serviceable, for a study of literature.

Presently, knowledge of these critical theories has become status symbol. It is a sad state of affair. On the positive side, such knowledge can help us in many ways to comprehend the world better. And think more logically. Each theoretical system tries to compete and gain dominance over

the other. These theories offer different interpretations of history and current events of the world, and every theory grounded on certain key concepts.

There is no unmediated, personal and natural response to literature. When we respond to some work, we have internalized some assumptions about what a piece of literature is, what it should mean based on assumption. Theory involves a questioning of some of the basic hypothetical assumptions we make in our study of literature. What is an author? What is meant by 'meaning of a text' 'What happens when we read? How should we read a text and why? What is the difference between a 'work' and 'text'?

These questions were critically examined in 1980s. The 1980s were the high watermark of theory. It started off as a rejection of and reaction to the traditional modes of understanding literature or what we call 'liberal humanism' which prevailed during 1930-50. In this light, the four papers on contemporary theories are explained----

1. Reader-Response Criticism
2. Feminist Criticism
3. Psychoanalytic Criticism
4. Marxist Criticism

Reader- Response Criticism
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I.A.Richards, a critic of immense insight and knowledge has revealed the function of art. Arts are the fund of knowledge and wisdom. It is the storehouse of intelligence. Arts affect the human emotions. The artistic creations satisfy our appetencies and enlarge our potencialities. The creative works lead a richer and fuller meanings and understandings of life. Hence, I.A.Richards is regarded as forerunner of reader-response criticism for his illuminating thoughts on arts and artistic works.

Reader-Response criticism has philosophic implications. It has Greek origin meaning ‘to bring to light’. The German philosopher Kant uses the tem to make a distinction between the study of essences and study of appearances. New Criticism is the result of study of essences and Reader – Response is derived from study of phenomena or appearances. The two tendencies are the outcomes of Phenomenology in the literary study.

The reader-response criticism is a recent field of criticism for the evaluation or response of a text. It is not the just the response that matters on a specific text. The analysis, the critical interpretation of a text matters a lot. That is what accounts for the great success of the text. The process and method of critical analysis of the text is evolving today. The greater comprehension of the text, a sound knowledge and

insight on text and eventually a reasonable command on the text is a recent pedagogical tool for effective classroom situations.

The viewpoints of the critics are the matters of elimination in reader-response criticism. The correct responses and opinions of a reader on a text is nicely taken into account. The meaning, the centrality of thought and deeper layers of narrations are contained in the text. The reader's attempt is the quest for delving deep into the layers and be proficient in expression and elucidation. In the process of examination and evaluation of a text, the proponents of twin essays are to be debated for correct interpretation. Wimsatt and Beardsley commented on 'Intentional Fallacy' and 'The Affective Fallacy':

The Intentional Fallacy is a confusion between a poem and its origin.....It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological cause of the poem and ends in biography and relativism. The Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and what it does).....It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome of either fallacy, the intentional or the Affective, is that the poem itself, as an object specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear.(345)

There is a vigorous reaction by reader-response critics on the physical shape of the text. The critics of the school hold meanings diametrically opposite to Stanley Fish's expression

on “Objectivity of the text is an illusion’. The text is not an achieved structure of meaning. It is the result or outcome of the evolving process of reading. The work has no independent existence. The reader opens the multiple illustrations and interpretations of the text. The meanings and judgments of the readers are extended to different directions for the understanding the text critically and innovatively.

The critics of reader-response criticism experiment on what the text does instead of what the text is. The focal point of the text is reader’s engagements developing a literary understanding of the text. The passive involvement of reader for the text is discarded. The active involvement in constructing the meaning out of the text is a sound methodology.

The agent of the process of reading is the Reader-with capital R.He/she who performs the activity of reading. Who is the reader? Anyone who is engaged in reading is called a reader. The school of New Critics holds their opinions on a literary text as a structure of stratified norms. It exists for its own sake. For reader-response critics, a literary text (for any text that matters) cannot have an independent existence. It comes into existence, and acquires life only when a reader reads. The reader is absent when the writer writes. And the writer is normally absent when the reader reads.

Readers are classified into two major classes: the ideal (hypothetical), and the actual (or the real or empirical) The common tendency on our part is to ignore the actual readers and then idealise readers. Kenneth Burke’s essay,*Psychology*

and Form is the clear exposition on readers and reading. He has different dimension on reader and reading process. He treats the reader as a variable, depending on the work concerned and not as an abstraction. The expectations of the readers from the reading techniques vary from reader to reader. The framing of the questions and styles of answers differ from reader to reader.

The readers are also classified according to their reading taste for an era, a certain work and the contribution of men or women for literary creations. The terminology like seventeenth century readers, readers for *Paradise Lost*, and feminist readers are applied to these sections of readers. In narratology, the word ‘narratee’ is used to designate the ideal reader. The narratee is one whom the narrator addresses. The narratee is conceived as someone, who is part of the narration, an imagined character. The dramatic monologue in form of literature is addressed to the narratee.

The term ‘implied’ reader used by Wolfgang Iser needs analysis to extend the discourse of reading. The readers who respond in full measure and capacity to the demands made by the text are implied readers. Wayne Booth’s term ‘implied reader’ implies the intelligence or faculty that superintendents the work. The work expects a full concentration and a calculated intelligence for evaluation or an examination. Iser develops the idea of ‘implied reader’ to convey a textual entity and a process of meaning production. It encompasses the restructuring and the potential meaning as well as the reader’s concretization of meaning. It is at once textual and imbued

with consciousness. Hence, he is a phenomenological reader, a transcendental model, not empirical as an informed reader.

The ‘intended’ reader encompasses the authors intending to write. Readers for technical writings and social documents belong to this bench of readers. Culler develops the term ‘competent reader’ : one who has learnt or mastered the skills required to understand or interpret the text. The academy of English expects the students and exposes the knowledge and concepts on metaphor, simile, irony ,negative capability to develop literary understanding of the students. This is a part of construction and creation of mind for aesthetic analysis. These readers are mental constructs.

The actual reader is a living being who brings to bear upon the text in the reading process. He has accumulated the knowledge of the world with his personal predilection. The actual reader is more comprehensive and expansive in his educational way .His opinions and judgments on the complexity of the situations are accepted by majority. He has competence on the text in all its linguistic and literary complexity and ability to suppress the personal responses. His vision on the textual analysis and elucidation is far-sighted and insightful.

Indian aestheticians use the much-loaded term *sahrudaya*. He is a perceptive reader. He has sound perceptions of life with his devoted attempt on reading. He is responsive and responsible, capable of a total identification with the art and artist. He has grown with the total concentration and involvement ,a meditative approach in

reading. There is a continuous process of *samsakar* involved in this initiative. He is not a unit but part of continuity. He is the result of unremitting refinements acquired through several births. There is participatory dialogues and communion between him and the work. He is no more an individual, but an all-man in the metaphysical experience, an overpowering experience, neither pleasurable nor painful –that is *ananda*.

The reading methods and techniques differ from reader to reader on different occasions for a same text. A text is not a physical text alone, but it is something like an event, and an interaction with the reader creating the text. The reader interacts with the writer on a text differently. Feminists and deconstructionists have more similarities than differences. Reader –response critics share the same assumptions, but they do not have shared methodology in their approach to work. Reader-oriented theories are not necessarily united by a single, uniform methodology, though they have a common goal in view. It is not one field but many, not a single widely trodden path but a multiplicity of crisscrossing, often divergent works.

The theories of reading are classified into four major sections:

1. Transnational Reader-Response Theory
2. Affective Stylistics
3. Subjective Reader-Response theory
4. Psychological Reader Response Theory

Transnational Reader-Response Theory

This theory was originally formulated by Louise Rosenblatt. The literary work is the result of the transaction between text and the reader. As the reader reads the text, the text corrects the interpretation of the reader. The approach and interpretation of the text should be aesthetic. It should not merely focus on the facts contained in the text. The 'determinate' and 'indeterminate' meanings are incorporated in the text. The factual information are called determinate meanings and creation of meaning through gaps are indeterminate meanings of the text. Wordsworth's 'Lucy Poems' are the appropriate example in this connection. This short lyric, in two stanzas, serves our purpose :

A slumber did my spirit seal

I had no human fears

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly ears.

No motion she has now, no force ;

She neither hears nor sees,

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,

With words, and stones, and trees. (13)

The poem contains two statements, one in each of the stanzas. The 'I' of the poem is known to us as the narrator of Wordsworth's poem, whereas 'she' who is the protagonist is an unknown being, assumed to be Lucy. Stanza one says that

the poet thought that she(Lucy) could not die, whereas stanza two contradicts this view saying, or implying, that she is dead. The space between two stanzas is filled in by the reader, depending on the reader's background, belief and upbringing. The reader does this by bringing to bear upon the poem, his/her reading of the poem. Lucy is dead. Her physical body has ceased to exist. But she has merged and become one with the natural world. Thus she has attained immortality. There can be no more deaths for her. In the first stanza, she is a 'thing' , and so was immortal, and in the second she has achieved immortality by becoming a part of the diurnal motion of the earth. The poem is a lament on the death of an innocent girl. She was a mortal. Her death is an occasion for rejoicing and celebrating , as she has returned to the world of nature, thus achieving immortality. Wordsworth was a pantheist, who believed in nature worship. The continuous interplay between these two meanings (the determinate and indeterminate) is what constitutes reading. This process of reading involves retrospection, anticipation, fulfillment, revision, and so on. Determinate meanings may become indeterminate as our focus shifts, and our point of view varies.

Affective Stylistics

This theory is usually associated with Stanley Fish. It is also based on the assumption that the literary text is not just an object that exists, but takes its existence from the act of reading. In his essay 'Affective Stylistics', he attacks the notion that reading is a finished activity, and substitutes a temporal view in place of a spatial view. The text is put to a close examination to know how stylistically it affects the

reader, or rather how the sequence of words on a printed page gets converted to a felt experience. There is focus on the text, but it is not autonomous entity. The results occur within the reader. The sentence construction matters a lot for the reader. The total attention is focused on what sentences do rather than what they mean. A construction or formation of a sentence is an action made upon the reader rather than a container from which a reader extracts a message.

Stanley Fish describes the process of the structure of the text . The structure occurs from moment to moment in the process of reading. The process is described in ‘slow motion’: it is a word-by-word, or phrase-by-phrase, analysis of the response of the reader. The reader’s engagement with the text is more critical and evaluative. He /she has critical lenses to examine the specific word, the phrase and sentences for their justifications and judgments. It is travelling of the reader from one word to another. In a complex point of thought, there is a pause in order to make sense of what is read, expected or anticipated. Hence, the meaning of the text is not the outcome of what the text says, rather the meaning is the experience of what the text does for the reader. The thematic evidences are used to support and corroborate the claim that the text is the experience of reading. This is done to justify the validity of reading. It is the text which plays the most significant role in establishing the experience of the reader.

Subjective-Reader Response Theory

David Bleich is the major spokesman of this theory. It shows a radical departure from the previous two theories we

have mentioned. The text has enormous power to guide and control the reader in the reading process. The text is a foundation and a base for the reader. This theory of Bleich purports the fact that the responses of the reader are not determined by the text. Reading is wholly a subjective matter, and the nature of what is perceived is determined by solely by the perceiver. The explanations and narrations of the reader create the literary text. The act of reading creates a conceptual, symbolic world. The reading is symbolization. We interpret the meaning of this symbolization. When we wish to explain our experience we resymbolise. The text is there in our mind. The text, therefore, is the written response of the readers. How are we to arrive at knowledge from out of our experience of reading? The objective is self-understanding. This methodology instills and inspires critical thinking of the text.

Psychological Reader –Response Theory

Norman Holland propounded this theory. The reading of the text and understanding is not quite different from real life situations. He has Freudian leanings in his concepts. A work of art projects and presents fantasies. The psychological needs and desires are fulfilled by the interpretations of a literary text. The source of pleasure for a reader lies in the transformation of the unconscious wishes through a literary work. The subjective interpretation is a close encounter with the fantasies created by the text. The psychological conflicts are impacts of the reading process. This is broadly divided into a defence mode when our psychological defences are raised by the text, a fantasy mode which discovers ways of

tranquillising the defences and a transforming mode which uses these two for interpreting the work.

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Feminist Criticism
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The feminist criticism attempts to challenge the traditional notions and conceptions and establish the achievements of women in literary circles. The literary criticism does not provide enough space for contributions of women expressed by women. The two prominent axioms on which feminism are built are presented below:

1. Gender difference is the foundation for structural inequality between men and women by which women suffer sympathetic social injustice
2. The inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity, but is produced by cultural construction of gender differences

The agenda of feminism is to understand the social and psychic mechanism that constructs and perpetuates gender inequality. Feminist literary criticism aims to study the ways in which cultural representations undermine and reinforce the economic, social, political, and psychological suppression and oppression of women in society. It would be proper to call the field of feminism, if a plural of an abstract noun may be permitted. Feminist movement, women's liberation movement is active and dynamic social bodies and institutions fighting for the rights of women. The rights and claims, the safety and security of women in society have become global issues these

days. There are platforms and media support for these women empowerment. This is not field of analysis and debate here.

Feminism as an academic discipline, an intellectual enquiry that goes by the name of 'women's studies'. This academic discipline, as it prevails today as self-conscious movement, should be understood as direct product of women's movement of 1960s. It is seen as one of the practical ways by which to spread the ideas of freedom and equality, and transform patriarchal notions. Literary study is the most powerful medium to stimulate public minds.

The position of women in society was not encouraging up until the nineteenth century. They were powerless to counter the prevailing view of male supremacy. They felt that male supremacy was even desirable. A woman's place is supposed to be in home. She was the 'angel of the home', as the poet Coventry Patmore called her. It still operates the same way in many countries of the world, where women are meant for bearing and rearing children. In western world, women were largely occupied with getting access to the ballot box, family support and preservation. They were content with private world of family and domesticity. They were playing multiple roles as wives, mothers, caretakers, nurturers, and homemakers. The cultural anthropologist, Levi-Strauss considers that women have always been passive objects in the final decision of marriage. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Donne-all held the view that form is masculine, while matter is feminine.

In the past, we have notable studies in this movement. Shelley's mother-in-law Mary Wollstonecraft's book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*(1792),and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1879) deserve special mention. At a time when male supremacy was taken for granted(political power, property rights and reputation rested with men)and it was an unwritten convention that women should obey men. These works articulated the sense of discrimination created by such inequality between the sexes. Since then feminism has sought to offset the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture, assert sexual equality, and eradicate sexist domination. Feminist criticism seeks to free itself from time-honored and naturalized patriarchal notions by subverting them. The aim and objective of criticism is to expose the misogyny involved in the literary production and practice of the past. In order to achieve the objective, there is no single method, but plurality of method. A conjoined effort was seen to be necessary. It is even fashionable these days to term it 'cultural politics' , rather than 'feminist theory'.

The prominent writers who have voiced their views in literary creations need mentioned. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*(1929)Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*(1949) Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*(1969) are significant studies, indispensable to an understanding of case of feminism. Since 1970s, there has been profundity of feminist writings the world over. The dominating issues addressed by women writers can be classified as follows:

1. Men establish the norms and rules, women are defined as 'other' with reference to these norms

2. Sex and gender are entirely different from each other, and need to be distinguished. Sex is biologically determined and gender is created by society.
3. The central thrust of feminist criticism is to promote gender equality.

The issues are examined with enormous writings by women in various forms of literature. The feminist theory chooses two areas to tackle these issues. The first task is to evaluate the literature of past with a view to expose the notorious patriarchal ideology inscribed in it. It needs revisionary, re-reading from the perspective of women. This task has involved a re-interpretation of classics. The curriculum of women's studies begins with a project that encourages students to read literature afresh. Feminist critics quote from the scriptures: 'the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of air, and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them, and whatsoever the man called every living creature that was the name there of' (Genesis 2:19)

The second agenda of feminism is women as writer. It is to unearth forgotten women talents, bringing women writers of past who are unheard of. The function is to create a whole body of literature by women and of women. Elaine Showalter gives the name gynocriticism to stand for the dual function. The focal elements of gynocriticism are explained as

1. Biology: To question biological essentialism, that is, the promise of patriarchy that woman is a womb, a receptacle for male domination. To use the very

attributes in women's biological features as a motif in writings with a view to celebrating it.

2. Experience: To portray women as enormous source of values in life as well as in art. There lie vast areas of delicate emotions and perceptions of women that are specific to women's experience
3. Discourse: Women are caught up in a prison-house of language that is male-specific. Contest this and create women's language which will be distinctly feminine in its style and structure.
4. Social and economic condition: In writings reject notions of universal feminism. Encourage plurality and the concept of the diaspora.

The significant creations like Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their Own* (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in Attic* (1979) depict the task of rediscovering the talent and proficiency of neglected women. Less known authors are Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Christina Rossetti and authors who have been overlooked or elbowed out by historians have been brought to a clearer focus. The present pattern is to be modified. To accomplish this, the literary canon have been redefined, jettisoning the unwanted baggage of male writers, and planting a newer one in place of old. The present scenario is to promote scholarship pertaining to women's studies, rewrite literary history and transforming the existing literary study for a distinctive female literary tradition. The tradition and the emergence of modernism can be approached from the feminist point of view.

The traditional historians interpret the movement in various ways: as a reaction to Victorianism, the after-effects of World War 1, the ills of industrialization, etc. The conventional view is that modernism, in art and literature, was born to work against the tendencies of age. From the feminist perspective, modernism can be defined as an outward expression of women's movement fighting for suffrage and equal rights. It reflects the changes in the relationship between men and women in a growing and permissive society.

The emergence of experimental literature in fiction is the testimony of women's literature. Reputed writers like Toni Morrison, Adrienne Kennedy and Adrienne Rich have given a lead in this direction. They are creative in style and expression. Their creative works are revolutionary in spirit and content. They are quick to seize upon those elements which suit them, like psychoanalytic, Marxist and deconstructionist theories.

Feminism is expanding and encompassing a plethora of communications from multiple angles. It is a proven fact that women are subjected to patriarchal oppression. Patriarchy operates in different ways in different countries. The problems of women are shaped by their class, race, nationality, religion and many other factors. It is a complex issue involving implications at various levels. The women being treated as 'the angel of house', and the women being placed at the 'pedestal' are some of them. Feminist critics try to go against the grain in exploring/exposing the patriarchal ideology of literary texts. It is wide in range, because it accommodates several issues-cultural, social,

political and psychological. Its broader goal and mission is to widen the understanding of women's experience of the world and their values in the world. As a critical and revolutionary movement, it is speaking and struggling for the rights and claims of women in the society.. Yet, the growth and development of literature of this field is phenomenal in terms of the volume of books and articles written about it. Specialized journals promote critical reassessments. Feminism has become a productive industry that has an immense impact on the centers of teaching and learning.

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Psychoanalytic Criticism
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The theory of human mind is psychoanalysis. The concepts of psychoanalysis are incorporated in our everyday life. The criticism related to this field is called psychoanalytic criticism. This criticism can be comprehended as emerging from the romantic view that literature is an expression of its author's persona. The psychoanalytic view of human behavior is relevant in our experience of literature. Psychoanalysis is defined as a form of mental therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interactions of conscious and unconscious elements of human mind. The paper examines the detailed analysis of the theories and concepts related to this branch.

Sigmund Freud(156-1939) is a well –known figure in this field. Many of the principles of mental therapy are derived from the works of Freud. It was he who gave his ideas the name of psychoanalysis in 1896.He expresses that people are motivated by desires, fears and conflicts. They are unaware about these experiences. They are also unconscious about these forces. These forces are stored in our memory, and are repressed. This is the results of unconscious mind. This is a part, or section , a sub-system of the mind , but lying below the level of consciousness . These forces organize our current experiences and emotions.

The unconscious state of being is dynamic, and is always at work, controlling us from very depths of being. There are many defences by which we keep unconscious under check. *Transference* and *Projection* are two of these defenses. There is also *regression*, a short return to the past experience which is relived. It is a good therapeutic tool for cure. When some of these defenses break down, we have anxiety. We have a partial access to the unconscious through our dream, and creative activities. During our dreams the unconscious is free to express itself. The dream becomes nightmare, when it is too fearful or threatening. It may lead to trauma when defense breaks down. Death and sexuality are fascinating themes for study in psychoanalysis. Critics of this persuasion have varied notions on how these concepts can be fruitfully applied to literary criticism.

Sigmund Freud uses the dream to imply the ways by which real events are transformed into real images. These are called *displacement and condensation*. The representation of events in a dream are quite similar in literary works. Abstract ideas and feelings are concretised. Dreams show or reveal things as literature does. Dreams are like literature. The central purpose of the literature is the secret gratification of a forbidden infantile wish. That is the reason why the literary critics have great interest in the Freudian method of analysis and interpretation.

Freud is intelligent and well educated to explain the mental illness and their causes and cure. He had sound knowledge on classics. His innovative way of explaining the mental condition brought many laurels in literature like

Goethe Prize for literature. Using psychoanalysis as his tool, he interpreted works of literature best known to him. His *Interpretation of Dreams*(1900) and the essay *The Uncanny* are among the best pieces of writing. He has used psychoanalysis to elucidate Shakespeare's characters Hamlet, Macbeth and Lear.

Psychoanalytic criticism can be nicely classified into three major phases. The first two belong to the early and classical phase, and third to the poststructuralist phase. In Classical Freudian criticism, the work of literature was likened to a dream or fantasy of the writer. The focus here is on the psychoanalysis of the author. Characters in literature were seen and treated as real living beings who belong to the created fantasy world. Freud's interpretation of symbols was applied in rigid manner to the language of the work of literature. Such application is implied as 'vulgar Freudianism'.

The examination of text reveals the knowledge of writer, the workings of creator's mind in this phase. Two of the best known works of literary criticism employing classical Freudianism are Ernest Jones's Book *Hamlet and Oedipus*(1949), and Marie Bonaparte's *Life and Works of Edgar Edgar Allen Poe:A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (1949) for which Freud wrote the introduction. These two works are to be seen as important landmarks in psychoanalytic criticism. The further research rejected these studies on many reasons. They do not devote more attention on language, states of mind and world of fantasy.

The second stage of classical psychoanalysis introduced in 1960s and 1970s. The greater emphasis and attention was laid not on the author but on the reader. Norman Holland is the initiator of this theory. His examination is based on the reader and the text. He terms it 'transactive criticism'. The source of the pleasure (experience) we derive from a literary work, lies in the transformation of unconscious wishes, and fears into culturally acceptable meanings. Holland uses the acronym DEFT (Defences, Expectations, Frustrations and Transformations) to define this process. Reading recreates the identity of the reader.

Jacques Lacan (1901-81) called the 'French Freud', is a French psychoanalyst. He began his career, like Freud, as a medical practitioner with a medical degree. From about 1930 onwards until his death, he was the most influential figure in psychoanalytic circles. He presented a famous paper called the 'Mirror Stage' in 1936. He came to be influenced by Saussure and Levi-Strauss. He was something of a rebel. He was expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association. When his research findings were published in 1966, under the title *Ecrits*, he became a prominent Parisian intellectual and his fame as a 'structuralist psychoanalyst' spread far and wide.

The interest of Lacan is re-writing, re-interpreting classical Freudian Psychoanalysis in the light of poststructuralist theories. He rejects Freud's notion of the instinctual unconscious that precedes language. The unconscious comes into being along with language. It is the result of the structuring of desire of language. Since Lacan's

focus on language and the structuring of desire by language, he replaces Freud's concept condensation and displacement with Roman Jakobson's metaphor and metonymy. Lacan uses linguistic and literary traditions unlike Freud. Metaphor and condensation are characterized by similarity and association. The unconscious consists of signifiers rather than instincts. The unconscious is structured like language, and the dream is structured like a sentence. For Lacan, the subject comes into being when it acquires its consciousness, the sense of being. It develops a concept of self and self-hood. This happens in every human being at a mythic moment for which Lacan's term is 'the mirror stage'. This occurs between six months and eighteen months, when the child begins to conceive as a unified being, separate from the rest of the world. Before this, when the sense of the self is not acquired, the child exists in a realm world which Lacan terms as 'imaginary'. In this stage, there is no distinction between the self and the Other, but there is a total identification with mother. The mirror stage is a pre-linguistic stage towards the close of which the child enters into the language system. The new order into which the child enters is called by Lacan 'the symbolic'. As Lacan speaks, the unconscious is the 'kernel of our being'. The unconscious is structured like language, and language exists as a structure before the individual enters into the system of language.

The theory of Jacques Lacan is a transformation in the reading and critical practice of criticism. The Lacanian method of psychoanalysis is influenced by poststructuralism searching the text for uncovering the meanings and the

structure of sentences. Hence, psychoanalytic criticism, whether Freudian or Lacanian, develops our critical assessment of literary works in many ways. This critical insight is based upon the assumption that sexuality is the basic constituent element in the construction of the subject. Any psychoanalytic reading involves interpreting the presence of sexuality in a text. It can be author-based, text-based or reader-based. The oedipal dynamics, family dynamics, relationship to death, sexuality are the prominent issues to be debated and discussed in contemporary theoretical perspectives.

The postcolonial critics often resort to psychoanalyzing the behavior of literary characters. This methodology of analysis as legitimate as the explanation developed from the feminist or Marxist perspective. Psychoanalytic concepts are not confined to one medium. It encompasses the human production involving narration; production of images is its tools of narration. This creates reasonable impacts on the appreciation of any literary work. Psychoanalysis has another field of writing literary biographies called as psycho-biographies. These trace the growth and development of the author's genius, drawing evidences from his life and writings-his mind and art. One concluding remark :psychoanalytic criticism is neither verifiable , fasifiable.

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Marxist Criticism

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The German philosopher Karl Marx (1818-83), and the German sociologist Friedrich Engels (1820-95) are the founding fathers of the school of criticism. Marxist criticism is not focused not solving individual problems, or attaining individual salvation. Marx and Engels were basically concerned with political philosophy and economic production and thought in the context of European capitalistic society. The philosophers have not attempted a full-length study of art and literature. The merits of a piece of literature are judged in terms of political and socio-economic formula. They were not emotional boors, but German intellectuals. Their entire direction and evaluation of literature is in terms of economics. In subsequent days, the principles and philosophies underlying Marxian thought came to be adopted and modified what has come to be known as Marxist criticism.

The material philosophy is Marxism. It supports to naturalist and opposed to supernaturalist world view. It foregrounds economic realities of human culture. The power of economics is the strength of all institutions. It is a emerging force for intellectual thoughts and prolific ideas of institutions. It opposes to the idealist philosophy. The idealist philosophy has faith and belief to the existence of spiritual world. The Indian philosophic system is based on such an

assumption. Friedrich Hegel preached the philosophy of idealism which maintains that the world is governed by thought. Ideas rule the world, not men. Marx rejects and –this Hegelian philosophy. He has narrated his philosophy in his work, *The German Ideology*:

The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is the first off all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life, thinking and real intercourse of man, appear as the direct efflux of man's material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, and metaphysics of people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc-real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process.....Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life.(197-8)

Marxism embraces a wide field of thought comprising the theory of economics, history, society and revolution. Marxist literary theory does not constitute a school. It assigns a structure to social reality. It is called a structured view of reality. Society is evolving and dynamic. It is not vague or indistinct background. It has a definite shape and pattern in history. There are continuous and perpetual struggles among antagonistic social classes. This is termed 'dialectical'

Marx posits methods by which history and society can be analysed. The whole issue is problematized with the intervention of literature in this social structure and historical canvas. The pertinent question is confronted: literature reflects and/or distorts social reality. The founding fathers of Marxism clarify the ambiguities of sense and thought. The study and meanings of literature can only be conceived within the larger framework of social reality. The theory which treats literature in isolation will miss the joys and pleasures of literature. It will be deficient in its ability to explain what literature really is. The socioeconomic element is the best criteria for determining the character of society.

The superstructure of society, politics and ideology are based on economics. Economic conditions are the material circumstances. The historical circumstances are generated by material circumstances. Human affairs can be realized and experienced without the reference of history and economics. The methodology advocated by Marxists maintains the theoretical ideas and framework can be judged by the concrete application of world-view.

The division of people in the society is based on the principles of distinctions on socioeconomic conditions. There is an eternal struggle for power between the social classes. History is a class struggle. The proletariat, the working class, is always subjugated by the bourgeoisie-the rich who control the resources, and the wealth of the nation. The result of this exploitation is 'alienation'. It is a method by which the working zeal of a worker is declined. The worker is 'deskilled' and made to perform the tasks, the nature and

purpose of which he cannot know. He relinquishes his labour power to the capitalist in exchange for wages, and becomes an appendage of a machine. Workers form the labour force. They are thought of as hands. People become commodities. They are ignored and alienated from the mainstream of the society.

Reviewing the basic concepts in Marxism, we will examine its application in literature. The models of applications are explained—

The Reflection Model

The Aristotelian tradition of mimesis is the defining principle of this model. Literature is understood as reflecting the reality outside. The material world of our being is reflected in the mind of man and translated to forms of thought. The major exponent of this system is the Hungarian Marxist George Lukacs. He opines that literature is the knowledge of reality and not just mirroring of it. The form of literary work reflects the form of reality. Literature has power to create a fictional world which is a reflection of real world. He attacks bitterly the dogma of modernism which is reactionary and decadent: it represents individuals who are isolated from society. The personality of the man as disintegrated: he is shown to be solitary, unable or unwilling to have pleasant communion with fellow human beings. The modern man experiences the agonies of solitariness and its consequent mental illness. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' sums up this condition succinctly. The theory of Lukacs is primarily focused on realistic novel. He considers the function of novel.

It is the novel that matters. He does not the language of the fiction into account. It is just the vehicle for shaping the form.

The Production Model

The French Marxist Pierre Macherey developed this theory. The literary compositions are seen as productive labour. A piece of a poem, a fiction, a play is the creations of labour devoted in productive way. The materials are his quality thoughts. The thoughts and ideas, emotions and imaginations are turned and shaped into end products. The author is not a shaman who creates out of nothing, but one who beats into shape literary genres, literary conventions and practices. The creation of a text is the total strength and energy devoted by the author as a finished product for the service of the society.

The Genetic Model

This approach is called ‘genetic’ because it is concerned with the origin of literary production. The Romanian sociologist, Lucien Goldmann , developed this model. How did literature develop out of social life and customs of the people? The creation of literary works depends on social consciousness. Some social groups possess a superior form of ideology, a superior form of ‘world view’. These social groups may be reactionary, or revolutionary. The view of this group forms the mental structure, which is shaped and given coherence by great writers in their works. The conception of a work of art is not judged as the expression of author’s self or individual genius. It is the expression of social class. A literary work is the collective product of a social community.

It is built on 'transindividual mental structures'. The mental structures of Goldmann are not linguistic structures, but interrelations of concepts. He calls them 'homologies' World views are social facts. Artistic works represent the coherent and adequate expressions of world view. Great writers innovatively discover the mental structures, transform or transmute them into lasting works of art. Goldmann's *Hidden God* (1964) is a classic illustration of this theory.

The Frankfurt School

This is promoted by Theodore Adorno who rejects the views opined by Lukacs. He strongly expresses that world of art is different from social reality. These two views are poles apart in connection to the art and the function work of art. Art has its formal laws and rules. It has its meanings and essence. It has its life and soul. It is an image of reality. It is a mere photographic representation of reality. Art exposes the contradictions and ambiguities of reality. It is the negative knowledge of the actual world.

The negative knowledge is not the negation, but the knowledge that can negate a false and reified condition. Adorno and his followers appreciate and applaud modernism and experimental form of art. Modernism is approached as a critique of late capitalism. Techniques of fragmentation of the self, the splintered selves are the current practices that negate the man. It expresses the selves speaking their experiences, their values and positions in society. The identity is fragmented. The crisis is resulted because of sorry state of identity.

Modernism exposes the isolation of man from society. This technique of literary production is uniquely presented by playwrights like Samuel Beckett and John Osborne. They posit the horror of man in society. The present mankind is insecure and unsafe. He is in quest for solace. His picture is tragic and turbulent. The practitioners of art faithfully represent in various forms of literature.

The contemporary Marxist theory is concerned with the functioning of society in subtle ways and means. It is radical departure from the traditional notion of Marxism. It is growing and evolving historical process. The power of ideology has greater meanings and importance than power of material. The base/superstructure model is rejected in preference to the poststructuralist view of literature. This is termed as revisionist Marxism. Louis Althusser, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson have made notable contributions to this field in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

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