



INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY THEORY

MA Lecture Course, ELTE, Department of English
Studies

FELSŐOKTATÁSI JEGYZET - DIGITÁLIS TANANYAG

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Literary Theory Introduction:

Literary theory: NOT praxis (the production of literature), NOT aesthesis (the perception of, the pleasure taken in literature), but theoretic: “to look at, to contemplate, to survey”: a critical reflection on the possible means and methods of analysing literature, and on the nature of literature itself. The foregrounding of language, of literariness. The various methods of writing literary criticism.

What is literature? What makes a text literary?

1. extrinsic approach: the way in which it is framed: we can read anything as literature if it is presented *as* literature. Art is what is presented as such. (cf: Duchamp’s urinal)

Excerpt from Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal, 15 April 1802:

“When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again.”

William Wordsworth: I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wander'd lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Dorothy's journal has literary qualities, and yet, it was not presented as poetry, it was not published anywhere in its own time. Rise of feminist criticism -> canonised as a literary text in its own right -> The Journal is published, and thoroughly edited, and extracts appear in Romantic anthologies. -> It is "institutionalised" as literature <- literature is an institution with publishing houses, editors, reviewers, critics, school and university syllabi-
>

1. literature must be framed as literature (it has to look like literature – i.e. a poem never published is also literature) 2. the institutional network (a set of discourses) creates it as an object that counts as literature (canonisation)

What do we mean by “literary qualities”?

2. Intrinsic approach:

- a. literariness of literature: language drawing attention to itself – language is not a transparent medium to convey a piece of information or a message – the emphasis is on “how” rather than “what” (i.e. the “how” complicates the “what”, makes it more complex, even ambiguous) We do not read Ww’s poem as a tourist guide about the Lake District. Lit. is not a piece of information about a reality “behind” it. As opposed to e.g. a Wikipedia entry about the Lake District

However: everything can be read as literature, if the reader focuses on literariness – i.e. literature is literature because it is read as such. e.g. “Dogs must be carried on the escalator” – ambiguity of the sentence -> language drawn into the foreground by the reader who notices or focuses on this ambiguity -> Is literature a way of reading? (e.g. Derrida reads Plato, the philosopher, or Locke, the philosopher by focusing on language, on “rhetorics”, the ambiguity inherent in the language of the text, rather than on some “truth” “behind” it. -- see later!)

+Immanuel Kant (1727-1804): aesthetic judgement: “beauty is what pleases without interest” e.g. a horse – can be judged aesthetically (whether it is beautiful or not) – NOT: whether it is useful or not / whether it has 4 legs or not / whether it is a horse or not – these are NOT aesthetic judgement

- “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” – it depends on the beholder HOW s/he judges – they judge aesthetically OR want to get at some truth claim that can be falsified or verified

- b. performative function of literature

Constative: descriptive truth claims, can be falsified or verified.

vs: Performative: language creates a change in the existing state of affairs, language creates new things out of nothing. (e.g. “Let there be light!”, “I now

pronounce you man and wife.”) [this opposition, introduced by J. L. Austin, is later challenged by Derrida]

- literature is imaginative writing in the sense that it has a performative function. We do *not* ask whether Ww really saw the daffodils, whether the daffodils were really there, whether the daffodils are really like that, or, whether Moll Flanders was a living person or not. When we speak about literature, we tend to ask different questions.

However: so that we do not ask the above questions, the piece of writing has to be presented, framed as literature.

Paradox: no utterance is entirely constative, each text contains performative elements – even history books

e.g. Hayden White: *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987) – there are no “facts” in history, history is the interpretation of (chaotic, homogeneous) facts, which are presented in a narrative form that gives them coherence, logic and meaning. History writing is performative - it endows facts with a meaning, a hierarchical structure and a plot that are not necessarily there at the first place. If it is difficult to tell fiction and history apart, the “performativity”, or “imaginative character” of literature needs to be supplemented by another criterion->

c.) literature is “discourse that knows of its own fictionality”

3. Intertextuality:

literature always inscribes itself into “literature” – works are made out of other works that they repeat, challenge and transform. A work exists through its relation to other works. E.g. Shakespeare’s “My Mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” reacts to the Platonic idealisation of women in the poetry of the period (cf. later: T.S. Eliot: “Tradition and Individual Talent”, Harold Bloom: *The Anxiety of Influence*)

All in all: there is no absolute criterion that would define “literature” – literature is the thing that escapes all definitions, all categories - however, the “autonomy” of lit. has much to do with the rise of aesthetics as a separate discipline in the 18th c. – literature is sth. that we read for its own sake (see esp. Kant)

Singularity of literature? What is good literature? (facts-> value) cf: Derek Attridge: *The Singularity of Literature* (2004) -> aesthetic + ethical function (see later: ethical criticism)

originality and invention:

- challenge to accepted cultural norms (both past and present – e.g. women have to get married, or, novels present a linear story)
- contains an element of surprise (for every age) -> remains endlessly open to reinterpretation, generates new questions ->
- worthy to be reread (exact repetition never occurs with rereading), remains new and challenging at each reading
- Openness to interpretation: one can never say this book or that poem “means” or “says” this or that (there is *no* closure)

“I still believe that no good joke is ever racist. And I believe it for the same reasons that I believe no good play or novel is ever racist, regardless of the politics of its author. The discourse of racism is bald, monotonous, unquestioning, single-voiced and desolate. Art, when it is good... is none of those things. Art is dramatic, and by dramatic I mean that it holds everything in opposition and suspense. / The moment art forgets it is dramatic and grows tendentious, the moment it begins to formulate a programme for the amelioration of mankind, or for spreading faith or disbelief, or for promoting racial disquiet or racial harmony, it ceases to be art. Call it a little novel, comprising voices at intellectual and moral odds with one another, taking you by surprise and told, vertiginously, by a narrator it would not be wise of you to trust.” (Howard Jacobson, qtd. by Stephen Mulhall, in *The Wounded Animal*, J.M. Coetzee & the Difficulty of Reality in Literature & Philosophy, 2009.)

What are the characteristics of good art? What are the characteristics of bad art? What kind of binary oppositions organise this passage?

CASE STUDY

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

**Composed Upon Westminster Bridge,
September 3, 1802¹**

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would be of soul who could pass by

¹ The date of this experience was not September 3, but July, 1802. Its occasion was a trip to France (see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*, July 1802, p. 395). The conflict of feelings attending Wordsworth's brief return to France, where he had once been a revolutionist and the lover of Annette Vallon, evoked a number of personal and political sonnets. (Editor's footnote in *The Norton Anthology*, vol. 2. p. 296)

garment – clothing, dress

bare – naked

glittering— sparkling, shining, flashing

New Criticism (Cleanth Brooks: "The Language of Paradox" in: *The Well-Wrought Urn*, 1947)

- the paraphrase of a poem does not account for its power
- oppositions reconciled in a unified whole

oppositions: (-) city vs. nature (+)

(-) mechanic vs. organic (+)

(-) dead/inanimate vs. alive/animate (+)

(-) inhuman vs. human (+)

Deconstruction: Challenges the view that a poem has a unified meaning, that the world/work of art is harmoniously organised through language. Posits "Truth" as an effect of language that is constantly undermined by language itself.

The close-reading of the advocates of New-Criticism is not close enough. The text is pregnant with inherent tensions that 1.) subvert the stability of binary oppositions and turn the hierarchy between them upside down 2.) cannot be resolved in any reassuring synthesis. Gives the primacy to language and investigates the rhetorics that both produces and shatters the meaning of a text.

A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
This river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

1802

1807

“This City now doth, like a garment wear / The beauty of the morning...”

body	=	City
----		-----
garment		beauty of the morning

What kind of body? Silent, bare, lying open to... (a corpse? a prostitute?)

“The very houses *seem* asleep” (*are* they asleep?)

oppositions shattered: dead vs. alive (aporia); material vs. spiritual

meaning created and deconstructed by the text: city = nature; matter = spirit; inanimate = animate

oppositions reconciled by the sheer power of tropes -- language (i.e. culture, as the very opposite of nature) – yet, language draws attention to itself and reveals its own arbitrary power to posit analogies

New Historicism, Cultural Materialism

Prime assumption: the text (work of art) cannot be separated from its *context* (history as created through discourses: texts). The work of art, or the aesthetic, does not transcend history but, even if it has ideological interests to create the illusion of transcendence, the most it can do is to erase the traces that witness its actual embeddedness *in* history. Criticise deconstruction on the basis of leaving the historical context out of consideration → leaving the social and the political problems of a given era out of consideration. Strongly influenced by Marxism. New Historicism: emphasis on the ways in which texts contribute to and perpetuate the ideological assumptions of a given era. Cultural Materialism: concentrates on the ways in which texts undermine the ideological assumptions of a given era and offer places of resistance.

Editor's footnote:

Ww. first goes to France at the height of his revolutionary enthusiasm, in 1792-94. Trip to France in 1802: wants to settle his affair with Annette Vallon, his ex-lover from whom he had a child.

By 1802, Ww. has already turned into a conservative, planning to get married. He has vested interests in 1. erasing his affair with Annette Vallon 2. establishing his Englishness in anti-French England, and, therefore, to erase his youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution. However, these historical circumstances leave their trace on the poem that is supposed to praise the English city.

Ww describes his memories of the first trip (1792-94) in Books 9-10 of *Prelude*.

“I crossed the Square (an empty Area then!)
Of the Carousel, where so late had lain
The Dead, upon the Dying heaped; and gazed
On this and other Spots, as doth a Man
Upon a Volume whose contents he knows
Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read
[...]
High was my Room and lonely
..... I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month.
[...]
And in this way I wrought upon myself
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole City, “Sleep no more.”
[...]
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of the Night,
Defenceless as a wood where Tygers roam.”

(*Prelude*: Book Tenth, France Continued , 71-93)

Paris haunts the poem about London: What does it mean that the “houses seem asleep”?

New Criticism: seem *asleep* = they are living, gently human

Deconstruction: *seem* asleep = can be dead or alive (but rather dead – cf: silent, bare body)

Historical/Political readings: *seem* asleep = the working class masses only seem asleep, they will rise up and actually “murder sleep” (Macbeth). London = Paris

Psychoanalytic reading

With an emphasis on the notion of trauma, one can turn the political reading into a psychoanalytic reading. Wordsworth (Englishness) traumatised by the (missed encounter with the) French Revolution: the events were overwhelming, not understandable, shocking. The shock of these events cannot be assimilated, integrated. The trauma *of history* keeps returning and haunting any transcendental poetry of Englishness.

Feminist readings

Political agenda: emphasis on female voice, female writing, and on the construction of the female by male authors. Wishes to give (public) voice to the voiceless (the female)

Would consider:

1. the relationship between Wordsworth's rejection of Annette Vallon and the prostitute image of London (Paris).
2. the way in which Wordsworth both idealises and subjects the female body (London)
3. the role of Dorothy Wordsworth (Ww's sister) and that of Dorothy's journals in Wordsworth's life and poetry. Dorothy's voice is silenced, but, at the same time, used and abused by the male poet and by male poetry.

THE RISE OF ENGLISH

Literature: new concept, emerges in the 18th c (before: everything related to letters and books)

English: new discipline, emerges in the last decades of the 19th century, established as a subject after Word War I.

Beginnings (not yet “literature”!):

RHETORIC: originally: the art of persuasion (today, we tend to see it as a characteristic of poetry or literature in general -> cf: Dorothy Ww’s Journal, or Ww’s “I wandered lonely”)

Gorgias’s school of rhetoric in Athens: Gorgias defends the irresistible power of poetic discourse to arouse emotion and thus control the opinions (*doxai*) of the audience. Teaches the strategies of style that effect persuasion—antithesis, alliteration, parallelism, etc—and practices these strategies in his own oratory -> (political, social) use value

Plato (427-347 BC): rejects rhetoric as the enemy of truth + it has such a strong hold on the human mind that it precludes rational thinking -> it is dangerous for the Republic (->banning of the poets from the Republic) [cf. later: populist speakers->fanaticism in French. Rev. – subversive of est. order]

Aristotle (384-322 BC): *Rhetoric:* authorises rhetoric as an art in its own right. It can be used for good or bad purposes; it can cause great benefits as well as great harms.

[Aristotle’s *Poetics* – concerned with drama - is *not* yet an analysis of “literature” – poetry is different from history in its focus on the general and the potential rather than the particular and the actual, yet, it is very much embedded in other kinds of discourses. “Aesthetics” (as the study of the beautiful, as the philosophy of art) is *not* yet considered to be a separate discipline of philosophy.!]

Quintilian: *Institutio Oratoria* Cicero: *De Inventione, De Oratore*

Middle Ages: rhetorics taught at universities – the study of persuasion (the production of arguments “invention”, and the presentation of arguments “dispositio), through the analysis of verbal schemes and tropes, that is, through rhetorical figures, or figures of speech.(incl. metaphor, metonymy, irony, repetition, intensification, etc.) It forms part of the *trivium*, together with logic and grammar. The art of rhetorics not only contains the teaching of language skills, but case-studies for proper and improper human conduct, and examples to virtue to be imitated. So it also has an ethical function.

John Locke: dismissal of rhetorics as an enemy of philosophical truth. (Plato->Locke: rhetorics vs. truth): *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), “On the abuse of Words”

„if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the *art of rhetoric*, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, *wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them.* What and how various they are, will be superfluous here to take notice; the books of rhetoric which abound in the world, will instruct those who want to be informed: only I cannot but observe how little the preservation and improvement of truth and knowledge is the care and concern of mankind; since the arts of fallacy are endowed and preferred. It is evident how much men love to deceive and be deceived, since *rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit*, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality, in me to have said thus much against it. Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.”

rhetorics (figures of speech, such as metaphors, metonymies, similes, etc) are the enemy of truth -> in order to convey truth, we have to use literal, ordinary language.

Digression: deconstruction of rhetorics in post-structuralist literary theory (late 20th c)

Derrida's deconstructive reading (D. reads Locke *as* literature, by focusing on language - as against *what* he says (i.e. metaphors are the enemies of truth), he focuses on the *how*): Locke's language is highly rhetorical: he uses metaphors, such as the metaphor of the tabula rasa (white sheet) to represent the human mind at its birth. He equally uses in the above passage a most prominent simile: eloquence is like the fair sex.

-> D's conclusion: there is no language without metaphors (i.e. without rhetorics) - such words as “reflection”, “revolution”, “to grasp the truth”, “the heart of the matter” are all metaphorical. The processes of metaphor are everywhere “at work” (!) in language.

Metaphors are “woven into” (!) the very “fabric” (!) of language -> all language is inherently metaphorical and figurative, and figures of speech are not just ornaments. <- influenced by Nietzsche

Nietzsche: On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense (1873)

“What is truth?”

“A moving army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms, in short a summa of human relationships that are being poetically and rhetorically sublimated, transposed, and beautified until, after long and repeated use, a people considers them as solid, canonical, and unavoidable. Truths are illusions whose illusionary nature has been forgotten, metaphors that have been used up and have lost their imprint and that now operate as mere metal, no longer as coins.”

Truth is *constituted* by rhetorical figures. Further, these rhetorical figures form an army, so there is something powerful and violent in them. -> “will to power” (cf. later: Foucault)

What do they have to do with truth? Nietzsche argues that the language of Western metaphysics is replete with rhetorical figures: philosophers “grasp” a problem, “bring the truth *to light*”, “enlighten” and “reflect” upon certain things (light usually stands for knowledge and truth.) Also, we tend to anthropomorphise things as if they were similar to us: the leg of the table, the arm of the clock, the heart of the problem or matter, or God itself -> as if we, human beings were the centre of the universe ->the universe becomes a human-centred set of meanings. -> we *constitute* truth with language, and do *not* describe it. -> performative dimension of language. If rhetorical figures are constitutive of the world (they shape it, and endow it with the coherence that it lacks), and they cannot be escaped, then is there any difference between “literary” (rhetorical) and “ordinary” (or philosophical) language?

Nietzsche: human-centeredness, the subjective interpretation of the world is not truth but an illusion. Yet this is an illusion the illusionary nature of which has been forgotten – we use metaphors and anthropomorphisms without being aware of it, and we do not know that the illusion they give of order and coherence is a lie. Yet, there is no other way: 1.) it is impossible to devise a language that would be devoid of rhetorical figures. 2.) language inescapably constitutes the reality around us.

-> as opposed to Locke, Nietzsche argues that there is no opposition, no difference between philosophical language that is supposed to convey the truth on the one hand, and literary language, or rhetorics that Locke dismisses as lie on the other. All language, even the language of philosophy is metaphorical, and is *constitutive* (rather than descriptive) of truth.

-> influence on deconstruction: there is a gap between “reality” and “language”-> language constitutes truth and there is no way to “grasp” or “express” “reality”. I.e. language precedes reality.

Paul Ricoeur: The Rule of Metaphor (1975): inherent metaphoricity of language + metaphors redescribe and reshape reality, they create new insights and new meanings-> a happy thing!

THE RISE OF ENGLISH AS A UNIVERSITY SUBJECT:

England: 18th c.: emergence of “literature”

1. Scotland: New Rhetoric – revival of rhetorics: Hugh Blair: *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) at the University of Edinburgh. Advocates the study of rhetoric, and lays down the rules of good style, eloquence and public speaking as a resource for social success. Method: rhetorical analyses of written texts (Classical Greek and Latin authors, Milton, Sidney, Shakespeare, French Classic Tragedy, Robinson Crusoe, Tom Jones, etc.). Resembles today’s “English for Specific Purposes”.

e.g.: “Critical examination of the Style of Mr Addison in No. 411 of the Spectator”:

“Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses’. This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. [he goes on to describe the style]... In this manner we should always set out. A first sentence should seldom be long, and never an intricate one.”

2. Non-academic traditions of criticism:

- a.) Poetic advice to young authors (e.g. Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*)
- b.) Journalism, periodical essays: to form the taste of the “common reader” through appreciation, commentary and evaluation. (e.g. 18th c. Addison’s and Steele’s periodical essays in *The Spectator*) -> emergence of public criticism (later, 19th c: Coleridge, Hazlitt, Matthew Arnold)
- c.) First attempts at canon formation (e.g. Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), Thomas Warton’s *The History of English Poetry* - three centuries of English poetry put into a continuous narrative for the first time.)

The Rise of Aesthetics: (as opposed to rhetorics)

Germany: 18th c. rise of aesthetics as a *separate* branch of philosophy.

Immanuel Kant: epistemology – aesthetics – ethics (thoroughly separated) *Critique of Judgment*

(1790): on the ways in which we judge the beautiful, i.e. the (mental) possibility conditions of judging the beautiful - aesthetics [1787: *Critique of Pure Reason* – the true - epistemology; 1788: *Critique of Practical Reason* – the good – ethics]

-“aesthetic judgement” is always *disinterested*

Beauty is what pleases without interest (i.e. without moral or sensual interest (desire), and without any epistemological purpose, i.e. truth)

e.g. a horse. when I aesthetically judge a horse, I do *not* ask what it is good for (its use value), *nor* do I ask whether I like it (sensual interest), *nor* whether it is a morally good or bad horse (moral interest). I only ask whether it is beautiful or not. Every object can be judged in many different ways (such as: is this representation of the horse true to reality? or is it morally good?), but aesthetic judgement is different from all other kinds of judgements: it cannot be subsumed under any abstract concept. E.g. Hamlet is exemplary, but we cannot determine he is the example of “what”.

- aesthetic judgement is always subjective (it does not reside in the object, but in the beholder – i.e. the horse can be judged in many different way, but it’s up to me how I judge it, if I judge it aesthetically, or not).

- Sensus Communis: although aesthetic judgements are subjective, they have *universal validity*.

- aesthetic judgement is always autonomous (i.e. disinterested – see: above)

-> Later (!): *autonomy of the work of art* itself (Kant does not speak much about art, he still speaks about the way we make aesthetic judgment)

-> Art (incl. literature) ceases to have an obvious function, its practice and enjoyment is an end in itself, removed from any social purpose. “Art” starts to be seen as something separate from society.

Previously, people wrote poems, produced plays or painted paintings for a number of purposes (money, fame, persuasion, entertainment, etc). Literature had basically a social function. Now, these concrete, historically variable pieces are put under the label “art” and the experience of them was called “aesthetic experience”. Beauty is seen as an unchanging, transcendental feature of certain pieces labelled with the term aesthetic.

Friedrich von Schiller: *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795): art is the domain of the freedom of the imagination, and offers us a solace as against the wrongs of the real world. Art reconciles the antagonisms between sense and intellect, nature and reason. The *Letters* open with a political analysis of contemporary society and in particular of the French Revolution and its failure to implement universal freedom. Since human beings cannot rise above the fetters of their time without education, and since the *means of education can be art only*, he conceives of art as a vehicle, one that over time will *improve humankind* and set the individual free from the constraints and excesses of either pure nature or pure mind. The function of art must be to educate and elevate the human race toward this ideal, if unattainable, position, through aesthetic experience.

19th c. England: Romantic period – poetry is no more a simple verse form: creativity, imagination, vision, transcendence, ideal (as against utilitarian ideology of industrialism), poet = genius (above

ordinary people). The literary work comes to be seen as a mysterious, transcendental organic unity, in contrast to the fragmented individualism of the capitalist marketplace. Literature is seen as a realm separate from the everyday world, yet, it still has the capacity to transform society, to pave the way for the ideal. Cf: Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (1819): the mission of poetry is "the partial apprehension of the invisible world" and poets are the "unacknowledged legislators of the [real] world."

However: literature or aesthetics are *not* yet subjects taught at universities. ->

19th c. universities:

1.) rhetorics (cf: Hugh Blair above)

2.) philology - originates from Germany: the evolution of languages, historical study of the development of English language, phonetics, dialectology, comparative mythology, ethnology (e.g. Causabaum in *Middlemarch*)

1887: Henry Nettleship (Professor of Classics at the University of Oxford): *The Study of Modern Languages at the University of Oxford*: the study of English literature (-) cannot equal the study of the classics (+), only the historical study of the development of the English language is rigorous enough as a subject in its own right. -> 1893: first degree course in English at the University of Oxford: subjects like German, Old English, and the history of the language. Poetry is merely a source of examples for rhetorical figures, or of how English was used in Shakespeare's time, and novels are not worthy of study. Most of the students are women, which fulfils the idea that English is for the "less able", who are unable to cope with the great works of classical civilisation.

Introduction of English (literature) as a discipline in its own right: In India

1835: English Education Act – East India Company: officially makes English the medium of instruction in Indian education, and requires the study of English literature

English has a *civilising mission* (religion failed, Indians could not be converted to Christianity)–

English Literature is taught to the Indian population as a mould of the English way of life, morals, taste

- > training of good and faithful company servants, who consent to their own oppression (cf. later:

Gramsci) (and today: Indians are still the best cricketers)

Victorian period England: English lit. (as literature) is *not yet a university discipline*, but a new concept emerges that paves the way for its 20th c. emergence as a university subject: culture/cultivation (!)

S. T. Coleridge (*On the Constitution of the Church and State* 1829): [C]ivilisation is itself but a mixed good, if not far more a corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished can more fitly be called a varnished than a polished people; where this civilisation is not grounded in *cultivation*: the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our *humanity*.”

Matthew Arnold: from the Preface (1875) to *Culture and Anarchy*: “The whole scope of the essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; *culture* being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world” -> ”culture” replaces religion

“The Study of Poetry” (1880): “More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without *poetry*, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.”

Function of poetry: interpretation of life (epistemological function); consolation: it also makes sense of of a life without guidance (religion). Poetry sustains and guides us in a world governed by science and technology, by money, by personal interests.

“The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1865) Criticism: “a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.”

disinterestedness in Matthew Arnold : culture frees us from personal social or political interests – it offers a truth, a morality that transcends history and politics. It makes us better people – it instructs us how to be a good person, by offering us ahistorical truths. Since it deals with universal human values it does not deal with such historical “trivia” as actual civil wars, the actual oppression of women, actual poverty, actual social problems <- culture is the product of the creative individual (the genius) who elevates himself above temporal and spatial determinations. This view that it is possible for someone,

even for everyone to free him or herself from social and historical determinations is the basis of liberal humanism.

Arnold communicates, in fact, the moral riches of a middle class civilisation, and a reverence for middle-class achievements. Culture becomes a means of social control, since religion starts to fail in this respect (cf: Victorian period as a period of religious doubt, Darwin, etc).

John Churton Collins: *The Study of English Literature* (1891):

“The people need political culture, instruction, that is to say, in what pertains to their relation to the State, to their duties as citizens; and they need also to be impressed sentimentally by having the presentation in legend and history of heroic and patriotic examples brought vividly and attractively before them”

->Literature serves the British imperialist interests

All this can be achieved without the cost and labour of teaching the “people” the Classics. English literature is in their own language, and is conveniently available to them. Since it works through sentiment and emotion, it can fill in the gap left by religion.

English, as an academic subject is first institutionalised not at the Universities, but at the Mechanics Institutes, and in working men’s colleges. It becomes part of adult education, of the education of the working classes. (<- means of social control)

20th c.:

After WW I -> German influence (philology) declines -> England’s victory over Germany means a renewal of national pride, plus the trauma of the war: meaningless massacre. Literature turned into a solace, and an alternative to the nightmare of history. English became not only *a* subject, but *the* supremely civilising subject, the spiritual essence of social formation.

In 1917, a group of lecturers at Cambridge University came together to introduce radical innovations in their university’s mainly philological curriculum.

E.M. W. Tilyard (1889-1962) and I.A. Richards (1893-1979) want to create a subject that would study English literature in its own right, not just a source of examples of how English was used in Shakespeare's time, or as pale imitations of Greek and Latin works. As the intellectual inheritors of Arnold, they believe that literature would restore a sense of humanity to the world, in the face of modernity, of the growth of dehumanising technology and the machine age.

1921: "The Newbolt Report": "literature is not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the Human spirit, in which all should worship."

Lord George Gordon, 1922: "England is sick, and ... English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State"

➔ rise of "Practical Criticism" (see: later)

What did these people consider as "literature"? Which authors? What kinds of works? If literature has indeed a civilising mission, then what kinds of written works are able to fulfil this mission?

Canon: great texts that we should read and admire.

origin: biblical writings established as authorised (Council of Trent, 1546).

18th c.: debates over the worth of particular writers. Joseph Warton (1722-1800): "in the first class, I would place only thee sublime and pathetic poets: Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton"

19th c.: first anthologies of poetry. E.g. *The Golden Treasury of English Verse* (1861) ed. Francis Turner. -> authority to decide which poems should be considered the most valuable.

T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919):

"Tradition ... cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. ... No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets

and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.”

Tradition = canon (present in the mind of the great writer) – challenge to the Romantic idea of originality (-> strong presence of intertextual references in Eliot’s own works)

The tradition (i.e. canon) is “the storehouse of Western values” -> for Eliot: Western values = universal human values

F.R. Leavis: *The Great Tradition* (1948). the “great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad” - “they are significant in terms of that human awareness they promote: awareness of the possibilities of life” they have "a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity "... (a bit too vague)

Harold Bloom: *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973): all writers struggle against the influence of the past. Because a poet must forge an original poetic vision in order to guarantee his survival into posterity, the influence of precursor poets inspires a sense of anxiety in living poets. A small minority of 'strong' poets manage to create original work in spite of the pressure of influence, by trying to repress the strong precursor poet’s influence. -> The history of poetry is a history of poetic rivalry.

Elitist position, favours the Western canon, as well as high culture as against popular culture (<-high culture can save us in the midst of our “present difficulties” – Arnold) - see later: Practical Criticism, New Criticism, beginnings of Deconstruction.

The assumption that Western values are “universal” is challenged with the rise of cultural studies:

CULTURE WARS

Rise of cultural studies: after WW II.

questioning of existing definitions of culture as necessarily high culture. Culture (-) vs. culture (+).

The investigation of all kinds of signifying practices, including popular culture, working class culture, and all forms of social practices. Considers “high culture” (Arnold’s “culture”) as elitist, conservative, ideological, escaping existing social antagonisms.

2 sources:

1. Roland Barthes: *Mythologies* (1957): reading of a range of cultural practices (e.g. professional wrestling, advertising of cars, fashion, drinking of French wine, etc) to show their social implications. (i.e. “connotations”)
2. Raymond Williams: *Culture and Society* (1958) – shows the *historical emergence* of the concept of culture (high culture) as we understand it today (“culture” is not natural and universal, but historical, geographical and class specific). ->Richard Hoggart: founder of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: it seeks to explore popular, working-class culture that had been erased because culture had been identified with high literature.
<- influenced by Marxism: vindicates the right for the “people” to have their own voice and sees culture (high culture, that is) as an oppressive ideological formation that justifies and contributes to the maintenance of the existing social hierarchies.
later: particular interest in identity formations (gender, race, class), and seeks to rewrite the canon to include minorities (gender, race, class). The binary between high and popular culture is seen as an oppressive ideological construct, so it seeks to bring them on the same level of analysis. It is “democratic”, all encompassing (reads Shakespeare with rap music) and interdisciplinary (includes sociology, political studies, etc) -> though much despised by “theorists”, it has left a great impact on the changes affecting “theory” itself.

Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature (1980)

“most of the objections to ... the African novel sound like admonitions from imperialist mother hens to their wayward or outright rebellious captive chickens. They cluck: ‘Be Universal! Be Universal!’ And what they don’t consider universal, they denounce as anthropological, atavistic, autobiographical, sociological, journalistic, topical ephemera, as *not literary*” (Chinweizu, Onwucheka Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike)

-> there is no value-free position outside a culture from which to deliver judgements. Canon is formed by those who are in a position of authority (well educated, upper class, white, European or American men), and this canon is self-perpetuating.

-> texts by female authors, authors of colour, texts belonging to popular culture are not anthologised -> not part of the canon and university curricula -> change in the 80s

<- feminists, people of colour, and from the lower classes start to have the possibility to rise to a position of authority (for instance: the gain right to university education, and, as a result, to university professorships -> rewrite university curricula – the canon – to include those who had been excluded so far)

-> “Culture Wars” at universities (particularly, U.S.)

Cultural Studies: works written by women or by people of colour or by any member of a marginal or dispossessed group have to be studied, just because they raise important questions of identity. (E.g.: what is it like to be a woman, what is it like to be a person of colour, etc.?) -> strong political agenda

Theory: C. S. approach, in itself, fails to meet the criteria for being “canonised”, i.e. to represent “aesthetic” or “literary” value (as opposed to works by Shakespeare or Wordsworth, etc). E.g. Derek Attridge’s criteria for literary “value” – politically neutral.

-> What to include in university curricula? Shakespeare? Milton? Harry Potter? Toni Morrison? (Is “aesthetic” value enough? Is “political”/“representative” value enough?)

However: “theory”, from the 90s, starts to incorporate a political and ethical agenda – focus on the “singularity” of (“good”!) works staging marginal situations (Attridge himself writes a book entitled: *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* – Coetzee is a South African writer, his books often stage the effects of colonisation. Derrida, having re-read Locke and Plato in the 70s and 80s, starts to engage with the contemporary problems of democracy, immigration, terrorism, etc. from the 1990s.)

PRACTICAL CRITICISM

Matthew Arnold: "The Study of Poetry" (1880): "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry."

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WHAT to study (canon) -> HOW to study English Lit.:

I.A. Richards (1893-1979) and F.R. Leavis (1895-1979) wanted to create a subject that would study English literature in its own right, not just a source of examples of how English was used in Shakespeare's time, or as pale imitations of Greek and Latin works. As the intellectual inheritors of Arnold, they believed that literature would restore a sense of humanity to the world, in the face of modernity, the growth of dehumanising technology and the machine age.

I.A Richards (1893-1979): *Practical Criticism* (1924): literary analysis has to achieve the precision of *science* (self-legitimation of English as university discipline) + "practical": morally elevating, has social utility + applied to specific works.

Influence of Matthew Arnold, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

≤-S.T. Coleridge: discussion of Shakespeare's poetry in *Biographia Literaria* (1817!).

"In the application of these principles to purposes of *practical criticism* as employed in the appraisal of works more or less imperfect, I have endeavoured to discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power." -> "power for reducing multitude into unity of effect".

-> work of art: work of a genius -> organic unity: nothing can be added or withdrawn (each part contributes to the perfection of the whole), transcends historical time and geographical place

Poetry “reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order.” -> reconciliation of opposites in a harmonious, ideal order. even discordant qualities.

->I.A. Richards: the poem has an intrinsic artistic worth (independent from any context, incl. the author’s biography) -> “close-reading”: an “objective” way of reading literary texts.

experiment: R. withholds all extra-textual information, and ask his students to interpret the poems themselves -> paying attention only to the text’s language

F. R. Leavis

editor of *Scrutiny* (1932-1953): conservative journal of literary criticism, combines literature + morality
The Great Tradition (1948): "The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad." -> canon of “great writers”: they have "a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity" (reaction to WWII, fascism, and communism)

Education and the University (1943); *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (1969): the university has to become a centre of consciousness for society and counter the "blind drive onward of material and mechanical development." His student, Boris Ford launches the *Pelican Guide to English Literature* (bearing strong marks of Leavis’s critical methods).

Key ideas:

1. The study of literature has a *civilising* mission to humanise people and provide values which, in the modern world, can’t be obtained elsewhere.
2. Criticism should make an *objective* judgement.
3. At the same time, the reader must demonstrate *sensibility* to the text, which happens *naturally*.
4. Close reading involves the intense scrutiny of a piece of prose or poetry, concentrating on the words on the page, and disregarding the work’s context. <- The literary text has an intrinsic artistic worth, transcending all particularities of time and space.
5. There is a canon of authoritative list of great works of literature that everyone with sensibility should study and admire.

Critical points:

1. “civilising”: a process of forcing people into a fixed, ideal pattern of “Englishness”

2. “objective”: no interpretation can be objective, because no interpretation happens in a vacuum. (we all have presuppositions coming from our own context + from the ways in which we were educated to read lit.) + the experiment, in order to be scientific, should be repeatable, yet, interpretations always differ from one another.
3. “sensitivity”, “natural response”: there is no such thing (cf. above) – if it existed, then why was there a need to *teach* literature?
5. “canon”: judgements of worth cannot be neutral and disinterested (cf. how a piece becomes canonised as “great”? The process of canonisation is historical and geographical (i.e. not “natural”), it does not happen in a vacuum, there are always vested interests, cultural elite, reviewers, professors in power position, etc.)
6. “intrinsic value”: the judgement of intrinsic worth depends, in fact, on an external context, on the time- and space-specific criteria of those who make the value judgement.

American New Criticism

John Crowe Ransom *The New Criticism* (1941)

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren: *Understanding Poetry* (four different editions between 1938 and 1976): becomes a textbook for undergraduate university students.

William Empson: *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), Cleanth Brooks: *The Well-Wrought-Urn* (1949)

W.K. Wimsatt: *The Verbal Icon* (1954)

Poem: “an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation” -> organic unity -> more emphasis on form

1. Autonomy of the literary text, i.e. the text is a “verbal icon.”, the poem is a “well-wrought urn”. Clear-cut boundary between text and context, the reader needs to focus on the system of relationships that are operating within the text. Literature must be understood “in itself”
2. Literary artefact: primarily a system of language. In it language operates differently than it does elsewhere, it is governed by a different set of rules.
3. heresy of paraphrase: It is impossible to paraphrase a poem, “a poem should not mean but be”. It is never what a poem *says* which matters, but what it *is*.
4. Intentional fallacy: when readers evoke what the author “meant”. What the author intended is never relevant to the literary work, and it is also unavailable. : “Never trust the artist, trust the tale” (D.H. Lawrence) <- to invoke the intention of the author is to threaten the integrity of the literary text.
5. Affective fallacy: when readers convey their own emotional responses to the text. One has to concentrate solely on the work the way in which it brings the diversity of experience into unity. It is not the author that does this, but rather a principle inherent in any good artwork..

Practical Criticism and New Criticism: focus on the *meaning*, how *form* contributes to meaning. For them, meaning is always one, and one that can be deciphered. Literature offers a critique of the superficial, rationalised and commercialised world we live in. Belief in liberal humanism: the human subject is an autonomous individual, free from social and historical determinations, able to make autonomous choices, master of its own life and actions. Endowed with an agency (can act according to his or her own free will)

RUSSIAN FORMALISM: 1916 – 29: Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOYAZ (the Society for the Study of Poetic Language) in St. Petersburg.

Roman Jakobson: “The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality but literariness i.e. that which makes of a given work a work of literature.” Concerned with the *how* of literature rather than the *what*.

"literariness" for Russian Formalists:

Viktor Shklovsky: "defamiliarization" of automated perceptions, “defamiliarization” of objects, as if we saw them for the first time - it makes “the stone stony”.

Cf. again Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* on the plan of composing *Lyrical Ballads* with Wordsworth:

“Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.” (1817)

Contrast between poetic and practical language

Practical language: used to accomplish a goal

Poetic language: foregrounds itself, draws attention to itself: foregrounding - defamiliarises language use as well, by laying bare the device (i.e. language). Poetic language emphasises itself as a medium over the message it contains, foregrounds itself as language.

“The distinctive feature of poetry lies in the fact that a word is perceived as a word and not merely a proxy for the denoted object or an outburst of an emotion, that words and their arrangement, their meaning, their outward and inward form acquire weight and value of their own” (Jakobson)

Poetic function of language: “The focus is on the message for its own sake”

Shklovski: *Theory of Prose* (1925, translated in 1990) – poetics of fiction

first one to distinguish between story (fabula): the chronological order of events, and plot (sjuzet): the way in which they are presented in the novel. *Plot prevents us from seeing things the way they really are (defamiliarisation): the story is made “strange” and draws attention to its own artificiality.* E.g. Sterne: *Tristram Shandy* - the first novel to speak about its own construction, to draw attention to its own artificiality as a fictional construct.

Vladimir Propp: *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928)

Poetics of fiction. Focus on the characters possible *functions* in the *plot*.

Function: “an act of a character defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action” -> all fairy tales are structurally homogeneous.

the number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited (Propp enlists 32 functions)

These are distributed among 7 spheres of action:

1. the villain
2. the donor (the provider)
3. the helper
4. the princess (the sought-for person) and her father
5. the dispatcher
6. the hero
7. the false hero

Preoccupation of Russian formalists: *how* literature is put together - structure (do not care for meaning)

[End of 19th c: scepticism, questioning of human agency, of human free-will, and the tenets of liberal humanism:

Nietzsche (cf: above): truth constructed by language (truth is a “moving army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms...”) – language precedes and constructs “reality”, “truth” -> linguistic determinism. [later: -> Structuralism, Feminism, New-Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Postcolonialism]

Marx: social, historical, geographical and economic factors determine who we are and what we think (ideology). Our thinking, our life, our history is driven by factors (economy, class struggle) that are beyond our control. -> historical, economic determinism [later: -> Feminism, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Postcolonialism]

Freud: “discovery” of the unconscious -> the subject is not free, we are determined by unconscious drives that are beyond our control -> psychological determinism [later: ->Psychoanalytic Criticism, Feminism, Postcolonialism]]

Russian Formalism -> Structuralism

STRUCTURALISM

Linguistic determinism :

Ferdinand de Saussure: *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916, *Course in General Linguistics*, 1959)

1. distinction between *langue* (competence) and *parole* (performance)
2. arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified: “cat”, “macska” refer to the same concept → 1. it is not reality that determines the sign, but a *convention*. Each language divides up the world in a particular way and differently, constructing different meaningful categories and concepts
before Saussure: reality/referent -> language

Saussure: signifier -> signified => sign i.e. language does not touch the real world, but is constitutive of reality, it does not mirror reality, but structures it and makes it meaningful. cf. The colour spectrum (“in reality” colours form a continuum, yet, the concept of specific colours in language divide and constitute the world arbitrarily.) -> Language is inherently performative, rather than constative. Signs have no referent, only a referential function.

3. Language is a system of signs, which is itself a *system of differences*: no item has significance in itself, but derives its significance entirely from its *relationship* with other signs. Every item is defined by what it is not. (On the phonetic as well as on the semantic level. E.g. phonetics - “cat” is cat, because it is not “rat” -> the difference between c and r is significant, and significant only because this difference is able to generate meaning. Semantics – “hot” is “hot” because it is not “cold”) -> None of the elements in language has a meaning in itself: “Language is a system of inter-dependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others” “The most precise characteristic [of each term] is in being what the others are not” (Saussure)-> our thinking is determined by *hierarchical binary oppositions*: presence (+) / absence (-); male (+) / female(-); light (+) / darkness (-); white (+) / black (-); etc. -> one term is always *privileged* (+). Yet, this privilege (value attribution) is not based on actual facts -> ideology.

4. “It is [. . .] possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. [. . .] We shall call it semiology. [. . .] Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be

assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.”→Just as there is a grammar of language, a grammar of other sign systems (culture, myth, literature) is also possible.

- we are all structuralists, in some sense: e.g. when we analyse a poem, we always start with the *binary oppositions* that *structure* the poem (and then!! look at the ways in which the poem complicates or overwrites these oppositions):

William Wordsworth: A Slumber did my Spirit Seal

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of early years.

No motion has she now, no force:
She neither hears nor sees:
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

What binary oppositions structure this poem? How does the poem complicate the binary oppositions that it set out?

(cf: life/death; past/present; sleeping/being conscious; “thing” as a young girl/”thing” as an object; temporality/ eternity; mind/nature, etc.)

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908 - 2009): structuralist anthropologist : analogy between language systems and social systems: *Tristes tropiques* (1955), *Anthropologie structurale* (1958, *Structural Anthropology*), *La Pensée sauvage* (1962, *The Savage Mind*, 1966), *Mythologiques I-IV* *Introduction to the Science of Mythology* (1964-81)

“the error of traditional anthropology, like that of traditional linguistics, was to consider the terms and not the relations between the terms”

the anthropologist must deal not with objectively observed facts of “nature” but with those structures that the human mind (“culture”) imposed on it.

“Of course, the biological family is ubiquitous in human society. But what confers upon kinship its socio-cultural character is not what it retains from nature, but, rather the essential way it differs from nature. ... Kinship systems, marriage rules, and descent groups constitute a co-ordinated whole, the function of which is to insure the permanency of the social group ... They may be considered as the blueprint of mechanisms which ‘pumps’ women out of their consanguineous families to redistribute them in affinal groups, the result of this process being to create new consanguineous groups, and so on.”

NARRATOLOGY

Narratology (intrinsic, formalist approach) – focus on the text itself: the novel is an autonomous whole, the characters are nothing but words on the page, and what can be known about them emerges from the printed pages of the book.

Influence of Russian Formalism and Structuralism, esp. Gérard Genette (1930—)

There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger.
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet
And so are you.

Narrative fiction: succession of fictional events.

Story: what is told. Chronological order of the events. Can be transformed in another medium, such as film, opera, etc. [film version of *Pride and Prejudice*]

Discourse: how it is told. The events as they are actually presented in the book. (Incl. flashbacks or flash forwards, digressions, repetitions, narrative style) [*Pride and Prejudice* – including Austen's irony, etc]

Arrangements: chapters, volumes, sections

Paratexts: "More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold.": "a fringe of the printed text which in reality *controls one's whole reading of the text*". (Genette)

1. Publisher's apparatus: cover (hardcover or paperback), the placement of the title, ISBN codes. First edition vs. subsequent editions. (Did the book appear in series? What does this mean? e.g. Dickens. Was there sth omitted? Or included more? e.g. *Clockwork Orange*)

Textual editing: the discipline that expresses interest in the publication history of a book.

2. the author's name, the title, preface or introduction, epigraph, motto, illustrations, etc.
(everything that does not belong to the fictional world)

Narrative situation:

real author -//- implied author – narrator – narrate – implied reader -//- real reader

Real author: the actual historical person who wrote the text. (Has a psychological depth, a personal history - born in X, died in Y)

Implied author: the version of the author emerging from a particular text. (The one who uses certain narrative devices, a certain style, etc. e.g. the Dickens of *David Copperfield*)

Narrator: the entity from which the discourse emanates, the one who is telling the story (even if it is third person narration). E.g. the “We” of Agota Kristof’s *The Notebook*, the “I” of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*

Narrate: to whom the narrator tells his or her discourse.

Implied reader: the profile of readerly traits that seem to be assumed by the text.

Real reader: the one that actually reads the narrative. (When we analyse reader response, or the reception of a work, we generally deal with the response of real readers)

Narrative Voice

Extradiegetic narrator: outside the story

Intradiegetic narrator: inside the story, generally characters

Heterodiegetic narrator: who does not take part in the story (can be intradiegetic or extradiegetic)

Homodiegetic narrator: who takes part in the story

First person narration: when the narrator refers to himself or herself as I, and takes part in the story. (often unreliable)

1. When the narrator is also the central character:

a.) Autobiographies (both real and fictional): when a narrator tells about his or her past experiences.

b.) when the narrator is the central character but focuses on the actions of others ->

limited or *restricted* narration (s/he tells what s/he can possibly know).

2. When the narrator participates in the story but is not the central character. ->

limited/restricted.

Third person narration:

The narrator is either extradiegetic (outside the story world) or intradiegetic (inside the story world) types:

1. limited versus omniscient narrator

a.) limited third person narration: the narrator filters the events through the consciousness of a central character: the *focaliser*. (e.g. Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*) The perspective of the narrator is called *focalisation*.

b.) omniscient third person narration: narrator exists outside the story world and offers details about a host of characters, or a panoramic descriptions of events. Omniscient narrators can also use focalisers.

Narrator and focalizer may be one and the same person, but they may also be different: the omniscient narrator's vision or perspective may coincide with that of a character, who will then be focalizer; the object of attention will be the focalized, while the speaking voice will firmly belong to the narrator.

2. overt versus covert narrators

a.) overt narrator: when the narrator announces his or her presence through self-reference. (Even when they refer to themselves as I, they are not to be confused with first person narration!)

b.) covert narrator: his or her presence seems to be unnoticeable.

Second person narration: refers to the protagonist as "you". (*If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, 1979) by Italo Calvino.)

First person plural narration: "we" (*The Notebook*, 1986, Agota Kristof)

One narrator or many narrators.

Narrative levels

Primary narrative level: it acts as a frame in which the narrator embeds the story (e.g.

Canterbury Tales): nested narrative:

- embedded tales (*Wuthering Heights*, *Frankenstein*, *Heart of Darkness*);
- mise-en-abyme (when a short narrative reflects in miniature what happens in a large scale in the narrative) e.g. André Gide: *Le faux Moneyeurs*, or the mouse trap in Hamlet (even though it is, of course, a drama).

Character narration: any character in a story can be used as a secondary narrator for a nested or embedded narration. These characters generally have their own perspectives/points of views. -> secondary narrator – introduces a new narrative level.

Metalepsis or frame-breaking: when the narrator violates the existing frame of the narrative. (e.g. the extradiegetic narrator enters into his or her own story world.) -> generally happens in

metafiction: when the novel draws attention to its own fictionality (e.g. *Vanity Fair*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*).

Reliable vs. unreliable narrator:

unreliable narrator: when the norms of the implied author are different from that of the narrator.

Suspect: overt narrators, first person narrators, especially if the narrator is in a psychological state that is out of the ordinary (grief, complexes, madness, etc). e.g. the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*

Characters: *not* real beings, constituted by words on the page. (*no* life or psyche outside the story world)

1. Complexity:

Flat characters: do not develop in the course of action, types.

Round characters: do develop in the course of action and have more than one quality.

Direct definition vs. indirect presentation

Direct definition: adjectives. (defines both the character and the one who makes the definition! Interesting cases: when the narrator makes misleading direct characterisations e.g. *The Portrait of a Lady*, or when characters define/present each other directly – can we take these for granted?)

Indirect presentation of a character: through action, appearance, environment (social, physical), name, speech

speech:

- *Quoted or direct speech*:

He laid down his bundle and thought of his misfortune. "And just what pleasure have I found, since I came into this world?" he asked.

- *Reported or indirect speech*:

He laid down his bundle and thought of his misfortune. He asked himself what pleasure he had found since he came into the world.

- *Free indirect speech*:

External characterisation vs. internal characterisation

Do we have access to a certain character's interiority? Which interiorities are presented and which interiorities are not presented?

3 modes of representing the consciousness (inner) of fictional characters:

1. *Psycho-narration*: the narrator explains what a character thinks or feels. E.g: Mary, a working mother, hated Neal, because she was trying to shut down the day care centre.
2. *Free indirect discourse/speech* or *narrated monologue* (from 19th c, esp. Jane Austen).
“Mr. Collins was eloquent in her praise. The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner, and with a most important aspect he protested that *he had never in his life witnessed such behaviour in a person of rank — such affability and condescension as he had himself experienced from Lady Catherine.*” (14th ch. of *Pride and Prejudice*)
Keeps the character’s tone and style, but transforms first into third person, and also keeps the tense of the narration. Double voiced: character + narrator)
3. *Interior monologue* or *stream of consciousness* – Joyce, Woolf, etc. (most importantly: Proust)

Plot: Narrative: succession of events.

Discourse: the words of the narrative in the order in which they appear in the text. (The queen died, and before that, the king died.)

Story: the chronological order of events as they are reconstructed in the reader’s mind. (The king died, and then the queen died.)

[Plot: the chronological order of the events as they are reconstructed in the reader’s mind. (The king died and then the queen died of grief.)]

Timing

Story time vs. discourse time

Story time: the time that actually transpires within the imaginary world of the text. e.g. *Mrs Dalloway*, or *Ulysses*: one single day.

Discourse time: the amount of textual space devoted to the representation of narrative contents. e.g. *Mrs Dalloway* or *Ulysses*: a whole book.

Duration or speed: relationship between story time and discourse time.

Mimesis (showing) - dialogue or scene (story = discourse)

Expansion (long discourse, short story).

Diegesis (telling) – summary (long story, short discourse)

Gap or ellipsis (story time without discourse time)

Order and disorder:

Question: do the events of the story get narrated in the order they occur or not?

Order:

Ulterior narration: events are related after they happen, use of past tense

Anterior narration: events are narrated before they happen, future or conditional tenses.

Simultaneous narration: story is told as the events unfold, present tense (though improbable)

Intermittent narration: relates events that happen between moments of writing (epistolary novels, and diary forms)

Disorder:

1.) analepsis/flashback

2.) prolepsis/ anticipation/ flashforward

Narrative identity: Ricoeur: *Time and Narrative* (1983)

DECONSTRUCTION

Structuralism

Signs: Signifier

Signified

signifier->signified - referential function of language

Deconstruction: structuralism does not examine the consequences of the gap between language and world.

1. language cannot but conjure up a reality – reality is absent – we are in a world of absences – our shared “linguistic predicament”
2. There is no point of view, which is outside language. We are born into a world of language that determines us

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
This river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

“I crossed the Square (an empty Area then!)
Of the Carousel, where so late had lain
The Dead, upon the Dying heaped; and gazed
On this and other Spots, as doth a Man
Upon a Volume whose contents he knows

Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read
[...]
High was my Room and lonely
..... I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month.
[...]
And in this way I wrought upon myself
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole City, "Sleep no more."
[...]
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of the Night,
Defenceless as a wood where Tygers roam."

Jacques Derrida (1930- 2004):

The language that determines the world and us is a system of differences -> meanings are products of differences, each sign gets its meaning because of its difference from every other sign -> *there is nothing outside the text* -> we cannot have access to any kind of "reality" behind language that could give us the "true" meaning (all our knowledge is mediated through texts).

1. writing is orphaned – absence of the author
2. Différance: meaning emerges from its special and temporal difference from other signs -> meaning is always *deferred*: it is *contaminated by traces* of what it is not, and of traces of its context (past, present, future) -> meaning is never there, it is never "present" (it is overdetermined, saturated) -> there is no "true" meaning. Language immediately destroys the meaning it seems to create.
3. deconstruction of the hierarchical binary opposition between speech and writing (i.e. showing that the non-privileged term, i.e. writing, is, in fact, the more important, and that everything is, in fact, "writing"):
 - a.) writing (marked by absence) seems to be a supplement to speech (presence).
However: if speech has to be supplemented, it is already marked by an absence to be supplemented (cf: D's analysis of Rousseau's *Confessions*) -> there is an

absence, a lack, within speech -> -> there is *always already* a trace of absence in presence, and there is *always already* a trace of writing in speech

-> presence is not privileged over absence + speech is not privileged over writing

- b.) speech seems to be there, seems to be present, whereas writing is marked by absence -> what makes writing understandable in the absence of both the speaker and the addressee is the iterability (repeatability) of each sign, i.e. even if we do not know the speaker's intention, we understand his or her meaning in one way or another (even if this meaning is ambiguous), because each sign is the repetition of already existing signs whose meaning has already been determined by convention, the context, etc.

However: speech is also understandable because its signs are the repetition of already existing signs (i.e. there is no sign system that would be "private", private language would not be understandable, it would not be a sign system at all) -> speech could also be understood in the potential absence of the speaker -> speech is not predicated upon presence either -> no essential difference between speech and writing, speech is *always already* writing, i.e. its understandability is predicated upon the iterability of its signs (see also: SEC)

- c.) If speech is presence, and writing is a mere supplement to/representation of speech, then writing is a parasite that threatens the purity of speech -> it makes speech ("presence", "truth") ambiguous.

However (via an analysis of Plato): writing both destroys "truth"/memory (aletheia, anamnesis) and serves it -> writing is a "*pharmakon*": both remedy and poison <-

1. poison: a.) writing is ambiguous, can be interpreted in many different ways, as opposed to speech. b.) we need writing, if we cannot remember, but true remembrance is always based on interiorisation, and on our capacity to remember -> writing (as an exterior supplement) destroys "true" memory.
2. remedy: writing helps memory, we were not able to remember without writing + speech can be just as ambiguous as writing, because both are based on the iterability of the sign

->emphasis on ambiguity, on undecidability:

e.g. a.). In an analysis of Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*, which was written after the poem entitled *Hyperion* - Paul de Man (cf. later) asks the question: is *Hyperion* in Keats's title, *The Fall of Hyperion*, refers back to the previous poem (in which case the title means that the

previous poem has fallen, and the new one is triumphant), or it refers to the figure/character of Hyperion in the poem itself? According to de Man, this question is *undecidable*.

e.g. b.). In an analysis of Yeats's poem "Among School Children", de Man asks the question: is the last line of the poem a rhetorical question, or a true question?

O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

According to de Man, this question is *undecidable*. Language subverts all fixed meanings that it creates.

3. deconstruction of all kinds of hierarchical binary oppositions that constitute our (Western) Logocentric thinking (i.e. not only the opposition of speech and writing):

a.) between literal and metaphorical -> the literal is *always already* metaphorical (see: Derrida's and de Man's analysis of John Locke earlier).

b.) between successful and unsuccessful performatives – the possibility conditions of a successful performative coincide with the characteristics of the non-successful ones (i.e. citationability, iterability/repeatability) -> what makes a performative successful are, in fact, the characteristics of the non-successful ones. (see: Derrida's analysis of J.L. Austin in SEC)

c.) etc, etc.

->no Author, no authority, no presence, no centre, no origin, no essence, no fixed meaning, because the working of language subverts all fixities and definites -> this becomes a metaphysical and ontological position -> critique of Logocentrism (Logos: order, origin, the spoken word) -> Nihilism?

No!: deconstruction has strong political and ethical stakes

e.g. language is a political force: the referential function of language does not touch the real world, but affects it, it constitutes an imposition upon reality -> deconstruction of the opposition between constative and performative: what camouflages itself as constative is always already performative -> the preformative power/the performative *violence* of all utterances -> language is a political force that shapes reality, e.g. it is the imposition of the

general upon the particular and the singular. (e.g. a.) The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” during the French. Rev: “all men *are* equal” – seems to be constative, but is, in fact, performative – men *become* equal bc. of the declaration.. b.) “Blacks *are* inferior to whites” – seems to be constative, but is, in fact, performative – blacks *become* inferior bc. of the declaration)

ethics: emphasis upon *singularity*.

Undecidability of all writing – reading is an ethical act: attentiveness to the “singularity” of the text, without any reassuring “meaning”, or totalising synthesis -> Politics/ethics: attentiveness to the singularity of a given situation, no recipe, no certain ground to fall back on, no method, no rule (in undecidable situations, you have to make a choice, after all, but this choice cannot be governed by any pre-given rule or authority). -> Praxis must be invented and reinvented again and again according the singular context. Key words: responsibility (i.e. to faithfully respond to a given situation). Justice (as against blind authority). – but all in all: see later.

Paul de Man: (1919-1983) – first and foremost a Romanticist

some key ideas:

gap between reality and language -> language creates reality

e.g. autobiography: writing *creates* a (coherent, meaningful) life, rather than being created by one’s (chaotic) life

-> “Literature is fiction not because it somehow refuses to acknowledge ‘reality’, but because it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world. It is therefore not *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language.”

(“Resistance to Theory”, 1986. 11.) -> take literature as a synonym for language in general!

-> “What we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenism.” (Ibid.): there is a difference between referent (natural reality) and the referential function of language (linguistic reality) -> ideology is when we think that the meaning constituted by language is the same as natural reality, when we apply linguistically constructed meanings to the real world (and act accordingly)

Posits “Truth” as an effect of language (cf: Nietzsche), which is *constantly undermined by language itself* ->

“I would hold to the statement that the text deconstructs itself is self-deconstructive rather than being deconstructed by a philosophical intervention” - E.g. Locke: ”all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats [...] Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.” – Locke’s language *deconstructs itself*: it *says* that rhetoric insinuates wrong ideas, that it mislead judgement, and yet, Locke’s language is plenty of metaphors. -> there is a *difference between what the text says and what it does*. (this is a focal point for deconstructionist analyses!)

-> there is no “closure” (definitive, fixed meaning), all attempts at “totalisation” (at establishing a total, all encompassing, definitive structure) are vain.

-> there is a persistent threat of misreading -> no definitive or absolutely true reading is possible (cf. above)

+ “*materiality of the letter*”: can subvert all established meaning, can make all statement ambiguous (cf. “lying” in Westminster Bridge).

READER: HERMENEUTICS, READER RESPONSE THEORIES

Formalism, Structuralism, Early Deconstruction: form and art work are taken for granted as independent from context, elitist (focus on canonical pieces), aims at the objectivity of reading, at close-reading (even if all readings turn out to be misreadings) -> focus on the text. Hermeneutics + reader response – takes the reader into consideration -> focus on the dialogue between text and reader. Part of the German tradition (as opposed to Practical/New Criticism: England/U.S.; Structuralism, Deconstruction: France - > U.S.)

Hermeneutic tradition

1. Hermeneutics: Schleiermacher, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer
2. Reception theory: Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser
3. American Reader-response Criticism: Stanley Fish

Hermeneutics: the art/ principles of interpretation.

Hermeneutics vs. Poetics:

Poetics (formalism, structuralism, deconstruction): how meanings are constructed, how the effect of meaning(s) is achieved.

Hermeneutics: how to arrive at the meaning (as if there was such a thing)

Hermeneutics:

originally a biblical discipline <- the distance between text and reader renders meaning opaque.

“writings can be understood and ought to be expounded principally in four senses.

The first is called the *literal*, and this is the sense that does not go beyond the surface of the letter, as in the fables of the poets.

The next is called the *allegorical*, and this is the one that is hidden beneath the cloak of these fables, and is a truth hidden beneath a beautiful fiction. Thus Ovid says that with his lyre Orpheus tamed wild beasts and made trees and rocks move toward him, which is to say that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts grow tender and humble and moves to his will those who do not devote their lives to knowledge and art; and those who have no rational life whatsoever are almost like stones. ...

The third sense is called *moral*, and this is the sense that teachers should intently seek to discover throughout the scriptures, for their own profit and that of their pupils; as, for example, in the Gospel we may discover that when Christ ascended the mountain to be transfigured, of the twelve Apostles he took with him but three, the moral meaning of which is that in matters of great secrecy we should have few companions.

The fourth sense is called *anagogical*, that is to say, beyond the senses; and this occurs when a scripture is expounded in a spiritual sense which, although it is true also in the literal sense, signifies by means of the things signified a part of the supernal things of eternal glory, as may be seen in the song of the Prophet which says that when the people of Israel went out of Egypt, Judea was made whole and free. For although it is manifestly true according to the letter, that which is spiritually intended is no less true, namely, that when the soul departs from sin it is made whole and free in its power.” (Dante, *Il Convivio* (The Banquet), 1304-07)

Yet: Hermeneutics proper was born out of the Protestant Reformation < -one's relationship with the Bible became personal, no authority (such as the Pope) to tell you what it means

1. Biblical hermeneutics

Translation (such as that of Luther's translation of the Bible) is always an act of interpretation: Coleridge on Luther struggling with the text:

“Methinks I see him sitting, the heroic Student, in his Chamber in the Warterburg, with his midnight Lamp before him ... Below it lies the Hebrew Bible open, on which he gazes his brow pressing on his palm, brooding over some obscure Text, which he desires to make plain to the simple Boor and to the humble Artizan, and to transfer its whole force into their own natural and living Tongue. And he himself does not understand it! Thick darkness lies on the original Text, he counts the letters, he calls up the roots of each separate word, and questions them as the familiar Spirits of an Oracle. In vain ! thick darkness continues to cover it! not a ray of meaning dawns through it. ... Disappointed, despondent, enraged, ceasing to *think*... he sinks, without perceiving it, into a trance of slumber: during which his brain retains its waking energies, excepting that what would have been mere *thoughts* before now (the action and counterweight of his senses and of their impressions being withdrawn) shape and condense

themselves into *things*, into realities! ... All at once he sees the Arch-fiend [i.e. the devil] coming forth on the wall of the room, from the very spot perhaps, on which his eyes had been fixed vacantly during the perplexed moments of his former meditation: the Ink-stand, which he had at the same time been using, becomes associated with it: and in that struggle of rage, ... he *imagines* that he hurls it at the intruder, or not improbably in the first instant of awakening, while yet both his imagination and his eyes are possessed by the dream, he *actually* hurls it” (Coleridge, *The Friend*, 1809.)

2. hermeneutics of law: with the rise of constitutional democracies, it mattered what the law was and how it was to be interpreted – how to interpret the general and how to apply the general to the singular

19th c: Biblical hermeneutics -> literary hermeneutics

No hermeneutics devoted to literature until the eighteenth century. (Critics are concerned with evaluation and rhetorics)

Romanticism: cult of the genius. Poet is like the divine creator, who creates something out of nothing. Literature starts to be interpreted as if it was a sacred text, while the Bible starts to be interpreted as if it was literature.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834):

“understanding *does not* occur as a matter of course”

Hermeneutics should be a *universal* discipline (applicable to the Bible, to the law, and to literature, both ancient and modern)

Interest in the *method* of interpretation (rather than its validity)

19th c: before the linguistic turn (!) - basic assumptions: words mirror the author’s thoughts, meaning is fixed by the author’s intention, the act of interpretation has to reduce the existing gap (!) between reader and author.

How, then, is interpretation to be accomplished?

1. Before interpretation can even begin, the interpreter must acquire a good knowledge of the text's historical context.
2. Interpretation has two sides:
 - a.) *Linguistic or grammatical*: to understand the usage of words and therefore their meaning (historical context: what a word meant at a certain age in history.)

b.) *Psychological*: focuses on the author's psychology. Appeal to authorial psychology to resolve ambiguities at the level of linguistic meaning. It helps to grasp the "essence" as opposed to sheer outward "form". It is a "divinatory" method (i.e. roughly, a method of tentative hypothesis, going beyond available empirical evidence -- from French *deviner*: to guess or conjecture.)

3. Hermeneutic circle (paradox): we cannot truly understand the text's structural and linguistic parts except in the light of the whole, and we can only know the whole as it is expressed in its parts.

"The reader projects before himself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again the latter emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. The working out of this fore-project which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there." (Gadamer)

Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)

- suspends the "natural attitude " of everyday knowing ->focus on what is immanent in consciousness itself. -> "brackets" the object-world, in a process he calls *epoché*, or "reduction"
- consciousness is made up of "intentional acts " correlated to "intentional objects. " -> the phenomenon (the object-as-it-appears to consciousness – noema) is the object-as-it-is-intended. The "intentionality " of consciousness is its directedness toward objects, which it helps to constitute. Consciousness is not a mere receptacle of sensory data about external objects, but has part to play in the act of perception. Objects are always grasped partially and incompletely, in "aspects " that are filled out and synthesized according to the attitudes, interests, and expectations of the perceiver. (Even though I can see only one side of a cube, I know what it is, in its wholeness.) Every perception includes a "horizon" of potentialities that the observer assumes, on the basis of past experiences.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)

For Heidegger, we and our activities are always "in the world", our being is being-in-the-world (we do *not* study our activities by bracketing the world). We are always already determined by the world itself, by tradition, and the context in which we live: historicity, belongingness, situatedness, finitude, temporality. -> *Dasein*

The structure of *Dasein* is understanding or interpretation. Before understanding anything special, I always already interpret something *as* something. This kind of interpretation precedes (!) all acts of consciousness. The first movement of mind is interpretative.

Language: it is in language that understanding happens!

Truth (*aletheia*): the *unconcealment* by which all beings show themselves to be. *No* correspondence theory or truth (i.e. the correspondence between the statement and the real world), but *self-showing*. (Esp. in the work of art: it is in the artwork that truth as unconcealment happens – then truth withdraws itself – only to show itself again).

Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002)

Truth and Method (Wahrheit und Methode, (1960): difference between truth and method. attacks the “method” of what he(!) calls historical method that characterised the German hermeneutic tradition before, that is, he dismisses the belief that one can set aside preconceptions, one’s own historically conditioned point of view, that one can completely enter into the mind of another.

Integrates Heidegger’s historicity of *Dasein*: our being in the world is always determined by tradition, history, culture -> *prejudice*: we cannot approach any work of art, any object without prejudices (<-Heidegger: we always already interpret sth *as* sth). -> prejudice (sth good) = *horizon*

We approach the work of art (the horizon of the past) from the horizon of the present ->interpretation: “*dialogue*” between horizon of the past and horizon of the present -> understanding (always deferred): ideally, the” merging of horizons”. Presupposes some common ground between past and present, a continuity.

Hermeneutic circle: can also be understood as a relationship between the present and the past
2. attacks historicism because it condescends toward the past: makes it a mere object of knowledge, rather than engaging in a dialogue with it.

dialogue: learning from the other, endless questioning - we enter the alien world of the artefact, and, at the same time, draw it in our own realm -> a more complete understanding of ourselves. We open up to receive the work of art that tells us something new about ourselves. At the same time, we open up the work of art itself, which receives new meanings through our questionings.

By placing the emphasis on reception Gadamer paves the way for reception theory.

Reception Theory(*Rezeptionsästhetik*).

E.g. Borges: "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (1939)

The temporal distance separating the repetition from the identical original renders the repetition non-identical, different. (different context of the reception, different horizon of expectation.) – favourite piece of both reception theory and deconstruction

Hans Robert Jauss (1921–97)

Literary history is not the relationship of literary facts, but the chain of the reception of different readers in time.

Reception continually actualises the meaning potential of the work.

Establish the horizon of expectation of the first readership -> reconstitute the question to which the work originally gave an answer, the reasons why it was provocative, original.

E.g. Baudelaire's "Spleen II" I. From Jauss's own horizon: 1. reads the text in a linear way, takes notice of each important element-> 2. interpretative 2d reading: from the perspective of the whole, takes account of the elements he left in suspense. II. Historical reading: 3d reading: reconstructs the original horizon of expectation of the poem and establishes the reasons why it appeared provocative. -->Merging/fusion of horizons is not self evident (as it is with Gadamer), but the result of a long analytical work.

Good works: subvert our expectations and trigger a change of horizons: the reader is exposed to a new experience that requires a shift of horizon. Bad works conform to our expectations, they do not require any kind of shift or movement between horizons.

How to establish the original horizon of expectations?

He examines the public responses to a "great work" by comparing them with the reception of other works popular at the same time + takes account of the list of all those other works that were known by the first readership. Then, he isolates those aesthetic features and "devices " of the text that, because of their novelty, could have a mind- (or "horizon " -) expanding effect on the reader.

Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007)

"blanks " or "gaps,": texts leave great portions unexplained to the reader, such as gaps in the narrative, blanks in descriptions -> this basic indeterminacy (!) of all texts "implies" the reader and begs her participation in the production of meaning throughout the process of reading.

Iser (unlike Jauss) does not analyze actual readings of texts, but proceeds from an ideal, "implied reader." – sufficiently imaginative, sophisticated, and open to the text's challenges.

Reader response criticism – US.

Emerged in the 1970s, in reaction against New Criticism, which reduced accounts of the reader's responses to mere "affective fallacy."

Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr. (1928--)

The Philosophy of Composition (1977): what makes prose more or less readable?

cultural literacy: reading comprehension requires not only formal decoding skills but also wide-ranging background knowledge (cultural literacy). James Joyce is readable for university students, but not for college students.

meaning of a text vs. significance of a text. Significance: the text's meaning for us: -> pushed to its extremes: each reading reflects the reader's own psyche, background, problems s/he is interested in, rather than the text s/he actually interprets.

Stanley Fish (1938--) Milton scholar. He came to Milton by accident. In 1963 — the same year that he started as an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley — the resident Miltonist, C.A. Patrides, received a grant. The chair of the department asked Fish to teach the Milton course, notwithstanding the fact that the young professor "had never — either as an undergraduate or in graduate school — taken a Milton course" (269). The eventual result of that course was *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1967; rpt. 1997).

His [Satan's] Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norvegian Hills to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand
He walked with, to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marble

1. His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norvegian Hills to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral

The size of his spear is to be equal to that of the tallest pine cut and shaped in Norway to become the mast of a ship → Satan's spear is very big, so he is also very great. You have the image of a great spear and a great Satan.

2. His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian Hills to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand

The spear was, in fact, the size of a wand. It was nothing but a wand.
First, you imagine how big his spear was, and then, as you proceed in reading, you have to reconsider your conceptions: the spear turns out to be the size of a wand. You have the image of a miniature Satan, holding a wand

3. His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian Hills to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand
He walked with, to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marble

It turns out that your first conception was right. Satan is really big, because he uses his spear, which is equal to the tallest pine and the big mast, merely as a wand, as a walking stick.

Paradise Lost educates us into realizing that every time we think we grasp the point of a text, the text proves that we are fallen readers, that we have prematurely understood what's there.

Self-Consuming Artifacts (1972), "Interpreting the Variorum" (1976)

It is the reader that brings the text into existence. (I.e. it is not *Paradise Lost* that leads the reader, but rather: the reader brings the text into existence by actualising its meanings – such as re-enacting fall – misunderstanding -- and the redemption – understanding. The reader makes visible the texts' potentialities.)

new term: Interpretive community decides what counts as text as well as what counts as interpretation. The (historically, culturally, geographically, politically determined) interpretive community to which we belong guides our interpretations, it decides whether or reading can

be considered as an interpretation at all. (E.g. whether an analysis can count as a legitimate interpretation.)

The reader has to come from somewhere, h/she isn't an autonomous being. -> it's not the text that produces the reader, it's not the reader that produces the text, but it's the community that produces the reader who in turn produces the text.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Sigmund Freud: hermeneutics of suspicion

undermines basic assumptions of Western metaphysics concerning human agency <-

„discovery” of the unconscious

Psychoanalysis calls on individuals to recall the childhood events and fantasies that shaped their personalities (importance of memory!) – making conscious the hidden recesses of the mind -> cure: more or less coherent *narrative identity*.

The analyst *reads* and *interprets* the patient's dreams, fantasies. ->Psychoanalysis is first and foremost a theory of reading. (What actually happens: transference – the patient re-enacts his/her symptoms with the analyst during the sessions)

Psychoanalytic criticism: studies either an author's “unconscious” motivations, or that of characters (e.g. Hamlet's oedipal problems and *not* Shakespeare's)

Topography of the mind:

Id: lawless, driven by desire to have its needs instantly gratified.

Super-ego (ego ideal): guardian of norms (conscience: a sense of guilt over violations of rules).

Ego: preserves the self by telling it to hold back on its desires and negotiate with reality, moderates between Id and Super Ego.

Child's development:

I.Pre-Oedipal phase: symbiotic relationship with the mother

1. helpless, completely dependent on his mother
2. anal phase: the child sucks his mother's breast for milk -- pleasurable – mouth: organ of survival + erotogenic zone -> drive to incorporate objects
3. anal stage: sadistic, the child derives pleasure from expulsion and destruction, desire for retention and possessive control
4. phallic stage: focus on the genitals

-> autoeroticism: the libidinal drives are centred on the child's own body - primary

narcissism: libido invested in oneself taken as an object.

II. *Oedipal* phases:

Oedipal stage—oedipal triangle:

Male child: incestuous desire for the mother in the dyadic relationship -> father enters the

picture: primary repression: the child *represses* his desire for the mother out of a fear of

castration (primary repression) -> formation of the unconscious (where the prohibited desire

for the mother is repressed). Reality principle: the child takes on his father's role and becomes a man -> his desire is directed to other women.

Female child (highly problematic, not really developed by Freud!): incestuous desire for the mother -> father enters the picture: the girl perceives that she is "inferior" (lacks the penis), just like her mother -> turns in disillusionment from the mother to the father: she desires her father (and envies his penis), wants to seduce him. Since this project is doomed to failure, she returns to her mother for identification, renounces the desire for her father - and wants a baby instead.

If the oedipal stage is not successfully overcome: "castration complex"

Repression: when sexual energies (the libido) are denied a natural outlet. (Yet: a primary repression is absolutely necessary – i.e. when the child relinquishes his desire for the mother -> formation of the unconscious)

Sublimation: libidinal energies channelled into non-sexual activities, such as artistic creation or work.

"Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychological activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life" (*Civilisation and its Discontents*) – repression forms the basis of our civilisation (cf: Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*)

Defense mechanisms (Freud + Anna Freud) are psychological strategies that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or feelings

Mechanism	Description	Example
Repression	Repression is an unconscious mechanism employed by the ego to keep disturbing or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious.	During the Oedipus complex aggressive thoughts about the same sex parents are repressed
Denial	Denial involves blocking external events from awareness. If some situation is just too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it.	For example, smokers may refuse to admit to themselves that smoking is bad for their health.
Projection	This involves individuals attributing their own unacceptable thoughts, feeling and motives to another person.	You might hate someone, but your superego tells you that such hatred is unacceptable. You can 'solve' the problem by believing that they hate you.
Displacement	Satisfying an impulse (e.g. aggression) with a substitute object.	Someone who is frustrated by his or her boss at work may go home and kick the dog,
Regression	This is a movement back in psychological time when one is faced with stress.	A child may begin to suck their thumb again or wet the bed when they need to spend some time in the hospital.
Sublimation	Satisfying an impulse (e.g. aggression) with a substitute object. In a socially acceptable way.	Sport is an example of putting our emotions (e.g. aggression) into something constructive.

Projection: an individual attributes unwanted thoughts, feelings and motives onto another person. Esp. salient in racist and sexist thinking: the “other” (non-Western/woman/gay) is “dirty”, “irrational”, “aggressive”, “sexual”

EROS – THANATOS – Repetition compulsion

Initially, Freud thought that we were all driven by the “pleasure principle” – Eros – we all want to procreate, to have sex, to work, and our dreams are dreams of wish-fulfilment. Later: F. comes upon the phenomenon of repetition compulsion: the “patient *cannot remember* the whole of what is repressed in him, and...is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of...*remembering* it as something belonging to the past” -> a "compulsion to repeat": we involuntarily repeat bad experiences (no experience learned, but merely repeated), we involuntarily return to infantile stages that should have been overcome, we are repetitively haunted by certain nightmares -> there is a drive opposing the pleasure principle: death drive, or Thanatos (cf: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920)

-> task of psychoanalysis: to turn involuntary repetition into conscious remembrance, to integrate repressed experiences (which trigger the repetition) into conscious memory, and thereby stop the repetition. -> working through of past experiences -> healing (sex, work: Eros)

Mourning and Melancholy

Mourning: “working through” - “healthy” response to loss: sadness, and the loss is eventually overcome, it is worked through. The person is able to invest libidinal energies into a new object.

Melancholy: the pathological version of mourning, endless return to the lost object (that the person incorporates as part of him/herself), inability to invest libidinal energies into a new object (the person is preoccupied with him/herself – the lost object becomes a part of himself), self-hatred, there is no “working through”, no healing. (E.g. the Ancient Mariner)

Trauma (Gr. “wound”): a very intense event breaks through the protective shield of consciousness -> leaves a memory trace in the unconscious -> cannot be assimilated or remembered by consciousness, but, after a period of latency, it starts to haunt the person in flashbacks and nightmares, and has long-lasting effects – PST (post-traumatic stress disorder) -> traumatic events can only be recognised retrospectively, from their effects (when they actually happen, they are not registered by consciousness) E.g. sexual or war traumas: the person cannot actually “feel” anything, the event does not become part of “experience” – cf: Mary in *The Grass is Singing*, or Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*. – yet, the event keeps haunting him or her. Trauma is, among others, a disease of memory: the person’s failure to actively remember -> rather than possessing the past, s/he is possessed by the past -> there is no boundary between past and present during flashbacks, the “past” literally returns, it gets repeated -> difficult to cure or to analyse (i.e. to “interpret”).

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981)

He reinterprets Freud in the light of structuralist and post-structuralist theories of discourse.

Real: the world in its natural, material state, the world “before speech.”

Imaginary/mirror stage: happy, narcissistic union with mother, no distinction between subject and object.

Child can see him/herself reflected as a unified whole in the mother’s eyes -> identifies with this (imaginary) image of unity, which he does not actually experience in his/her own body ->

imaginary *misrecognition*. 1. To exist, one has to be recognized by an-other -> our image (i.e. our sense of ourselves) is mediated by the gaze of the other. The other becomes the guarantor of ourselves. 2. The self is essentially narcissistic: we arrive at a sense of an “I” by finding that “I” reflected back to ourselves by some object or person in the world. *The ego is based on an imaginary image of wholeness*, and the function of the ego is to maintain this illusion of coherence and mastery.

digression: Lacan’s concept of the mirror phase influences:

1.->Laura Mulvey: “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”: cinema produces a fundamentally male gaze and the woman is always the object of this male gaze, she is constituted by this male gaze. (I.e. the gaze of the camera is a voyeuristic gaze, just as well as the gaze of male protagonists and the gaze of the spectator, who identifies with the male protagonist -> constructs the woman as an object of the male gaze.)

2. -> Louis Althusser: *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*

We are recognised as subjects by ideological state apparatuses – church, family, school – and gain our sense of subjecthood from this recognition. These apparatuses gaze at us, construct us, and *interpellate* us as subjects. (From the moment we are interpellated as (i.e. called) girls or boys, or as students, we see ourselves as such, and act accordingly. -> we become subjects who work by themselves -> no need for coercion. See also later.)

end of digression

Symbolic stage: Authority, the Law: the domain of the Father—“the specular *I*” gives way to “the social *I*”; (the world of “the name of the father” - *le non/nom du père*.) The big Other, or the Phallus (it does not equal the actual penis!) —>work, adult relationships -> this is the world of *language*

->2 fathers: 1. father of the Oedipus complex, who intervenes and disrupts the relationship between mother and child and thus denies the child’s access to the mother. He transmits the Law to the child (that of incest prohibition), but is himself subject to the law.

2. Father: a figure (!) of absolute power – the symbolic power of the Law (more important!) – the transcendental signifier that guides and structures discourse, and therefore, the whole society. Both fathers function at the level of the superego.

-> 1. the individual’s imaginary identifications that characterised the mirror stage is supplemented by the symbolic identification with an “ego ideal”: the words, norms and directives of its given cultural collective.

-> 2. the child represses its guilty desire for the mother, and this desire *is* the unconscious

-> in his conscious life, the child has to search for substitute objects (objects substituting for the mother) – L. calls these: *objet petit a*

Lacan's originality: to rewrite Freud's oedipal process in terms of language:

Mirror stage: child contemplating itself before the mirror: 'signifier' (capable of bestowing meaning) -- the image it sees: 'signified' – and the other way round: the image is the signifier and the child is the signified. -> signifier and signified are as harmoniously united, it is a world of plenitude: standing before the mirror, the 'signifier' (the child) finds a 'fullness' in the signified of its reflection, and the other way round. No lack, no absence, no gap.

Symbolic stage: entry of the father -> child thrown into post-structuralist anxiety. In gaining access to language, the child learns that 1. a signifier presupposes the absence of the object it signifies, and that 2. the sign is defined solely through its difference from other signs. -> 1. the object of its desire (the mother) is absent (there is nothing “behind” the signifier, it is only there to show up the absence of the thing it signifies), and 2. the child is defined by sexual difference, by what it is not -> “symbolic order”: language stands in for objects that are absent, language substitutes for the object itself. The child can never have any *direct* access to reality (in particular, to the prohibited body of the mother). -> grows into the 'empty' world of language, where there is nothing else but an endless chain of signifiers, with no fixed or determinable meaning (see Derrida: the meaning is always “deferred”).

Desire: an endless movement from one signifier to another. All desire spring from a lack (the absence of the object, the mother), which it strives, in vain, to fill. To enter language = to become prey of desire: we will now never be able to find rest in “the” single object, or in “the” final meaning -> substitute objects (*objet petit a*) Yet, the symbolic power of the Phallus, or else, the “transcendental signifier” gives the *illusion* of a meaning, of a ground always deferred.

Jouissance: the something more that would satisfy and fulfil us beyond the meagre pleasure we experience. Contrary to desire which moves from one signifier to another, jouissance would be absolute and certain. Real – Death -- Jouissance are connected (jouissance is the ultimate beyond of pleasure). That which escapes symbolization and is beyond representation -> the big Other is inconsistent or structured around a lack, the lack of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* escapes any encounter, and yet, makes its presence felt. (“There is no sexual relationship” – i.e. not in the symbolic realm)

digression:

-> Slavoj Žižek (1949--): political reading of Lacan. In modern societies, people do not fully understand what their system represents or how it works, but suppose that there are Others who know it. (i.e. "the Other supposed to know"). e.g. Such as the priest reciting the mass in Latin before an uncomprehending laity.-> Political authority is Symbolic in nature.

Sublime object of Ideology: 1. a king is only a king because his subjects think and act as if he is a king 2. (!). The people will only believe he is a king if they believe this is a sublime Truth about which they can do nothing -> sublime object of ideology (<-Kantian sublime, in a simplified way: the subject's perception is inadequate to encompass the whole of the experience, such as the size of a huge mountain -> perceptual failure is an indirect testimony to the inadequacy of human perception to what Kant calls the Ideas of Reason, such as God, the Universe as a Whole, Freedom, the Good, which exist *within* the human mind) ---- politics (in Žižek): the subjects feel inadequate to explain the workings of their regime, to explain their own political beliefs (->experience of the sublime) -> testimony to the system's being Great, and Good -> posit their own leaders as representatives of these Ideas.

Ideological disidentification: people *know* and are able to criticise the regime in which they live, yet, they are governed by more or less *unconscious* beliefs which uphold the system anyway. It is not that they do not know and this is why they are doing it, but rather "they know it, but they are doing it anyway". (There is much more on and by Žižek, e.g.. around the Lacanian terms *jouissance* and the Real, and their relation to politics.)

-end of digression

Lacan: "The unconscious is structured like language":

Freud approached latent (unconscious) meanings in the mind through an analysis of manifest (conscious) meanings: the manifest meaning is illusory, and the latent meaning is the genuine one -> the genuine meaning exists outside language.

Lacan: the unconscious is also language: a 'sliding of the signified beneath the signifier', a constant fading and evaporation of meaning, our dreams are like 'modernist' texts which are almost unreadable and which will never yield any final interpretation. The ego, or consciousness, can only work by repressing this turbulent activity, provisionally nailing down words on to meanings.

cf: "Tomorrow, I will go to Paris" grammatical subject: "I" <-> actual subject: I, the sum of my entire being. The overlap is illusory, imaginary. -> the subject is *split*, torn apart by language.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL6rkBSHS4A> – Lacan live! L. gives a seminar in Paris (very funny)

Julia Kristeva (b. 1941)

Lacan: the symbolic (paternal, rational) versus the imaginary (maternal, emotional).

Symbolic order = patriarchal sexual and social order, dominated by the Law, which the father embodies -> its oppressiveness is the target of Kristeva's feminist critique.

La Revolution du langage poetique (1974):

distinguishes between the symbolic (paternal, rational, the Law, Authority) and the 'semiotic' (residue of the pre-Oedipal stage).

semiotic chora: when the child does not yet have access to language (infans = speechless) – its body is a heterogeneous flow of inarticulate pulsions, drives.

->entry into the symbolic, into the world of articulate language: this heterogeneity, this inarticulate flow is repressed.

Yet, repression is not total (!): the semiotic can still be discerned as a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself: in tone, rhythm, and the bodily, material qualities of language, in contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence and absence. ->the semiotic is the 'other' of language.

It is bound up with the child's contact with the mother's body (as opposed to the symbolic, associated with the Law of the father,) and connected with femininity. But it is *not* exclusive to women! <- it emerges from a pre-Oedipal stage, common to all.

“Revolution”: the semiotic is a means of undermining the symbolic order. Apparent in symbolist poetry (esp. that of Mallarmé) or in modernist prose (e.g. James Joyce), where the rhythmic and material properties of language come to the surface, as if language was driven by unconscious (semiotic) drives. Disruption, plurality of meaning, creative excess -> undermines established social meanings. (Symbolist poetry does *not* equal the “symbolic”, on the contrary..)

Revolutionary language in literature -> revolution in politics, undermines the patriarchal (symbolic, rational) order of society. The semiotic throws into confusion the binary opposition between masculine and feminine - it is a 'bisexual' form of writing, deconstructing all kinds of binary oppositions (proper/improper, norm/deviation, sane/ mad, etc) It is *not* inherently feminine: most of the 'revolutionary' writers are male + it is *not* exclusively

semiotic: the symbolic is inescapably there (we all grow up in the symbolic order), but a residue of the semiotic constantly subverts it.

Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection (1982)

theory of the abject:

According to K., the development of a sense of unitary subjecthood necessitates the abjection (exclusion, denigration) of the mother (the maternal, the material, and the bodily). Expulsion of the maternal and the material happens out of fear of falling back into the mother's body, and losing our sense of identity. Yet, the maternal is not repressed altogether, but constantly hovers at the periphery of our subjecthood, challenging our sense of clean and proper selfhood.

the abject: the part of ourselves that we reject, that we expel, because it seems to "infect". (e.g. the corpse, the maternal, the vomit) It is both familiar and strange (like Freud's uncanny), it is something outside the symbolic order, but we still have to face it, since it is still very much part of ourselves.

Strangers to Ourselves (1991):

theory of abjection transposed into the realm of politics: the abjection of the "stranger", the "foreigner", the "immigrant" derives from our abjection of the mother, of the maternal, of the bodily *within us*, which we *project* upon others -> the "stranger" is the stranger in ourselves that we deny, that we expel -> we have to reappropriate the maternal, the other, the stranger into ourselves where it truly belongs.

GENDER STUDIES

FEMINISM and GENDER

Feminism: the belief that women, just because they are women, are treated inequitably within a society, which is organised to prioritise male viewpoints and concerns. Feminism seeks to change this situation.

Literary feminism: deals with the ways in which women are represented and are self-represented in literary works and in the literary canon. -> literature is always already politics (i.e. the way in which w. are represented in literature has strong connections with the way in which they are represented in politics)

Gender studies: focuses upon the historical, social, and psychological systems within which sexual identity becomes meaningful.

Premise: there is a difference to be made between sex (male/female) as something biologically given, gender (masculine/feminine) as a social construct, and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual), as a variable sexual behaviour and orientation.

Questions the naturalization of a patriarchal system, which defines male heterosexuality as the norm.

->ideology critique (!): what has been taken as *natural* and neutral (i.e. “obvious”) is shown to be *cultural*, historical and strongly biased; as sth. that helps to maintain existing (historically developed and culturally constructed) power relations.

e.g. feminists don't deny the biological differences between men and women (many celebrate them), but they don't agree that physical shape, size or bodily chemistry make men naturally superior to women – physical differences don't make men better leaders, more intelligent, or more courageous.

e.g. Michel Foucault: *The History of Sexuality* (1976-84)

anti-repressive hypothesis: Victorian discourse on sexuality did not repress sexuality, but created it as an object of investigation -> emergence of the concept of the homosexual in the 19th c.

Discourse, discursive formations: they do not “describe things”, but both constitute their objects and generate knowledge about their objects – Knowledge = normative knowledge -> regulation -> Power

methods of producing “Knowledge”: observation -> examination -> normalising judgment: sane-mad, heterosexual-homosexual, normality-perversion.

“This new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*. As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. ... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.”

Ideology critique -> Foucault shows that what we perceive as “natural” (such as the existence of the “homosexual” as a concept) is in fact culturally and historically constructed by the discourse of psychiatry (psychiatry became a “discipline” in the 19th c.).

HISTORY OF FEMINISM

Situation of women in the 18th c.

“the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything” (William Blackstone’s *Commentary on the Laws of England*, 1765)

Mary Wollstonecraft: *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792):

(-< Thomas Paine: *Rights of Man*, 1792 – in support of the French Revolution: “all men are equal before the law”, need for representative democracy, and not one based on inheritance) Wollstonecraft argues for women’s right to education, which would pave the way for their economic independence.

Situation of women in the Victorian period:

married woman: cannot inherit, cannot keep personal property – all belongs to the husband (including, for instance the copyright laws of the woman's work).

divorce: a husband can sue his wife for divorce on grounds of adultery, but a wife has to prove incest or bigamy in addition to adultery + after the divorce: the husband gets all the property, and becomes the natural guardian of children.

1849, 1853: foundation of Bedford College and Queen's College, in London. → women gain access to university education.

John Stuart Mill: "The Subjection of Women" (1869)

Women should not only be treated as potential mothers and wives. Soc. treats and trades women as household slaves. → argues against the "legal subordination of one sex to the other", based solely on physical strength. → argues for the equality of rights. Mill is the first MP to propose giving women a vote in 1867.

(Present: because women are treated as "household slaves", their work is 1.) unpaid 2.) the marriage contract puts no limits on the time wives - and any other woman living in the family - will have to work and specifies no holiday when they don't have to work 3.) caretaking is done by unpaid female family members 24/24)

1882: Married Woman Property Act: husband and wife are two separate legal entities, wife also has a right to sue the husband, and can dispose of, sell or buy her separate property.

After WWI:

Suffragette movement → vote: in 1918 (for women over 30), in 1928 (men + women over 21).

Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

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

Shakespeare's sister with Shakespeare's genius would not have had the opportunity to become a playwright <-restricted education, no opportunities: women enclosed in the domestic sphere, they have to stay at home

[domestic/private sphere: women <-> public/political sphere: men]

It is not enough to grant a place to the greatest women writers in literary history, minor figures (Mrs Aphra Behn, Dorothy Osborne) are also important: “Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue”

Argues against the male projected inferiority and weakness of women: women are mirrors in which men can pose and perform their heroic actions

Concept of androgyny – people, and esp. artists are androgynous (cf: *Orlando*)

After WW II.

1970: Women’s Liberation Conference: Ruskin College, Oxford (over 500 participants.)
demands: equal pay, equal education and opportunity, hold credit cards with their own names, 24-hour nurseries, free contraception and the right to abortion.

→ **2d wave feminism:** breaks down gender stereotypes, esp. that women belong to the household, and that the prime goal of women is to be beautiful and useful to men
shortcoming: led by middle-class White women (no regard for intersectionality: the intertwined questions of gender, race and class)

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex* (1949)

Influenced by Sartre’s Existentialism

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman;”

“No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... which is described as feminine.”

Why women have allowed men to subordinate them?

1. Excluded from the public sphere, women fail to form the bonds that men make in war, pubs, government and business. No potential female group identity. Marriage binds women to domesticity and perpetuates the belief that if the female is protected and provided for by his male partner, she is happy. However, she argues (via existentialism) that human potential must be judged in terms of both liberty and happiness (but rather liberty).

Public/political sphere: transcendental, rational, judgemental, the perpetuation of knowledge, of the ideas of the future -> liberty of men

Private/domestic sphere: nature, the body, feelings, procreation.-> women enclosed here
It is women's reproductive cycle and lesser physical strength that bound them to domesticity.
(later feminists: the personal is always already political)

2. Woman is always situated as the "other" of man, whereas man has always an identity in himself (cf Freud: women lack the penis, and envy it)-> 'the woman' has no substance, she is defined by "lack" -> she becomes a screen of projection for male fantasies and fears. -> has to vindicate her autonomy.

<- theories (incl. literary theories and scientific theories) privileged male perspective: the main object of psychoanalysis, literary criticism, medical science etc, etc, was male (and sometimes still is)

Myth of the Eternal Feminine:

"As against the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless. If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behaviour of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter who are wrong: we are told not that Fertility is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine."

Kate Millett: *Sexual Politics* (1970)

Sex is a 'status category with political implications'. Patriarchy is the primary form of human oppression -> the ideology of "femininity" has created a psychic structure in women -> *women are complicit in their own oppression: a "dependency class", identifying their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them.*

Phallogocentric criticism: investigates male writers from a female point of view. How canonical male writers (D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, etc) contribute to the degradation of women. Even those who portray women's situation in a realistic way, contribute to the conservative maintenance of patriarchy. E.g. both Flaubert's *Emma Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (adulterous wives) commit suicide -> the transgressive female is penalized, and the patriarchal moral code is reasserted.

->focus on and promotion of the role of the reader

<- *women have been educated to read bisexually*, and identify with the male protagonist --

>this has to change: Millett reads canonical works by men from a female point of view.

Gynocriticism:

- works to increase the number of female writers in the canon. Why did they disappear?
<-male critics and male reviewers -> literary “value” always already gendered.
 - focus on how female experience (female) voice is represented in literature
 - rather than victimising women, it focuses on their “awakening”
 - pen=penis -> authorship-Author-God, all are men ->need to change this situation
- >later: 1. accused of “essentialism” – as if there was such a thing as “female experience” 2. criticised bc. it takes the white, heterosexual, middle-class woman as the norm.

Elaine Showalter: *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1978).

Women: different life -> different literature (impossible to judge the value of women’s literature based on male norms)

History of feminism - 3 phases:

1. Feminine phase: 1840-18800

Women write in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of male culture. Imitation of men, interiorisation of male aesthetic standards, male pseudonyms. (E.g. George Eliot - Mary Ann (Marian) Evans, poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell: the Bronte sisters)

2. Feminist Phase: 1880-1920

Protest against men, expression of a shared responsibility in suffering.

3. Female Phase: from 1920

Women reject both imitation and protest (two forms of dependency) and turn instead to the expression of female experience. (E.g. Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf. Doris Lessing)

Gilbert and Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979)

E.g. Charlotte Bronte: *Jane Eyre*

Bertha Mason, the madwoman in the attic is read by G&G as the unconscious articulation of the hidden fears of patriarchy <- the body (Bertha) is denied a place in the rational order of things (associated with masculinity) - women come to be identified with everything that is feared as irrational -> such fears appear to justify the social control and containment of the female body (Kristeva’s abject) -> “*the monstrous feminine*” [later, Postcolonialist criticism also emphasises that Bertha is a Jamaican woman, and as such, she embodies the fears of British imperialism)

Jane Eyre: airy, aesthetic object

Is Jane Eyre a feminist novel? Female *Bildungsroman*, female experience, but end of the novel: “Reader, I married him” – inscribes the woman as a subject within the patriarchal system, Jane Eyre becomes the repository of domestic virtues, entirely enclosed into the private sphere.

3d wave feminism

Plus: Bertha Mason is Creole -- > necessity to examine intersectionality: race + class + gender

Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) A postcolonial and feminist prequel to Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, describing the background to Mr. Rochester's marriage from the point of view of his wife Antoinette Cosway, a Creole heiress. Antoinette Cosway is Rhys's version of Brontë's "madwoman in the attic". Antoinette's story is told from the time of her youth in Jamaica, to her unhappy marriage to an English gentleman, Mr. Rochester, who renames her Bertha, declares her mad, takes her to England, and isolates her from the rest of the world in his mansion.

4th wave: intersectionality, LGBTQ inclusive, body and sex-positive, against everyday sexism

Post-Feminism – questions essentialist feminism

Judith Butler: b. 1956. : the performativity of gender (informed by Derrida, and theatre)

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)

Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex" (1993)

“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1990):

Beauvoir: “one is not born, but becomes a woman” -> performativity of gender

Butler: “Because there is neither an "essence" that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all.”

Derrida's account of iterability (repetition)

Austen's idea of the performative (see in Derrida's text)

and: Louis Althusser: “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1968)

There is no “outside” ideology: ideology gains its power from being *obvious* and “natural” for everyone. (Ideology critique: shows that everything we take for natural and obvious is in fact cultural and historical.)

Ideological state apparatuses: education, religion, family. They always already call us/interpellate us as “subjects” (students, believers, girls or boys) -> we work by ourselves to be recognised as “subjects” (to be obedient to God, to the schoolmaster, to our parents, all in all: to be good subjects.) – we are accomplices in our own subjection, bc. we accept that this is the way things “obviously” are, and should be.

Paradox: subject means two things:

1. a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author and responsible for its actions -
>agency
2. a subjected being who subjects to a higher authority -> lack of agency

->the ISA interpellates the individual as free subject so that he or she can freely accept its subjection.

(question: how to oppose ideology if it is everywhere? how to reclaim agency?)

➔ Judith Butler:

Our gender comes into being through the *repeated performance* of different gender roles, which are constructed by society -> yet, since it has to be reiterated, repeated again and again so that it can be sustained, it is, in fact, not fixed: there is always a possibility for change through difference, through acting out roles differently.

->gender is a social construct (socially determined), and yet, one can make a difference by repeating differently the pre-given roles, by changing them.-> Butler acknowledges social determinism, but also reclaims agency by introducing the concept of performativity.

“If the “reality” of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized “sex” or “gender” which gender performances ostensibly express. Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations. Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed.... That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed.”

What does it mean that there is “no essence”? What does it mean to question the essence of the *biological sex*?

The biological givens (penis, vagina, etc.) *do* exist. However: the moment they enter discourse or language or culture (as they always already do), they are immediately interpreted (they are always already seen *as* something – cf. Heidegger), and acquire a *meaning* (e.g. penis=power). This meaning is always already determined by patriarchal society. That is: there is *no* pure sex, *no* pure biology.

The idea that biological sex is sth “essential” suggests that gender is an expression of sth. biologically given -> this legitimates the heterosexual matrix. However, Butler argues that the belief that gender expresses biology is an ideology, a false belief system, which only serves to to hide the fact that gender is always already an artificial construct and that biological sex is never without an always already pre-constructed cultural and political meaning (e.g. penis=power/rationality/leadership/politics/money etc, and vagina=lack/emotions/dependence/household, etc).

21st century woman philosophers

RELATIONALITY: becomes more important than “individuality” so far privileged in the Western philosophical tradition. According to **Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)**, "The realm of human affairs consists of a web of human relationships that exists wherever people live together."

1. *zoé* (biological life) VS. *bios* (uniquely human life, political life, lived in a network of human relationships)

-> **Adriana Cavarero (1947-)**. According to Cavarero, enlightened Western philosophy defined the human, biologically, as a forward-looking homo erectus, gesticulating freely with his hands, and, morally, as autonomous, self-identical, and having agency (Kant). This definition, according to Cavaero, displaced "*inclination*" as less or not quite human, and, at the same time, eliminated those intersubjective dimensions that manifest themselves in *care*, embrace, desire, love, and *responsibility* towards the vulnerable. Hence, *vulnerability* and

inclination should not be seen as a weakness but, on the contrary, as a human condition that we all share, and indeed must share. -> ethics of care, and responsibility (cf. also: Levinas)

Judith Butler: *The Psychic Life of Power*:

Focus on corporeal vulnerability, on the infant's corporeal dependency on others, on the bodily experience of others -> the subject is never entirely transparent to itself (non-transparency), there is always a dimension that remains opaque (e.g. at the heart of normative heterosexuality, there is both a disavowed loss of and identification with homosexual desire) -> I am always partially "foreign to myself" (via Kristeva)

Normative violence: the operation of norms in determining who counts as subject. A subject (who is recognised as such) lives a 'livable life', that is, a life that is viable in the dominant normative order - someone is recognised as a subject if s/he is intelligible, that is, conform to the dominant norms. (By subject, she means, foremost, legal subject.) But what of those who are in some sense "out of the norm"? The concept of the "human" is a site of "normative struggle" still in place.

"AFFECTIVE TURN" <- (social) psychologists already questioned the equation of emotions with "femininity" – i.e. men and women are endowed with the same emotional repertoire, but men are trained to repress their emotions to look "manly."

Silvan Tomkins distinguishes between *affects* (unconscious), *feelings* (in between) and *emotions* (turned into experience, conscious)

The appreciation of feelings and emotions has a long history, going back at least to the moral philosophy of David Hume or Adam Smith in the 18th century, or to sentimental and romantic literature. However, recent affect theories tend to be sceptical of traditional notions of empathy, compassion and shared or universal emotions. At the same time, they want to go beyond the traditional Freudian psychoanalytic framework, which relies on the logic of repression. They reject both the interior character of emotions (i.e. one's own emotions *expressed from within*) and the idea that emotions are only triggered by the environment (e.g. crowd-generated fanaticism). Instead:

Sara Ahmed: *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004, 2014) describes how emotions (e.g. pain, hatred, fear, disgust, love/affection) circulate, shape and create relationships in political and social discourses. She also raises important questions about the "justice" of emotions, also going back to the problem of "grief".

Lauren Berlant: *Cruel Optimism* (2011) examines how affective attachments structure general upward fantasies; cruel optimism, in her interpretation, is a double bond in which we cling to an object, or more precisely, an idea(s) (e.g., job security, social advancement, relationship, nationality), when in fact it poses a threat to us.

Sianne Ngai: *Ugly feelings* (2005) examines the cultural representations of irritation, envy, disgust, anxiety, paranoia, or even the paradoxical synthesis of boredom and ("stuplidity"). These seemingly minor, more politically ambiguous feelings (as opposed to large-scale anger, hatred or shame) are best suited to describe modernity, to capture the many political frustrations that arise in modernity.

FRENCH FEMINISM: more theoretical, less pragmatic, informed by French deconstruction

1. **Kristeva** (see: earlier) – the semiotic is always subversive of the symbolic

2. **Hélène Cixous** b. 1937.:

Criticises Freud's and Lacan's "phallogocentric system". (phallogocentric – via Derrida's logocentric: the structure of language is centred by the phallus)

Freud's theory of the girl's oedipal development: genital phase (active sexuality: pleasure in the clitoris) + attachment to the mother -> oedipal stage: desire for the father (penis envy) -> adulthood: desire for men - passive sexuality (pleasure in the vagina), reproduction, heterosexuality -> adult sexuality: not about not about female sexuality, but about male sexuality: the woman's pleasure is to come from being passively filled by a penis.

Lacan: the child must separate from its mother's body in order to enter into the symbolic order of language -> (mother's body->female body) -> the female body becomes unrepresentable in language -> female sexuality, female sexual pleasure is unrepresentable within the phallogocentric Symbolic order.

->Is it possible for a woman to write as a woman? Or does entry into the Symbolic mean that one always speaks and writes as a "man"?

Cixous: for women to write themselves, they must (re)claim a female-centred sexuality -> "écriture féminine" (female writing): very much like Kristeva's semiotic – closer to the unconscious - rhythm, poetry, without fixed meanings, fluid, disruptive, maternal -> produces a rupture in the Symbolic order -> politically transformative, revolutionary.

anti-essentialist (i.e. there is no such thing as essential womanhood):

“But there is no invention, of other I’s, no poetry, no fiction without a certain homosexuality (interplay, thereof, of bisexuality) making in me a crytalized work of my ultrasubjectivities” (*Sorties*) -> there is a form of bisexuality in all forms of radical writing -> *écriture féminine* is bisexual, it disrupts the binary between male and female, between hetero- and homosexual, constructed by the patriarchal order. (It has nothing to do with “essential womanhood”!)

The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975)

Myth of the Medusa: a woman with snakes for hair, her look turns men into stone. Freud reads the Medusa as part of the fear of castration: she is scary because she has too many penises (i.e. snakes for her hair). Cixous: men fear to lose their own penises, but this fear is a mere projection, they project a threat onto the figure of the Medusa. If women could show men that female sexuality or female pleasure is *not* about penises at all, that women cannot castrate bc. they do not have a penis, but a completely different sort of sexuality, then men would cease to project threat and fear on the body of women -> need for a new, radical form of writing, which has nothing to do with the phallus, or the phallogocentric system.

MICHEL FOUCAULT: 1926-1984

(*The Order of Things*, 1966; *Archeology of Knowledge*, 1969: *archive*: the collection of all material traces left behind by a particular historical period and culture; *Madness and Civilisation*, 1961; *The Birth of the Clinic*, 1963; *Discipline and Punish*, 1975; *The History of Sexuality* 1976-84) – see at GENDER as well!!

“discourse”, “discursive formation”: a system of representations, or a group of interrelated statements which *produce* a topic, an object and a truth about it (cf: they are performative of the knowledge they produce), and construct the framework in which truth claims about the given topic can be made, in which the topic can be meaningfully talked about (“nothing has any meaning outside the discourse”). -> discourse produces “knowledge”, and “objects of knowledge” -> we accept the reality with which we are presented, we interiorise it, we can be ruled and controlled by it -> discourses are always regulative: they determine what is normal and what is abnormal. (Individuals monitor themselves in an effort to conform to the “norms”) -> power

E.g. 19th c. discourse of psychiatry: produces “mental illness” as an object of knowledge, produces “doctors” as subjects who know and “patients” who are “examined”, produces concepts such as “normal” and “pathological”, and generates strategies for “treatment” – all that in order to legitimate its own power, its own existence as a “discipline” + control (through the power gained) the individuals. Techniques of control: observation, examination (entry into the “field of documentation”) -> production of normalising knowledge (turns the individual into a “case”) -> power

-> **biopolitics**: Western society moves from a regimen where the ruler controls the right over life and death to one where life itself becomes a subject to control. Biopolitics governs in bureaucratic, scientific, rule-based ways, ostensibly (!) to improve the health and well-being of citizens.

“Biopolitics” is a term that refers to the intersection and mutual incorporation of life and politics. In literal terms, it signifies a form of politics that deals with life (Greek: bios).

“one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was precisely that [...] sovereignty's old right-to take life or let live- [...] came to be complemented by a new right [...]. It is the power to "make" live and "let" die.”

„What does this new technology of power, this biopolitics, this biopower that is beginning to establish itself, involve? [...]

„a set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on. It is these processes-the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity, and so on [...] that the first demographers begin to measure, and these phenomena [started to be measured] in statistical terms.”

“The [new] mechanisms introduced by biopolitics include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures” “The mortality rate has to be modified or lowered; life expectancy has to be increased; the birth rate has to be stimulated.”

“the development of a medicine whose main function will now be public hygiene, with institutions to coordinate medical care, centralize information, and normalize knowledge. And which also takes the form of campaigns to teach hygiene”

ZOÉ versus BIOS (<- Aristotle, Hannah Arendt)

ZOÉ: biological life

biopolitics aims at the sustenance of biological life, at species' survival
statistics, birth rates, death rates, demographic data are all about zoé, the biological life that we share with animals

BIOS: human life meaningfully lived

lived in a political community, in the network of human relationships.

Influence on: Giorgio Agamben (1942--) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1988., *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 1999.

Comment on Foucault's "biopolitics": whereas the ancient Greek polity removed 'bare' (biological) life as irrelevant, Western modernity makes it a subject of control.

“bare life”: empty humanity, not quite human nor animal, an intermediate state that must be controlled by political society. This humanity stripped of nearly all of its human characteristics - present at its most denuded in the Nazi concentration camps.

“homo sacer”: the one who can be killed but cannot be sacrificed, both marks the limit and is constitutive of the Law

Sovereignty is the possibility of doing what is generally excluded, that is, killing. -> Both the ones who are killed and those who do the killing are somehow outside the Law (that prohibits killing). However, they represent, in fact, the concentration of the Law: the possibility of killing is an “exception”, and yet this state of exception (the suspension of the Law) is what defines Sovereignty -> the Nazi concentration camps point to the essence of human society. “The correct question to pose concerning the horrors of the concentration camps is, therefore, not the hypocritical one of how crimes of such atrocity could be committed against human beings. It would be more honest and, above all, more useful to investigate carefully, the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as crime.” (*HS*)

After Auschwitz, something remains (the remnant) and “survival designates the purse and simple continuation of bare life with respect to a truer and more human life” (*RA*) -> Law must be replaced by Justice

<- Western society (including Western philosophy) always focused on the Person/the Human/ the Human Personality (language, morality, the mind, the soul, the things that define our “humanity”) and opposed it to the Body (which was linked to the “animal”).

What happens if “bare life” is *not* taken into consideration?

“I see a passerby on the street. He has long arms, blue eyes, and a mind whose thoughts I do not know, but perhaps they are commonplace... If it were the human personality in him that was sacred for me, I could easily put out his eyes. As a blind man he would be exactly as much a human personality as he was before. I should not have touched the person in him at all. I should have destroyed nothing but his eyes.” (Simon Weil, qtd by Roberto Esposito, “The Person and Human Life”, 214.)

->contemporary philosophy needs to focus on bare life, the homo sacer.

NEW HISTORICISM – CULTURAL MATERIALISM

Emerges as a response against literary formalism (New Criticism and Deconstruction), considered as elitist and conservative. Critiques the New Critical belief in the autonomy of the work of art, questions the established hierarchy between art work (the “foreground” that transcends history) and history (“the background”). -> both are equally important: no distinction bw. “background” and “foreground”

-> follows the deconstructive claim concerning the need to subvert hierarchical binary oppositions, in which one (the art work) is privileged over the other (history). <- the work of art is thoroughly embedded in history, which, rather than being a “background”, is constitutive of the art work. Yet, we cannot speak of “influence” (i.e. history does not precede or “cause” the art work to emerge), rather: the artwork is intertwined in the web of *discourses* that constitute a given historical era. (In this sense, they also oppose “old” historicism, which believed in the autonomous existence of “historical facts” as influencing the artwork).

Influenced by:

Hayden White (historian): *Metahistory* (1973)

There is no objective or scientific way to present history. The sequence of events historians record are selected from the historical data (texts), and plot structures are imposed upon them to transform them into a comprehensible narrative, which is told as a particular kind of story. (cf: the different versions of History presented by subsequent history books – before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain - in Hungary.)

->there is no such thing as “real history”: 1. history depends on the selection of records by historians 2. “real history” is itself a mess of records, notes, letters, journals, testaments, chronicles, poems, memoires, essays, medical treatises, religious pamphlets, philosophical works, records of scientific experiments, political speeches, advertisements, cook books all in all: all kinds of writings from the past-> history is *not* accessible to us directly, only through the mediation of *writing*: writing has to be selected and interpreted, and then turned into “history”. -> the focus of new historicists is “history” as it appears in the various discourses of a given era.

Michel Foucault’s arguments on “discourse”, “discursive formations” (see : above)

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

History is kept in motion by the class struggle: a conflict between the means of production (the tools, the money, the technology) and the relations of production (the position of those who work in relation to the forces of production). Problem: capitalism - people (labourers) are alienated from their own work -> they lose their autonomy. Progress: class struggle - >communism.

model of base and superstructure:

The economic base (the totality of the relations of production) sustains and determines the superstructure (the various forms of social consciousness— religion, law, politics, art, philosophy, etc.) As the base changes, so does the superstructure. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx).

->ideology: “false consciousness” determined by the economic base (such as “commodity fetishism” – the belief in the inherent value of commodities)

Žižek’s critique: it’s not that they don’t know it (that they are in ideology), but they know it and do it anyway

Rancière’s critique: neither the superstructure, nor the base is pure, there is no such thing as the “working class” in its purity.

->Antonio Gramsci

“hegemony” (from notebooks 1930-32):

“The “spontaneous” *consent* given by the great masses of population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.”

->power can only operate with the *consent* (!) of the dominated, who consent to their own oppression because the dominant group (who is in possession of the economic base, i.e. the world of production) also determines their consciousness. -> ideology as a false consciousness is the one that determines all consciousnesses.

-> Louis Althusser: “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1968)

There is no “outside” ideology: ideology gains its power from being *obvious* and “natural” for everyone. (Ideology critique: shows that everything we take for natural and obvious is in fact cultural and historical.)

Ideological state apparatuses: education, religion, family. They always already call us/interpellate us as “subjects” (students, believers, girls or boys) -> we work by ourselves to be recognised as “subjects” (to be obedient to God, to the schoolmaster, to our parents, all in all: to be good subjects.) – we are accomplices in our own subjection, bc. we accept that this is the way things “obviously” are, and should be.

Paradox: subject means two things:

1. a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author and responsible for its actions -
>agency
2. a subjected being who subjects to a higher authority -> lack of agency

->the ISA interpellates the individual as free subject so that he or she can freely accept its subjection.

(question of cultural materialists: how to oppose ideology if it is everywhere? how to reclaim agency? – Judith Butler asked the same question, but with an emphasis on gender. Cultural Materialists focus on all kinds of oppressed or repressed entities)

Walter Benjamin: “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940)

[historicism: bad, cultural materialism: good]

“one asks with whom the adherents of historicism [i.e. old historicists] actually empathize.

The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists [i.e. new historicists] know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical

materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.”

->history is always the history of the rulers. -> “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”: “the progress” of civilisation is in fact a narrative benefitting the victor; it is a history of oppression (i.e. barbarism), and yet, it is presented as progress -> the task of the cultural materialist is “to brush history against the grain.”: to show the anonymous toil of the oppressed masses, including failed revolutions, sufferings, revolts.

“without exception the cultural treasures he [the cultural materialist] surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror” cf: Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as a critique of “civilisation” and its inherent link with barbarism (the horror).

NEW HISTORICISM

1. History is a kind of discourse, and the past is also a network of different discourses. The literary work does not transcend these discourses but is part of them -> the text cannot be separated from its *context*.

2. containment vs. subversion:

A literary work can be “contained” by the ruling discourses: when it perpetuates the ideological assumptions of a given era

Or it can be “subversive”: when it goes against the grain of ideas accepted as obvious in a given era. (Sinfield will introduce the term “dissidence” to offer an alternative to “subversive”)

3. Yet, they are suspicious of any “unifying worldview”: they are convinced that in each era there were many contrasting and competing “worldviews.”

4. They generally focus on marginal records, such as an anecdote, or a cook book, or a medical treatise, and then push them into the centre to show the relationship between artwork and surrounding discourses (subversion of the margin-centre dichotomy)

5. Influenced by Marxism: radical/subversive = good; conservative = bad; critical = good, blind to the ideologies in which it is embedded = bad

->aesthetics is always already politics. The work of art, or the aesthetic, does not transcend history but, even if it has ideological interests to create the illusion of transcendence, the most it can do is to erase the traces that witness its actual embeddedness *in* history.

E.g. 1. Wordsworth's apparently "innocent"/"symbolic" Westminster Bridge can be interpreted as being engaged, "in fact", with the French Revolution (as a historical referent).

E.g. 2. Romanticism: Romantic poets write on "nature", "imagination", etc. What does that have to do with politics? Jerome McGann, in *Romantic Ideology* 1984, calls their attitude *escapism* (escape from history and politics) -> "Romantic Ideology": the escapist belief that existing social antagonisms can be resolved in a unifying synthesis in the realm of the imagination -> Romantics (esp. the first generation) perpetuate the status quo of social inequalities. (-> New Criticism and Deconstruction perpetuates the same kind of Romantic Ideology - according to McGann.)

E.g. 3. NH reading of Blake's "London"

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In 1793, the term "Charter" was in the centre of political debate:

Dictionary meaning:

1. A document issued by a sovereign, legislature, or other authority, creating a public or private corporation, such as a city, college, or bank, and defining its privileges and purposes.
2. A written grant from the sovereign power of a country conferring certain rights and privileges on a person, a corporation, or the people: MAGNA CHARTA – the right of the subjects to control the absolute power of the king, who becomes subject to the law, 1215.
3. A document outlining the principles, functions, and organization of a corporate body.

->18th c: a royal charter was granted by the king to trading monopolies -> charter seems to give rights and privileges -> it is a good thing.

Yet:

"It is a perversion of terms to say, that charter gives rights. It operates by a contrary effect, that of taking rights away. Rights are inherently in all inhabitants; but charters, by annulling

those rights in the majority, leave the right by exclusion in the hands of a few... all charters have no other than an indirect negative operation. They do not give rights to A, ut they make a difference in favour of A by taking away the right of B, and consequently are instruments of injustice” (Tom Paine, *Rights of Man*) -> the charter is a bad thing

New Historicists argue that all contemporaries of Blake would have noticed this political debate lurking behind the term.

Thomas Pfau’s critique of New Historicism through the ironic enumeration of their axioms (in: *The Philosophy of Shipwreck: Gnosticism, Skepticism, and Coleridge’s Catastrophic Modernity*, *MLN* 122 (2007): 949–1004)

1) *The Axiom of the Archive*: that specialized research, understood as the recovery of previously overlooked materials and sources, amounts to a mode of knowledge production whose significance is taken to be self-certifying.

2) *The Axiom of Contextualism*: that the supposedly new materials so recovered largely imply their own causal and argumentative force simply by being (materially, biographically, or idiomatically) associated with a context whose outline is either being presupposed outright or inferred from the interpretive community (re)currently husbanding it.

3) *The Axiom of Pluralism* (or ‘indifferentism’): that the power and significance of contemporary critique arises from the primitive accumulation of so many disaggregated voices and archival projects, with the further assumption that critical knowledge will spontaneously arise from the open-market interaction of (presumptively) equivalent/indifferent (*gleichgültig*) perspectives.

4) *The Axiom of Retroactive Liberation* (or ‘secularization’): that an institutional, professional, and transactional mode of critique will eventually liberate historical meanings from their alleged past entrapment in religious or ideological norms and values and, in so doing, will restore for us their temporarily missed, yet always intended authentic (secular) core.

5) *The Axiom of Critique as a Guarantor of Historical Progress*: that the transactionalism of modern, institutional knowledge effects a teleological progression towards a hypostatized Liberal community envisioned as wholly transparent, inclusive, tolerant, and exhaustively informed. Crucially, though, this *telos* can only be articulated in a language of permanent deferral and (in what constitutes a diametrical reversal of Aristotelian thought) is being

defined by the *absence* of any specific norms or contents...

6) All symbolization is but a referential operation in disguise (e.g. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is, in fact, about the slave trade, as a *historical referent*) see also: the NH analysis of Blake's London, where "charter" is said to point to two opposing *historical referents*)

POSTCOLONIALISM//DECOLONIALISM

Seeks to analyse the global effects of colonialism. Broadly concerned with experiences of exclusion, denigration, and resistance under systems of colonial control. Addresses itself to the historical, political and cultural, and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the West and the non-West, dating from the 16th century to the present day.

Very much like feminism, “postcolonialism” is not only a critical theoretical approach in literary studies, but also designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority.

Both feminism and postcolonialism: champion resistance to authorities from positions of weakness, and seek the politicisation of areas conventionally considered a non-political (literature, the domestic sphere, education). Postcolonialism is theoretically post-structuralist, and politically radical, “left wing” (in the European-American understanding of the term.)

Postcolonialism/decolonialism:

3 forms:

1. Non-Western national liberation struggles: Frantz Fanon, Gandhi.
2. Theory (influenced by post-structuralism): Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha)
3. Third-World Literature itself

I. Frantz Fanon (1925 – 1961): Algerian psychiatrist (trained in France), member of the Algerian Liberation Movement. -> 1962: liberation of Algeria from the French colonial rule.

Black Skin, White Masks (1952), (1967)

The Wretched of the Earth (1961), (1963)

Black Skin, White Masks: shifts the analysis of colonialism away from the political and economic factors to an emphasis on psychoanalytic factors. Colonised: object of the racist gaze -> colonisation of the psyche -> racialised subject: inferiorised. Colonial double consciousness: the black skin makes him/her a constant object of the racist gaze, while s/he wants to imitate the coloniser, and particularly his culture, out of a feeling of inferiority (white mask). Coloniser: afraid of the colonised, constantly haunted by phobia and anxieties. Need for colonial independence: a new identity, a forceful self-assertion, independent from the colonial situation.

Understands anti-colonial struggle as a binary (Manichean) conflict between the good and the bad: “us” against “them” -> legitimates the use of revolutionary violence against the colonialist rule -> to destroy the binary, and give birth to a new identity.

(In that sense, Fanon opposes the passive resistance (non-violence, no-cooperation) movement of Mohandas Gandhi in India, under the British rule -> liberation of Pakistan: 1947.)

Problems with nationalist movements:

1. Once victorious, they take over the structures of authority of the colonial state: class hierarchies are maintained, and the huge difference between the oppressor and the oppressed remain, though now, they are both black
2. The postcolonial nation operates, in practice, as a politically independent, yet, economically dependent new colony.
3. Postcolonial nationalism only deals with homogenous, monolithic national identities (this problem will be dealt with theorists, such as Homi Bhabha – see: later)
4. Women in the new nations: women are set up by the generally male leaders of nationalist movements as “mother-figures”, excluded from the benefits of citizenship. When they turn against their denigration by their own culture, they are considered to advocate the “western values” of autonomy and self-determination, and feminist claims for equal rights.

II. Theory

Chinua Achebe: “Colonialist Criticism” (1974) - the universal qualities that Western criticism expects from literature are not “universal” but “European” in a universal disguise, he attacks the humanist idea that literature has to transcend its time and place -> need to change university curricula, and the canon (his novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), is written in English and became famous worldwide)

(See also: “most of the objections to ... the African novel sound like admonitions from imperialist mother hens to their wayward or outright rebellious captive chickens. They cluck: ‘Be Universal! Be Universal!’ And what they don’t consider universal, they denounce as anthropological, atavistic, autobiographical, sociological, journalistic, topical ephemera, as *not literary*” - Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike: *Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature*, 1980)

Edward Said: *Orientalism* (1978)

Said: both a US professor of comparative literature *and* a Palestinian activist -> cross-over between theory and practice.

Foucault's influence: power operates through systems of knowledge (information gathering, cataloguing). -> Natives are ruled partly through being represented in anthropological studies, newspapers, and the law. "Orientalism": a systematic discipline or discourse about the Orient: French and British scholarly works construct the Orient through imaginative representations (novels, poems, paintings), seemingly (!) factual descriptions (journalistic reports, travel writing), and claims of scientific knowledge about oriental history and culture -> power and control over the non-West. ->

Natives presented as: weak-willed, inferior, marginal, passive, highly sexualised objects of desire, sensual, irrational, undisciplined, natural, barbarian savages, and, therefore unable to rule themselves. -> they need to be ruled, bc. they cannot ruler themselves.

Colonisers presented as: strong-willed, superior, central, active, desiring, rational, disciplined, civilised, cultivated, and, therefore, able to rule themselves and others.

[Psychologically speaking, this is a form of *projection*: the coloniser projects everything "bad" (the abject) *in him* onto the empty screen of the native – cf: Kristeva's *Strangers in Ourselves*]

Orientalism as a discipline (discourse): offers the framework for a conscious and determined effort at the subordination of the non-West.

Gramsci's influence: domination by consent - the ruling class makes its own particular values and interests central, and it presents them as neutral, universal -> accepting this "common culture", the oppressed classes become complicit in their own oppression. (Cf: the study of English literature in India, Indians playing cricket, etc)

Said's work unmasks the Orientalist claims of objective knowledge of non-Western peoples as a discursive formation: as a network of hegemonic rhetorical conventions and stereotypical notions embedded in Western "desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (8). It tells the history of Orientalism as a Eurocentric process of production of knowledge about the silent Other: the Orient and its inhabitants.

Yet, Said was criticised because of his generalising claims (the implication that all empires function in similar ways), and his assumption that colonised people were utterly silenced by Western systems of knowledge. -> His claims would suggest that the colonised lacked the strategies with which to resist oppression, to answer back.

Said's response to criticism: *Culture and Imperialism* (1993):

“It is no exaggeration to say that liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhorsed, decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the *migrant*, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages.” -> - the migrant, the exile -> poss. of resistance.

Homi Bhabha:

Nation and Narration (1990)

The Location of Culture (1994): "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation"

Influenced by:

Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities* (1984)(very important book!): the nation is always already *imagi-nation*. All community is something “*imagined*” because its members never actually perceive or meet each other -> the nation is the most radical of Romantic fictions made up as a response to specific historical and political crises. “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* [nations and national traditions] where they do not exist” (5-6). This radical fiction (i.e. the nation) creates a feeling of fraternity that renders it possible for millions of people not so much to kill, but willingly to *die* “for such limited imaginings” (Ibid). Possibility condition of the rise of the idea of the nation: spread of newspapers (people reading the same newspapers at the same time are my compatriots), the spread of realist novels (makes it possible for people to imagine things happening simultaneously in a linear, teleological temporality, in a closed – textual – space.) -> Bhabha: the nation is a discursive formation containing “a double narrative movement”:

1. “*pedagogical*”: history, tradition, origins, organic, linear progress – like a *Bildungsroman* (a “continuist accumulative temporality”) -> people are “objects” of this narrative. It justifies and legitimates the idea of the nation by creating a tradition, and produces “national” cohesion.

2. “*performative*”: people are its “subjects”: “subjects of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary [national] presence”, people create it day by day, it takes place in the present, it is not concerned with the past (i.e. the daily lived reality of reading newspapers, owning passports, participating in shared experiences.)

->there is an unstable zone between the two narrative movements: the Third Space: this is where the true writing of the nation happens.

Criticises Said's monolithic structure, which offers no place for resistance -> "in-between spaces"

Said: the coloniser constantly rejects the colonised, yet at the same time acknowledges it. The colonised is that which the coloniser is not, the negative to his positive

Bhabha: Hybridity – there is no fixed model for colonial identity <- both the coloniser and the colonised are affected by the colonial encounter: cultural differences come into contact and conflict, and therefore unsettle the stable identities of both parties.

Identities based on mutual recognition:

I. the coloniser is what it is because he is not the colonised -> gains his own identity from what he (supposes he) is not -> he *needs* the colonised to have a (seemingly stable) identity -> a.) -> there is always already a lack in his identity if he needs the colonised to endow him with one -> destabilisation of his fixed, seemingly self-present and self-sufficient authority. b.) ->the coloniser is driven by both fear (his hatred of the colonised, his difference from him) and desire (his desire for the colonised, because s/he needs him/her.)

II. The colonised also gains his identity from the coloniser <- his identity seems to be fixed by the racist gaze of which s/he is an object. Yet, s/he can return and potentially challenge the coloniser's disciplinary gaze, stare back, and assert his/her independent identity -> his/her identity is not fixed: it is both determined by and free from the coloniser's -> possibility of resistance.

->There is a rupture in both the coloniser's and the colonised's identity -> both identities are hybrid, flux -> the whole system is ruptured (see also: Sinfield) -> possibility of resistance. Hybridity becomes a term to characterise postcolonial writing in general (!), it is *multi-voiced*, hovering in the in-between space between Western and non-Western cultures as a result of the colonial encounter. (Cf: Rushdi, Zadie Smith, etc.)

Mimicry

"colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*" -> "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English." (E.g. Friday in *Robinson Crusoe*)

->"What emerges between mimesis [representation] and mimicry [repetition] is a [form of post-colonial] writing, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of

history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable.” – “the 'national' is no longer naturalizable.” (*Location of Culture*)

Mimicry: imitation, parody, and, therefore, subversion of the colonial discourse by the colonised <- unmasks its artificial (rather than natural or obvious) character. (i.e. if it can be imitated, it is not “natural” but rather artificial – see also: Judith Butler on gender, and esp. the drag, the transvestite)

Gayatri Spivak: b. 1942.

First postcolonialist with a feminist agenda.

A large majority of the colonised has left no mark upon history because they could not, or were not allowed to, make themselves heard. (cf: Walter Benjamin) – especially women. Since colonised women were unheard under patriarchy, they were even more unheard under colonial regime Attacks the complicity of Western female writers and feminists with the imperialist agenda and their white, middle-class orientation (e.g. Gilbert and Gubar fail to emphasise in their analysis of *Jane Eyre* that Bertha Mason is the “creole”, colonised “Other”) key concept: *subaltern* (via Antonio Gramsci, 1930s): the politically and economically dispossessed, the homeless, the unemployed, etc

“Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988): “In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern female is even more deeply in shadow.”

example of the Indian widow sacrifice: the woman commits suicide after the death of her husband. Indian tradition: this cannot be done when the woman has her menstrual period (she has to be “pure”). Yet, one woman went to the pyres during her periods. What is the meaning of this? – asks Spivak. Is this a revolt?

Western point of view: the Indian system is cruelly patriarchal and forces women to commit suicide.

Indian point of view: the widow sacrifice is part of the Indian tradition, and cannot be judged according to Western norms – Western feminism is a mere imposition on “authentic” Indian culture.

What does the woman think? Where is *her* voice? Why did she go to the pyres during her period? We do not know: 1. “Indian tradition” is a tradition formed by Indian *men* – women have no voice in India. 2. “Western feminism” is the feminism of Western women – the Indian woman has no voice in it.

->the Indian woman has no voice at all -> we do not and cannot know what this specific act means -> i.e. the subaltern *cannot* speak.

“Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal. I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman. What is the truth of Friday? [...] No matter what he is to himself [...] what he is to the world is what I make him” (J. M. Coetzee, *Foe*, 121-122 – Coetzee “brushes history against the grain” by re-writing Defore’s *Robinson Crusoe*, focusing on Friday and using a female narrator)

solution offered:

strategic essentialism: political systems must represent the subaltern’s voice (as if she had a universal “essence”), but it must do so while being aware that it is not her voice that they represent.

see also: <http://jelenkor.net/main.php?disp=disp&ID=2413>

Achille Mbembe (1957-)

Necropolitics (2019) <- Foucault’s biopolitics: “to make live and let die” (“Society must be defended”, 1967)

“The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty’s limits, its principal attributes. To be sovereign is to exert one’s control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power.” (*Necropolitics* 66)

“I have put forward the notion of necropolitics, or necropower, to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating death-worlds, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead. I have also outlined some of the repressed topographies of cruelty (the plantation and the colony in particular) and suggested that today’s form of necropower blurs the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom. ” (*Necropolitics* 92)

Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. [...]he had all the sweetness

and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled.[...] The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the

Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe.

I began to speak to him; and teach him to speak to me: and first, I let him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life: I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say Master; and then let him know that was to be my name: I likewise taught him to say Yes and No and to know the meaning of them.

I was greatly delighted with him, and made it my business to teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand me when I spoke; and he was the aptest scholar that ever was; and particularly was so merry, so constantly diligent, and so pleased when he could but understand me, or make me understand him, that it was very pleasant for me to talk to him.

I began to instruct him in the knowledge of the true God; I told him that the great Maker of all things lived up [...] and thus, by degrees, I opened his eyes. He listened with great attention, and received with pleasure the notion of Jesus Christ being sent to redeem us; and of the manner of making our prayers to God, and His being able to hear us, even in heaven. He told me one day, that if our God could hear us, up beyond the sun, he must needs be a greater God than their Benamuckee, who lived but a little way off, and yet could not hear till they went up to the great mountains where he dwelt to speak to them.

My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection, which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. Secondly, my people were perfectly subjected - I was absolutely lord and lawgiver - they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion for it, for me. It was remarkable, too, I had but three subjects, and they were of three different religions - my man

Friday was a Protestant, his father was a Pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist.

John Maxwell Coetzee (b. 1940, Cape Town (cf: Mandela): *Foe*

“I would gladly now recount to you the history of a singular Cruso, as I heard it from his lips. But the stories he told were so various, and so hard to reconcile one with another, that I was more and more driven to conclude age and isolation had taken their toll on his memory, and he no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy” (11-12)

“Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr. Foe: that is my entreaty. For though my story gives the truth, it does not give the substance of truth [...] To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and comfortable chair away from all distractions, and a window to stare through; and then the knack of seeing waves when there are fields before your eyes, and of feeling the tropic sun when it is cold; and at your fingertips the words with which to capture the vision before it fades. I have none of these, while you have all” (51-52)

“Am I become a gipsy unknown to myself?”

“I am growing to understand why you wanted Cruso to have a musket and to be besieged by cannibal. I thought it was a sign you had no regard for the truth. I forgot you are a writer who knows above all how many words can be sucked from a cannibal feast, how few from woman cowering from the wind. It is all a matter of words and the number of words, is it not?” (94)

“To tell my story and be silent on Friday’s tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty”

“I do not love him [Friday], but he is mine. That is why he remains in England. That is why he is here” (111)

“Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal. I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman. What is the truth of Friday? [...] No matter what he is to himself [...] what he is to the world is what I make him” (121-122)

"We deplore the barbarism of whoever maimed him, yet, have we, his later masters, not reason to be secretly grateful? For as long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish?" (148)

"I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will. At such times I understand why Crusoe preferred not to disturb his muteness. I understand, that is to say, why a man will chose to be a slaveowner" (60-61)

"But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday"

ETHICAL CRITICISM

Why is ethical criticism a problem?

18th c.: (Winckelmann->) Kant -> birth of “aesthetics” as a *separate* discipline (i.e. separate from ethics and epistemology)

Epistemology: possibility conditions of judgements of knowledge.

Aesthetics: possibility conditions of judgements about the beautiful

Ethics: possibility conditions of judgements about the good.

When we form aesthetic judgements about an object, we do not care about the existence of the object, we do not want to know it, or gain knowledge from or about it. We are not interested in its moral qualities, and we do not want to use it for any purpose. We merely derive pleasure from its contemplation -> aesthetic judgement entirely disinterested - the beautiful is what pleases without interest (We can make different kinds of judgements about the same object: when we contemplate a pair of shoes in a painting by Van Gogh, we make an aesthetic judgment. When we contemplate the same object - the pair of shoes or the painting itself - in a shop, we consider its aesthetic value, its use value, and its symbolic value -> beauty is not in the object but in the subject who judges it aesthetically)

-> The realm of art is autonomous. Artworks are valuable for their own sake, not because of their service to ulterior purposes, such as moral improvement.

19th- 20th c. Oscar Wilde: Aestheticist movement: “art for art’s sake”.

“There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. (“Preface” to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*)

pushed to extremes: “When Benvenuto Cellini crucified a living man to study the play of muscles in his death agony, the pope was right to grant him absolution. What is the death of a vague individual if it enables an immortal work to blossom, and to create, in Keats’s words, an eternal source of ecstasy?” - aesthetic considerations overwrite moral considerations

20th c: New Criticism: autonomy of art -> art independent from social, historical or political contexts + art is not there to teach us, it is independent from morality. Yet, in the guise of being ethically neutral, these critics are deeply conservative and moralising (e.g. the canon of “great English writers” has a “civilising mission”, criticism has a “moral purpose”, it is a

torch that shows us the way out from the darkness of anarchy and war, “liberal humanism” etc. see: 2d handout)

-> however, moralising has *nothing to do* with what we call “ethical criticism”

Early (!) Deconstruction: interest in the text itself – “there is nothing outside the text”

(Derrida) – history, politics, power are considered to be the effects of discourse/texts/language

Ethical turn *avant la lettre*:

Wayne Booth: *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988)

Narratives always interpret life: they tell us about our lives and other possible lives. When we read a story we find ourselves in a world different from our own; we are exposed to the "Other" and to other value systems -> we are *changed* by our reading, narratives shape our lives, influence our decisions and values e.g. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Orwell's *1984*, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

Our perception of life is shaped by the novels + we evaluate/judge the characters, ask what we would or should (!) do in their situation, what options do they/we have -> Ethical reader: in a position of constant negotiation between a serious commitment to his or her own ethical standards, and a constant openness to the standards of others, and a willingness to alter his or her original position if necessary. -> change.

B. explores “values” implicit in literary works -> “value”: ambiguous term <- actualised by the reader, but the reader does not judge from a neutral or objective vantage point: “the minds we use in judging stories have been in part constituted by the stories we judge; there is no control group of untouched souls who have lived without narrative.”

Questions he asks: “Should I believe this narrator? Am I willing to be the kind of person that this storyteller is asking me to be? Will I accept the author among the small circle of my true friends?” (39) -> considers implied authors as potential friends – the reader decides whether s/he would cultivate friendship with such a person.

In the 1990s: “ethical turn” in literary criticism

1. second half of the 1980s: the radical scepticism associated with post-structuralist and post-modern theories, and especially deconstruction, is seen as nihilistic. Relativist position (the focus on ambiguities and irony) as well as the exclusive concern with texts are deemed not only apolitical but also irresponsible. Can history, and especially the trauma, the tragedies of history, pains and wounds be reduced to the status of textual effects? (Yet: this criticism is

not valid: deconstruction does have a politics and an ethics – Foucault, Derrida, or J. Butler are deeply concerned with political and ethical questions)

2. Paul de Man (who was born in Belgium, but emigrated to the US after WW II, and became the leading deconstructive theorist of Romanticism, as well as Derrida's good friend at Yale University) dies in 1983. In 1987, the young Belgian scholar, Ortwin de Graef discovers that de Man contributed review articles to a newspaper controlled by the Nazi occupiers of Belgium in 1941 and 1942. One in particular, "The Jews in Contemporary Literature", used the language of anti-Semitism (difference between Jewish literature and the rest) in a country where a large proportion of the Jewish population was to be deported to concentration camps. To those who considered that deconstruction denied any possibility of reference and determinable meaning, this hidden secret suddenly became the explanatory force behind de Man's alleged scepticism about referential truth (cf: the distinction bw. referential truth and the referential function of language). -> De Man's whole career was retrospectively rewritten as determined by this secret. Those associated with deconstruction at Yale (such as Derrida) were also forced to reassess de Man's career.

Ethical Criticism: 3 trends

1. Ethical philosophers turn to literary works – e.g. Martha Nussbaum
2. Deconstructive literary critics turn to ethics, and defend Paul de Man:
 - a.) the ethics of reading (J.Hillis Miller)
 - b.) ethics as reading (Derrida, Derek Attridge, Robert Eaglestone, Cathy Caruth) -

Ethical criticism does NOT consider artworks as moral claims, as objects that have a message to be deciphered. Ethical criticism is NOT something that says that the "message" or the "moral" of a given literary work is such and such, for instance that Wordsworth teaches us to love nature. But:

1. Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947): ethical philosopher with an interest in literature. Fictional narratives "cultivate our ability to see and care for particulars [...] to respond vigorously with senses and emotions before the new, to care deeply about chance happenings in the world [...] to wait for the outcome, and to be bewildered to wait and float and to be actively passive" (*Love's Knowledge*, 1990)

->e.g. She teaches philosophy to law students, and gives them, for instance, Dickens's novels to teach them *how* it is to be poor and marginal. Of course, law students now that oppression and poverty is bad (this would be the "message", or the "moral" of D's works), however, Nussbaum's aim is to show the *how it feels like* to be poor. -> art makes us better citizens of the world: *Poetic Justice* (1996)

<- advocates an ethics, and a strategy of reading based on "sympathy" and "sympathetic imagination": we identify/sympathise with the characters and become better people. She claims to draw her arguments from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759):

"How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. [...]By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception."

While reading a novel, we learn what it would be like to be a certain character in a certain kind of situation. This is good mainly if it subverts or calls into question our settled moral views. E.g, an 18th century male reader of Richardson's *Pamela* took it for granted that it was normal for an aristocrat to seduce a maid servant (i.e. Pamela). However, the novel subverts his settled views: the male reader is forced to sympathise with Pamela, to feel how it would feel like to be in her situation -> the novel has a moral effect.

Or: we sympathise with Anzaldua (Borderlands), we can imagine her point of view, we can imaginatively place ourselves in her situation -> sympathy with her makes us better people, with a respect and even sympathy for otherness.

However, as the quotation from Smith also suggests: "we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what *we ourselves* should feel in the *like* situation." -> according to Adam Smith sympathy is, in fact, self-projection.

Nussbaum is criticised by ethically oriented deconstructionist critics, and, particularly, Robert Eaglestone, for 3 reasons.

1. Nussbaum draws an equation between characters and people. Yet, characters are linguistic constructs, they are primarily textual and we cannot simply skip narrative techniques, the medium that presents them: E.g: *Pamela* can be read, as it was indeed read by Henry Fielding in the 18th century, as the journal of a hypocritical woman (Pamela) who does everything and uses all her womanly means to get married to a lord. This reading is made possible by the fact that the novel is narrated in first person singular by Pamela -> without having access to any other point of view, we cannot be sure that she is a reliable narrator. <- Texts are inherently ambiguous, etc. -> Nussbaum is blind to the ambiguities of the text, she offers reductive readings, she thinks that the moral truths in a work are directly available, and there is no need for any act of interpretation. She offers literature *as* moral philosophy.
2. Nussbaum bases her theory on the emotional response of the reader, and on the possibility of identification. She thinks that it is possible to put ourselves in the other's situation and thereby feel exactly what it would feel like to be in his or her situation. Of course, this claim is also highly questionable. Can we ever entirely identify with another? Some narratives are precisely about the limits of "sympathetic imagination". As for Adam Smith, whose work Nussbaum uses (and

misreads!) argues as follows: „As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, *we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected*, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation.” (*TMS*)

3. Nussbaum has a very limited view of the canon
4. She neglects the social, political, cultural embeddedness of literary works, she forgets that novels are written from a certain specific subject position, that they are not things that transcend their age.

“I still believe that no good joke is ever racist. And I believe it for the same reasons that I believe no good play or novel is ever racist, regardless of the politics of its author. The discourse of racism is bald, monotonous, unquestioning, single-voiced and desolate. Art, when it is good... is none of those things. Art is dramatic, and by dramatic I mean that it holds everything in opposition and suspense. / The moment art forgets it is dramatic and grows tendentious, the moment it begins to formulate a programme for the amelioration of mankind, or for spreading faith or disbelief, or for promoting racial disquiet or racial harmony, it ceases to be art. Call it a little novel, comprising voices at intellectual and moral odds with one another, taking you by surprise and told, vertiginously, by a narrator it would not be wise of you to trust.” (Howard Jacobson, qtd. by Stephen Mulhall, in *The Wounded Animal*, J.M. Coetzee & the Difficulty of Reality in Literature & Philosophy, 2009.)

[Coleridge's critique of sympathy/sensibility in 1825 (!):

Sympathy/Sensibility is “far from being either Morality, or one with the Moral Principle ... the very term Sensibility, marks its *passive* nature, and in its mere self, apart from Choice and Reflection, it proves little more than the coincidence or contagion of pleasurable or painful Sensations in different persons.(*OM*, 58) -> Col. places the emphasis on the importance of Moral Acts of Will, and self-reflection, because sympathy is merely a passive contagion of sensations.]

II. deconstructive ethics of reading: J. Hillis Miller: *The Ethics of Reading* (1987)

Reading itself is an ethical act: close-reading and deconstruction mean that we respect the otherness of the text the same way as we respect the otherness of people. Reading must be ethical in the sense of accounting for and disclosing all the ambiguities rather than aiming for a totalising closure.

“[if] this phrase [i.e the ethics of reading] means anything, it must have something to do with respecting any text discussed, with accepting an obligation to read carefully, patiently, scrupulously, under the elementary assumption that the text being read may say something different from what one wants or expects it to say or from what received opinion says it says.” (284)

E.g. Shoshana Felman’s reading of James’s *The Turn of the Screw*: no ultimate meaning. <- first person singular narration by the governess: 1. psychoanalytic reading: the ghosts that the governess can see are the figments of the governess’s deluded imagination 2. New Critical reading: the ghosts that the governess can see are real, they symbolise “evil forces” -> both readings reduce the ambiguity of the story. <- identification with (sympathy for) the governess does not give a valid interpretation.

Task of the critic: to respect the ambiguities of the text, to remain in uncertainties -> emphasis on respect (rather than sympathy).

Miller is criticised because: ethics equals narrative unreadability, reduces all questions of truth, responsibility and self-knowledge to a play of rhetorical codes and figurations; as if reading occurred in a vacuum, unaffected by the institutional, political, social and historical world of the reader or the text.

III. Derrida: even though each reading is a misreading, each reading is an act of *decision* and *responsibility* – the critic responds, with responsibility, to the irreducible alterity (otherness) of the text (text understood as all kinds of signifying practices, *not* only books or novels or poems or plays). The text cannot be reduced to norms, schema, signifying totalities, there is no way to sympathise or identify with it, but one has to respect its difference, its otherness, its alterity, and respond, with responsibility, accordingly. Each decision (in reading) is *singular*, and is dependent on the (political, historical, geographical, cultural, etc) singularity of both the text and the context (that of the text and that of the reader).

E.g. Derrida reads Plato's writings in the context of 9/11, i.e. in the context of global terrorism – (*Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 2002)

Influenced by the philosophy of

Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995) L. was born and grew up in Lithuania, in a Jewish family influenced by Enlightenment traditions. Having completed his doctorate in Germany (where he read Husserl and Heidegger), he moved to Paris. During WW II, volunteered for the French army and was captured by the Germans - he spent the rest of the war as a member of a Jewish forced-labor force. (His parents and brothers, in Lithuania, were murdered during the Holocaust.) After the war, Levinas returned to Paris.

"ethics as first philosophy": The traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge is secondary to a basic ethical duty to the Other. The ethical relation to alterity has a priority over any other relation. The Other is not knowable and cannot be made into an object of knowledge.

Responsibility to the Other is prior to any act of cognition, to any conscious act. It is not something based on knowledge or principles (i.e. the ethical act is *not* determined either by the knowledge of the other/the situation, or by any normative principle). The possibility of acting ethically is rooted in a condition of passivity, in which I am compelled to respond to the command coming from an absolute Other (*autrui*), with whom I find myself in a "face-to-face" relation. It is a condition in which I find myself responding to an unconditional demand, made upon me by a singular Other, or by the "face" of the singular Other. (warning!: Levinas's Other is close to the "Other" of postcolonial theory, but clearly distinct from, even opposite to the "Other" in Lacan. Also: "face" does not have to be taken literally – it rather points to an absolute vulnerability that discloses itself. Of course, by opening myself up to this absolute Other, I immediately make myself vulnerable as well, but this is why responsibility and opening are proper to an *ethical* condition that always has a priority, and that has nothing to do with utilitarian or rational considerations, such as: is it good *for me* to open myself?)

->Derrida: "I have to - and that's an unconditional injunction - I have to welcome the Other whoever he or she is unconditionally, without asking for a document, a name, a context, or a passport. That is the very first opening of my relation to the Other: to open my space, my home - my house, my language, my culture, my nation, my state, and myself. I don't have to open it, because it is open, it is open before I make a decision about it: then I have to keep it open or try to keep it open unconditionally. But of course this unconditionality is a frightening thing, it's scary."

Levinas:

“Saying” (+) as opposed to the “said” (-).

E.g. we respond to the Ancient Mariner’s “saying” (i.e. to the rime itself as a whole that keeps recurring, to the tormented narrative, to the way the Mariner addresses us, and the wedding guest), we respond to the Mariner (to the Other), rather than to his “message” or “moral” (He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small / For the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all) -> the two (the saying and the said) even contradict each other in the poem: if God loves us all, then why does the Mariner have to eternally suffer? Why is not there any possibility for redemption?

Other possible interpretation of the Rime with a focus on the albatross, as a singularity, as “bare life” via Agamben. In this case, the Mariner is erasing the “bare life” of the albatross, and enacts the violence of the Law.

