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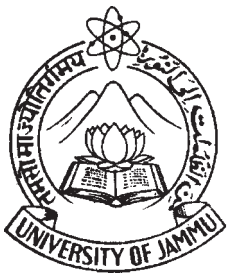

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

M. A. ENGLISH

Title of the Course : Literary Theory II **Course Code : ENG-411**
Semester : IV **Unit : I - VI**
Lesson : 1 - 13

2020

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M.A. ENGLISH LITERARY THEORY II

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to Semester - IV !

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to PG English Semester IV. We started our journey together in 2018 when you enrolled for PG English Programme. After the semester end examination and declaration of result you will earn yours M.A. English Degree. Do study hard and prepare well for the semester end exam and put in a little extra effort to prepare the Internal Assessment Assignments.

You are advised to visit DDE library regularly and make the best use of the books available to prepare notes. You can also prepare simultaneously for your NET/JRF/SET/SLET exam and the study material of course code : ENG-411 has been prepared keeping in view your syllabus and also your preparation for NET/SET exam. Do work hard

With best wishes

Prof. Anupama Vohra
Course Co-ordinator

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU

DETAILED SYLLABUS OF M.A. ENGLISH SEMESTER-IV

Course Code : ENG-411
Title : Literary Theory-II
Credits : 6

Duration of Examination : 3 hrs
Total Marks : 100
(a) Semester Examination : 80
(b) Sessional Assessment : 20

Detailed Syllabus for the examinations to be held in May 2020, 2021 & 2022

OBJECTIVE :

The aim of the course is to acquaint the students with modern and postmodern trends in literary theory.

UNIT-I

Marxist View of Literature : Selections From : *On Art and Literature*

UNIT-II

Post Modernism

(a) Ferdinand-de-Saussure (From Course in General Linguistics)

(b) Roland Barthes "The Death of the Author"

(c) Jacques Derrida "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"

UNIT-III

Feminist Criticism

(a) Elanine Showalter "Towards a Feminist Poetics"

(b) Barbara Smith "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism"

(c) Helene Cixous "The Laugh of the Medusa"

UNIT-IV

Post Colonial Theory

(a) Edward Said Selections from *"Orientalism"*

(b) Homi Bhabha "Of Mimicry and Man : The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse"

(c) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak	"Can the Subaltern Speak ?"

UNIT-V

Psychoanalytical Theory

(a) Sigmund Freud	"On Neurosis"
(b) Jacques Lacan	"On Mirror Stage"

UNIT-VI

Ecocriticism

Cheryll Glotfelty	"Introduction" of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*

MODE OF EXAMINATION

The paper will be divided into sections A, B and C.

Section A Multiple Choice Questions **M.M. = 80**

Q.No.1 will be an objective type question covering the entire syllabus. Twelve objectives, two from each unit, with four options each will be set and the candidate will be required to write the correct option and not specify by putting a tick mark (Ö). Any ten out of twelve are to be attempted. Each objective will be for one mark. (10×1=10)

Section B Short Answer Type Questions

Section B comprises short answer type questions covering the entire syllabus. Four questions will be set and the candidate will be required to attempt any two questions in 80-100 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 5 marks. (5×2=10)

Section C Long Answer Questions

Section C comprises long answer type questions covering the entire syllabus. Six questions, one from each unit, will be set and the candidate will be required to attempt any five questions in 300-350 words. Each answer will be evaluated for 12 marks. (5×12=60)

SUGGESTED READING

Roland Barthes	*The Pleasure of the Text* Trans. R. Millar.
Jacques Derrida	'The Exorbitant Question of Method' in *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.
.....	'The Purveyor of Truth' in *The Purloined Poe : Lacan Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading* ed. John P. Miller and W. Richardson.
Jonathan Culler	*Barthes : A very Short Introduction.*
Terence Hawkes	*Structuralism and Semiotics.*
Lucy, Niall	*Postmodern Literary Theory : An Introduction.*
Eagleton, Terry	*Literary Theory: An Introduction.*
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak	"Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Gary Nelson and Lawrence
Homi Bhabha	*The Location of Culture.*
Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffins (eds)	*The Empire Writes Back.*
Marx and Engels	*Literature and Art: Selections from their Writings.*
George Plekhanov	*Art and Society and other essays In Historical Materialism.*
John Strachey	*Literature and Dialectical Materialism.*
Terry Eagleton	*Marxist Criticism.*
Frederic Jameson	*Marxism and Form.*
Frederic Jameson	*The Political Unconscious*
Jonathan Culler	*On Deconstruction : Theory and Practice after Structuralism.*

Jonathan Culler and Jacques Derrida	*Structuralist Poetics: Structurism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature. Of Grammatology. Writing and Difference.*
Ashcroft Griffith	*The Empire Writes Back.*
Linda Hutcheon	*The Poetics of Postmodernism*
Patricia Waugh, Ed	*Postmodernisms : A Reader.*
Ann Jefferson and David Robey (Ed.)	*Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*.
Jane Routh and Wolff (eds)	*The Sociology of Literature Theoretical Approaches.*

Course Code :- ENG 411 **LITERARY THEORY II**

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MARXIST VIEW OF LITERATURE

STRUCTURE

1.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learners to Marxist Criticism so as to help the learners to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learners to prepare for the semester end examination.

1.2 MARXIST CRITICISM

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had an excellent knowledge of world art and truly loved literature, classical music and painting. In their youth, both Marx and Engels wrote poetry. In fact, Engels at one time seriously contemplated becoming a poet. They were well acquainted not only with classical literature, but also with the works of less prominent and even of little known writers both among their contemporaries and those who lived and worked in more distant times. They admired Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dickens, Fielding,

Goethe, Heine, Cervantes, Balzac, Dante, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov and mentioned many other less famous people who had also made their mark in the history of literature. They also displayed a great love for the popular art, for the epics of various nations and other types of folklore : songs, tales, fables and proverbs.

Marxist aesthetics, like the whole teaching of Marx and Engels, are subordinated to the struggle for the communist reorganization of society. When developing their theory of aesthetics, Marx and Engels naturally based themselves on the achievements of their predecessors. But the main aesthetic problems – and above all the problem of the relationship between art and reality –were solved by them in a fundamentally new way, on the basis of materialistic dialectics. Idealist aesthetics considered art as a reproduction of the ideal, standing over and above actual reality. The origin of any art form, its development, flowering and decay all remained incomprehensible to the art theoreticians and historians of the pre-Marxian period, in as much as they studied these in isolation from man's social existence.

Marx and Engels considered it absolutely impossible to understand art and literature proceeding only from their internal laws of development. In their opinion, the essence, origin, development and social role of art could only be understood through analysis of the social system as a whole, within which the economic factor – the development of productive forces in complex interaction with production relations – plays the decisive role. Thus art, as defined by Marx and Engels, is one of the forms of social consciousness and it therefore follows that the reasons for its changes should be sought in the social existence of men. Marx and Engels revealed the social nature of art and its development in the course of history and showed that in a society with class antagonisms it was influenced by class contradictions and by the politics and ideologies of particular classes.

Marx and Engels gave a materialistic explanation of the origin of the aesthetic sense itself. They noted that man's artistic abilities, his capacity for perceiving the world aesthetically, for comprehending its beauty and for creating

works of art appeared as a result of the long development of human society and were the product of man's labour. As early as in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx pointed to the role of labour in the development of man's capacity to perceive and reproduce the beautiful and to form objects also "in accordance with the laws of beauty." This idea was later developed by Engels in his work *Dialectics of Nature,* in which he noted that efforts of toil "have given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to conjure into being the pictures of a Raphael…" Thus both Marx and Engels emphasise that man's aesthetic sense is not an inborn, but a socially-acquired quality.

The founders of Marxism extended their dialectical view of the nature of human thought to analysis of artistic creativity. In examining the development of art together with that of the material world and the history of society, they noted that the content and forms of art were not established firmly once and for all, but they inevitably developed and changed according to definite laws along with the development of the material world and of human society. Each historical period has inherent aesthetic ideals and produces works of art corresponding to its particular character and unrepeatable under other conditions. The fact that the level of development of society and its social structure determine the content of artistic works and the prevalence of any particular literary or artistic genre was seen by Marx as the main reason that art in different periods never repeats itself and, in particular, that there was no possibility to create the mythology or epic poetry similar to those of the ancient Greeks under the conditions of the nineteenth century.

For Marx and Engels, any social formation constituted a complex and dynamic system of interacting elements, each influencing the other – a system in which the economic factor is the determining one only in the final analysis. They were in no way inclined to qualify art as a passive product of the economic system. On the contrary, they emphasized that the various forms of social consciousness – including artistic creation – actively influence the social reality from which they emerge. Marx and Engels drew attention to

the fact that social life and the ideology of particular classes are reflected in art in a far from mechanistic manner. Artistic creativity is subordinate to the general laws of social development but, being a special form of consciousness, has its own distinctive features and specific patterns.

One of art's distinctive features is its relative independence as it develops. The fact that works of art are connected historically with particular social structures does not mean that they lose their significance when these social structures disappear. Marx and Engels considered as another particular feature of art, the fact that its periods of upsurge do not automatically coincide with social progress in other fields, including that of material production. As far as capitalist society is concerned, this imbalance, according to Marx and Engels, must be considered as an expression of capitalism's fundamental contradiction, the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private form of appropriation. From his analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, Marx draws a conclusion which is of extraordinary importance for aesthetics, namely that "capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production, for example, art and poetry."

In their works, Marx and Engels set forth a number of profound ideas on the class, nature of art in a society of antagonisms. They showed that even great writers, who were able, often despite their own class positions, to give a true and vivid picture of real life, were, in a class society, pressured by the ideas and interests of the ruling classes and frequently made serious concessions to these in their works. The founders of Marxism emphasized that art was an important weapon in the ideological struggle between classes. It could reinforce just as it could undermine the power of the exploiters, could serve to defend class oppression or, on the contrary, contribute to the education and development of the consciousness of the toiling masses bringing them closer to victory over their oppressors. Marx and Engels therefore called for a clear distinction to be made between progressive and reactionary phenomena in feudal and bourgeois culture and put forward the principle of the party approach to art – that it be evaluated from the position of the revolutionary class.

Marx and Engels said that a link existed between art and the class struggle. They pointed out that classes were not static and unchangeable but that class inter-relationships changed in the course of history, the role of the classes in the life of society undergoing complex metamorphoses. Thus, in the period of struggle against feudalism, the bourgeoisie was able to create considerable spiritual values, but having come to power as a result of the anti-feudal revolutions, it gradually began to reject the very weapon it had itself forged in the struggle against feudalism. The bourgeoisie accomplishes this break with its revolutionary past when a new force appears on the historical arena – the proletariat. Under these conditions, attempts by individual members of the bourgeois intelligentsia, in particular cultural and artistic figures to gain a deeper understanding of reality, to go beyond the framework of bourgeois relations and express their protest against these in some art form, inevitably lead them to conflicts with official bourgeois society and to their departure from bourgeois positions.

Marx and Engels apply their dialectical and materialist theory of knowledge to analysis of art and literature. In their opinion, artistic creation is one of the ways of reflecting reality and, at the same time, of perceiving and apprehending it; it is also one of the strongest levers of influencing the spiritual development of humanity. This approach to art forms the basis of the materialist understanding of its social importance and prominent role in the progress of society. When examining literature and art, Marx and Engels concentrated their attention on the problem of realism – the most accurate depiction of reality in an artistic work. They considered realism as a trend in literature and a method of artistic creation to be the supreme achievement of world art.

Engels formulated what is generally recognized as the classical definition of realism. “Realism to my mind,” he wrote, “implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances.” Realistic representations, Marx and Engels emphasized, is by no means a mere copy of reality, but a way of penetrating into the very essence of a phenomenon, a method of artistic generalization that makes it possible to disclose the typical

traits of a particular age. This is what they valued in the work of the great realist writers such as Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe, Balzac, Pushkin and others. Marx described the English realists of the 19th century – Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontes and Gaskell – as a brilliant pleiad of novelists "whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths that have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together." Engels developed a similar line of thought when analyzing the works of the great French realist writer Balzac. He noted that Balzac gave the reader "a most wonderfully realistic history of French society…."

Marx and Engels were highly critical of attempts to place literature above politics and of the theory of "art for art's sake." They insisted that the works of realist writers should reflect a progressive world outlook, be permeated with progressive ideas and deal with truly topical problems. It was in this sense that they welcomed tendentiousness in literature, interpreted as ideological and political partisanship. They were deeply convinced that progressive literature had to reflect truthfully the deep-lying vital processes of the day, to promulgate progressive ideas and to defend the interests of the progressive forces in society.

Marx and Engels stripped away the romantic idealization of the Middle Ages and, at the same time, demonstrated the inconsistency of the abstract view held by the Enlighteners that this was merely an age of social and cultural regression. They pointed out that the transition from slave-owning to feudal society was historically inevitable and showed that the establishment of the feudal mode of production was a step forward in the development of human society.

Marx's and Engels' evaluation of the Renaissance as an age of "the general revolution", "the greatest progressive revolution" explains the warm sympathy they felt for the "giants" of that age. They saw the great men of the Renaissance not just as outstanding scholars, artists, or poets, but, at the same time, as great revolutionaries in world, science and culture. Marx and Engels considered Dante one of the great writers whose work announced the transition from the Middle

Ages to the Renaissance. They saw him as a poet and thinker of genius and, at the same time, as an inflexible warrior whose poetic works were infused with Party spirit and were inseparable from his political ideals and aspirations.

According to Wilhelm Liebknecht, Marx knew the *Divina Commedia* almost by heart and would often declaim whole sections of it aloud. Marx's "Introduction" to *capital* in fact ends with the great Florentine's proud words : "Go your own way, and let people say what they will !" The author of *capital* placed Dante among his most beloved poets – Goethe, Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Engels called Dante a person of "unequalled classic perfection" and "a colossal figure." Marx and Engels held the great Spanish writer Cervantes in high esteem too. Paul Lafargue noted that Marx set the author of *Don Quixote*, together with Balzac, "above all other novelists." Finally, their admiration for Shakespeare, one of their most beloved writers, is known to all. Both considered his plays with their far-ranging depiction of the life of his time and their immortal characters to be classical examples of realist drama.

The most important comment by the founders of scientific communism about classicism, the literary movement of the 17th and 18th centuries was made by Marx in a letter to Lassalle on July 22, 1861. On the basis of a materialist understanding of the development of culture, Marx in his letter rejected the unhistorical idea that classicism was the result of a misunderstanding of the laws of classical aesthetics, with their famous principle of the three unities. He pointed out that, though the theoreticians of classicism had misunderstood classical Greek drama and Aristotle's *Poetics*, this was no accident or a misunderstanding of history, but a historical inevitability. Classicist playwrights "misunderstood" Aristotle because the "misunderstood" Aristotle correspond exactly to their taste in art and their aesthetic requirements, formed by the specific social and cultural conditions of the time.

Marx and Engels uncovered the social, class-historical basis of the ideas of the 18th century Enlightenment. They showed that the Enlightenment was not just a movement in social thought, but an ideological expression of the interests of the progressive bourgeoisie, which was rising up to struggle against

feudal absolutism on the eve of the Great French Revolution. They wrote about the leading men of the Enlightenment in Germany – Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Wieland.

Marx's and Engels' analysis of West European romanticism is of great importance to the elaboration of a genuinely scientific history of literature. Considering romanticism a reflection of the age beginning after the Great French Revolution, of all its inherent social contradictions, they distinguished between revolutionary romanticism, which rejected capitalism and was striving towards the future and romantic criticism of capitalism from the point of view of the past. They also differentiated between the romantic writers who idealized the pre–bourgeois social system. They valued those whose works concealed democratic and critical elements under a veneer of reactionary utopias and naive petty-bourgeois ideals and criticized the reactionary romantics whose sympathies for the past amounted to a defence of the interests of the nobility. Marx and Engels were especially fond of the works of such revolutionary romantics as Byron and Shelley.

Marx and Engels considered realist traditions to be the culmination of the whole of the previous literary process. Characteristic of Marx and Engels was their profoundly internationalist approach to literature and art. They paid equal attention to the art of all nations, European and non–European, large and small, believing that every people makes its own unique contribution to the treasure-house of world art and literature. Their interests included the development of art and literature in England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia as well as the artistic and cultural treasures of the East or of such small countries as Ireland, Iceland and Norway.

They had a special attitude towards the democratic and revolutionary poets and writers who were close to the proletariat. Throughout their lives, they strove to draw the best progressive writers of their time to the side of the socialist movement and to educate and temper them, while helping to overcome the weaker aspects of their work. They actively contributed to the formation of a proletarian revolutionary trend in literature.

Marx and Engels strove to foster a new type of writer and artist who, assimilating the finest traditions of classical literature would take an active, creative part in the proletariat's struggle for emancipation, proceeding from a broad understanding of the experiences and the tasks of revolutionary struggle. The founders of Marxism saw the contradictions in the development of art under capitalism as a manifestation of the antagonistic nature of bourgeois society as a whole and considered the solution of these problems to be possible only after the proletarian revolution and the social reorganization of society.

They showed brilliant foresight in anticipating the basic traits of the new communist society. Communism is above all true freedom for the all-round and harmonious development of the individual. "The realm of freedom", said Marx, "actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane consideration ceases...." Labour freed from exploitation becomes, under socialism the source of all spiritual and aesthetic creativity. Marx and Engels point out that with only given true economic, political and spiritual freedom can man's creative powers develop to the full and that only proletarian revolution offers unbounded opportunities of endless progress in the development of literature. The great historical mission of the proletariat consists in the communist rebuilding of the world. It was in the proletariat that Marx and Engels saw the social force which could change the world and provide for further progress not only in economics and politics, but also in culture, the force which would bring about the conditions required for the full realization of mankind's higher moral and aesthetic values.

1.3 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed the Marxist view of literature. We have learnt how Marx and Engels have applied their dialectical and materialist theory of knowledge to analysis of art and literature.

1.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What do Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels mean by term "class struggle"?

2. What are the main tenets or features of Marxism? How it is related with literature?
3. Distinguish between base and superstructure with special reference to Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels.
4. Literature is important part of Marxist superstructure. Explain how.

1.5 SUGGESTED READING

1. *Karl Marx* by Isaiah Berlin.
2. *Karl Marx : His Life and Thought* by David Mclellan.
3. *Karl Marx : A Nineteenth-century Life* by Jonathan Sperber.

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POST MODERNISM

STRUCTURE

2.1 OBJECTIVES

Our objective in this lesson is to introduce the learners to Post Modernism to help the learners to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learners to prepare for the semester end examination.

2.2 POST MODERNISM

Structuralism owes its origin to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's idea of the sign as a union of signifiers and the signified and the starting point is in the "For Course in General linguistics" (1915). Instead of highlighting the historical development of language, Saussure chose to consider language in 'a

temporal terms' as a system of differentiated signs, which could have meaning within the system of which they were part. The anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss applied Saussure's "ideas in his studies of Kinship, totemism and myth, in order to make intelligible apparently meaningless set of prohibitions or sequence of events, providing them with a rational basis in what he points as universal qualities of mind."

In so doing he promoted a new interest in Saussure and became a focal point for the structuralist movement of the 1960s. The term 'structuralism' refers to the works of structural linguists like Saussure and Jakobson, structural Anthropologist like Levi-Strauss, and structuralist Semioticians like Greimas and Barthes. These critics share a characteristic way of thinking about structures. In the words of Richard Harland, "the structuralists in general are concerned to know the (human) world – to uncover it through detailed observational analysis and to map it out under extended explicatory grids. Their stance is still the traditional stance of objectivity, their goal the traditional scientific goal of Truth."

Lacan, a French Psychologist while defining the human unconsciousness, has given us a significant structuralist notion that has influenced the structuralist activity of our time. The human unconsciousness is structured like a language and Saussure conceived of language as a sign system that communicates in relationships or inter-dependence. A sign gives meaning only in relation to the totality of other signs. A sign consists of a signifier (Sound image) and signified. According to Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. For an understanding of structuralism, an understanding of its linguistic foundation is essential because structuralism in other disciplines is nothing but a metaphor or a model taken from linguistic foundation.

As applied to literature, structuralism tends to work in two opposite directions. Saussure's systemization of language points towards hypotheses about the universal qualities of mind. Roland Barthes asks a pertinent question :

"Is not structuralism's constant aim to master the infinity of utterances (Paroles) by describing the 'language' (langue) of which they are the products

and from which they can be generated." Saussure's concept of 'langue' is precisely the concept of an objective idea. Before Saussure, language was traditionally viewed in terms of a physical sound on the one hand, and a mental idea on the other. Saussure's signifier, in so far as it is taken up into 'langue' is not a thing but a category of sound, a conceptualized 'sound image' and his signified in so far as it is taken up into 'langue' is not an event inside individual subjective minds but an ever present, pre-existing social reality.

Saussure is the first linguist to treat language as a system of signs. He also demonstrated for the first time that linguistic sign is a complex and double entity consisting of the signified (signifie), which is the concept and the signifier (significant), which is the 'sound image.' The first refers to what is being conveyed and the second to the vehicle. Thus Saussure writes: "The linguistic sign writes not a thing and a name but a concept and a sound image."

Ferdinand de Saussure formulated four major dichotomies i.e., langue-parole, synchrony-dichrony, the signifier – the signified and paradigmatic – syntagmatic in his 'Course de linguique Generale' which proved to be the most dynamic of linguistic concepts. These dichotomies influenced structuralist thought and method. Saussure has given a theory and a method to the contemporary structuralists like Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Greimas, Lacan and Althusser. These structuralists follow in their practice the delimitation of the material – i.e., the method of reducing the vast body of material into manageable or tractable size for the purpose of close scrutiny. In structuralist parlance, this method is called 'decoupage' which when rendered into English means 'to cut.' The other method associated with this one is discrete binary cut of division, a fundamental and elementary device for reduction of the corpus into two distinct classes. According to Jackobson, "A set of binary selections is inherent in the communication process itself as a constraint imposed by the code on the participants in the speech event, who could be spoken of as the encoder and the decoder." Following Saussure, Jakobson laid great stress on

binary discrimination as the "first fundamental operation of the human mind basic to the production of meaning." Levi-Strauss, for whom 'binarism' is the first principle of operation, writes: "this elementary logic...is the smallest common denominator of all though." Structuralism can facilitate the appreciation of what the work presents by focusing attention on the relations between parts in a given work of literature identified by reference to a universal typology.

Structuralism is complementary to formalism. A structuralist critic views the work of literature as a kind of meeting place for different systems of meaning. Levi-Strauss and Barthes have given a new direction to structuralism in their practice of criticism. They have followed the Saussurian principle of binary division like nature / culture, raw / cooked, wet / dry, and noise / silence etc. Barthes' "S/Z" analyses a long short story by Balzac in terms of interrelated 'code' of meaning :

"The text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."

Barthes denounces the Romantic idea of genius 'Author-God,' If structuralism is taken to be an effort to link up the culture, mind and universe, then it has suggested that cultures can be understood semiotically. Cultures are structured sign-systems in their own ways. Kinships of various cultures whether primitive or advanced function like semiotic relations.

By saying that a culture is made up 'like that of language' Levi-Strauss is suggesting that the grammar of culture is like that of the grammar of language. Like language collecting relics from the past to create arrangements of signifiers and signified in order to mean, a member of a culture also arranges like a 'bricoleur' which is true of primitive cultures as well. Cultures have binary oppositions like language which Roman Jakobson calls 'distinctive features' such as soft/hard, high energy/low energy, tense/ released etc. The 'distinctive features' of Jakobson run parallel to Troubetskoy's theory of phoneme. Like the Phoneme in its 'distinctive

phonological opposition' leads to meaning-differential, a culture also in binary oppositions creates its meaning. For example, the oppositions between noise/silence, raw/cooked, dry/wet, sister/wife etc. mentioned in various myths of primitive cultures are analogical to Jakobson's 'distinctive features.' The quest of Levi-Strauss for culture universals can be likened to Chomsky's search for 'language universals.' Languages and cultures convey something fundamental about the human mind and the universe.

Louis Hjelmslev improves upon Saussure's concept of sign as a combination of signifier and the signified in his suggestion that the sign is a relationship of two forms: the form of content or signified and the form of Expression or signifier. Then Levi-Strauss, a structural anthropologist and Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist influenced by linguistic structuralism have hinted at a basic notion of structuralism that the human mind especially the unconscious functions analogical to the rules of the world. Structuralism accepted that language does not directly latch on to the facts, but that all expressions in a given language acquire their meaning through contrast with the meaning of other expressions.

Each school of criticism has its validity as well as its limitations. Structuralism is no exception to this rule. A criticism of structuralism is that to discern structures, recurrent patterns, and binary oppositions in literature is not necessary to see what makes literature great or significant. Moreover, much of what we get in structuralist criticism and for the matter in formalist and Post-structuralist criticism is already there in Anglo-Saxon and particularly within the English literary tradition. For instance, Barthes' declaration of 'The Death of the Author' makes no reference to the discussion by Wimsatt and Beardsley of the 'intentional fallacy', but it is clearly in line with it. Similarly T. S. Eliot's scorn for the inner voice anticipates Barthe's attack on expression. Moreover, Empson's study of Semantic changes, *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951) is a direct challenge to Saussure's account of language as a 'system.'

But it is obvious that structuralism offers a theory of literature and a mode of interpretation. Structural analysis does not move towards a meaning of text. The work, as Barthes says is like an Onion:

"A construction of layers (or levels, or systems) whose body contains, finally no heart, 'no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its own envelopes –which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces." (*Style and its' Image*, p.10).

Structuralism has succeeded in unmasking many signs but it has not shown how the signs work. That explains the limitations of structuralism.

2.3 POST-STRUCTURALISM

INTRODUCTION

From notes on lectures given by Ferdinand de Saussure at the University of Geneva between 1906 and 1911, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye have compiled Course in General Linguistics (French: Cours de linguistique générale) published in 1916, after Saussure's death. The book is regarded as the starting point of structural linguistics, an approach to linguistics that flourished in Europe and the United States in the first half of the 20th century. Roy Harris, one of Saussure's translators has summarized Saussure's contribution to linguistics and the study of language in the following way:

"Language is no longer regarded as peripheral to our grasp of the world we live in, but as central to it. Words are not mere vocal labels or communicational adjuncts superimposed upon an already given order of things. They are collective products of social interaction, essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their world. This typically twentieth-century view of language has profoundly influenced developments throughout the whole range of human sciences. It is particularly marked in linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology."

While Saussure was specifically interested in historical linguistics, the Course develops a theory of semiotics that is more generally applicable. A manuscript

containing Saussure's original notes was found in 1996, and later published as Writings in General Linguistics.

STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism is a general approach in various academic disciplines that seeks to explore the inter-relationships between some fundamental elements, upon which higher mental, linguistic, social, cultural etc "structures" are built, through which then meaning is produced within a particular person, system and culture.

Structuralism appeared in academic psychology for the first time in the 19th century and then reappeared in the second half of the 20th century, when it grew to become one of the most popular approaches in the academic fields that are concerned with analyzing language, culture, and society. Ferdinand de Saussure is generally considered a starting point of the 20th century structuralism.

POST-STRUCTURALISM

The terms structuralism and post-structuralism both refer to a political, literary, and aesthetic expansion of Continental Philosophy that developed in the second half of the twentieth century in a fashion parallel to certain developments in analytic philosophy. The post-structural approach is known for its efforts to offer a critical review of normative concepts in classical philosophy, and it makes use of the Linguistic Turn (i.e., the re-evaluation of language in theories of KNOWLEDGE), PHENOMENOLOGY, and HERMENEUTICS alike.

As the term post-structuralism suggests, its representatives have been formed especially through critical discussion with structuralists, such as Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), and the so-called Russian formalists. Among the most important representatives of post-structuralist philosophy are Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Gilles Deleuze (1925– 1995), Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998), Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), and Slavoj •i•ek and his school. Though many of the representatives have French backgrounds, their theories have had influence all over the world, especially in the areas of philosophy of language, Ethics, Neopragmatism, literary

theory, and gender studies. In the United States, the works of Richard Rorty (1931–2007) and Judith Butler are often associated with post-structuralism.

What distinguishes structuralism from post-structuralism is not always easy to identify, but as a general rule poststructuralists see their theories as based on structuralism's philosophy of language (Saussure) and anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), but they apply those insights to a wider range of topics and radicalize some of structuralism's premises. Post-structuralists differ among themselves in their specific approaches, for some proceed historically, some hermeneutically. In addition, some base their work on discourse analysis, and others combine critical theory with psychoanalysis. If there is a basic subject matter that connects these authors in addition to their use of the linguistic turn, it is the influence of phenomenology as found in the works of Edmund Husserl (1859– 1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976).

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Semiology is nothing more than a different way to think about language. Since language is so natural and common, most people pay no attention to how language works. The central function of language is communication and Saussure defines the method of communication as a sign. A sign is composed of two things; a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the word used to reference a concept or a thing and the signified is the actual concept or image that appears in the brain. For example, what happens when a person reads the word "funny"? One reader may think of a humorous joke and yet another person may conjure an image of classic hilarity such as a Roadrunner cartoon. The word "funny" is a signifier because when a person encounters a word they consciously or subconsciously have a concept of what that word is and what the word means in their minds (signified). Even though the signified concept may vary from person to person they still refer to the word "funny." Signifiers and the signified are meaningless without one another. What would be the purpose of having a word for something while having no conceptual understanding of what the thing is or what would be the point of having a concept of a thing in mind if there is no formal signifier to communicate that concept to another person?

It may seem trivial at first but there is a reason to think about language in this way. Having a conscious method of describing language gives every person the ability to better understand the world around him and it also gives social creatures the ability to readily and intelligibly communicate with one another. Saussure's primary goal in redefining language as a system of signs was to get past the linguistic definitions of how language works so that people could focus more on the why's of language. Linguistics had before Saussure focused on specific aspects of specific languages rather than analyzing language as a whole. Semiology is simply Saussure's method of helping the linguistic community move past traditional linguistics in an effort to gain a better educational understanding of what language is.

2.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Saussure began teaching linguistics in

a. 1907

b. 1916

c. 1922

d. 1913

2. *Cours de linguistique générale* was published in:

a. 1913

b. 1916

c. 1922

d. 1897

3. The idea of arbitrariness of language is concerned to:

a. Form and meaning

b. Number of signs

c. Grammar

d. None of the above

4. The physical units used in language have been termed by Saussure as:

   a. Arbitrariness

   b. Signified

   c. Signifier

   d. Langue

5. The relationship between different words belonging to same grammatical category, as per Saussure's concepts, is:

   a. Langue

   b. Parole

   c. Paradigmatic

   d. Syntagmatic

6. Which of the following is false?

   a. Langue is a broader concept than Parole.

   b. The term 'Langue' basically mean 'language.'

   c. Parole depends on the choice of Linguistic aspects by an individual speaker.

   d. Parole is to be studied to study language thoroughly.

2.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. How exactly, according to Saussure, is meaning produced?

2. Define the following key Saussurean terms:

   (i) sign

   (ii) referent

   (iii) signifier

(iv) signified

(v) signification

(vi) sign system

(vii) structure

(viii) différence

(ix) binary oppositions

(x) diachrony

(xi) synchrony

(xii) langue

(xiii) parole

(xiv) discourse

(xv) the paradigmatic axis

(xvi) the syntagmatic axis

3. Explain, in the light of Saussure's essay, the following statement: "The meaning of any utterance occurs at the intersection of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis."

4. Does Saussure's model shed light on the characteristic manner in which humans think and try to grasp reality? If so, how?

2.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a

2. b

3. a

4. c

5. c

6. d

2.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Martin Dodsworth, "Criticism now : the Abandonment of Tradition", *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. (8)

2. Richard Harland, 'Introduction', *Superstructuralism* (London : Methuen 1987).

3. *The Structuralist : From Marx to Levi-Strauss*, ed. Richard T. De George (New York, Double Day, 1972), p.70.

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ROLAND BARTHES' "THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR"

STRUCTURE

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with Roland Barthes. The lesson analyzes Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author." Roland Gérard Barthes was a French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist, critic, and semiotician. Barthes' ideas explored a diverse range of fields and he influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiotics, social theory, anthropology and poststructuralism. It also acquaints the learner with the format of the examination oriented questions.

3.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYIST

Roland Barthes was born on 12th November 1915 in the town of Cherbourg in Normandy. He was the son of naval officer Louis Barthes, who was killed in a battle during World War I in the North Sea before his son was one year old. His mother, Henriette Barthes, and his aunt and grandmother raised him. When Barthes was eleven, his family moved to Paris, though his attachment to his provincial roots would remain strong throughout his life.

Barthes worked hard as a student and spent the period from 1935 to 1939 at Sorbonne, where he earned a license in classical letters. He was plagued by ill health throughout this period, suffering from tuberculosis, which often had to be treated in the isolation of sanatoria. His repeated physical breakdowns disrupted his academic career, affecting his studies and his ability to qualifying examinations. He was also exempted from military service during World War II due to his poor health. While being kept out of the major French universities meant that he had to travel a great deal for teaching positions. Barthes later professed an intentional avoidance of major degree-awarding universities, and did so throughout his career.

His life from 1939 to 1948 was largely spent obtaining a license in grammar and philology, publishing his papers, taking part in a medical study, and continuing to struggle with his health. He received a *diplôme d'études supérieures* (roughly equivalent to an MA thesis) from the University of Paris in 1941 for his work in Greek tragedy. In 1948, he returned to purely academic work, gaining numerous short-term positions at institutes in France, Romania, and Egypt. During this time, he contributed to the leftist Parisian paper *Combat*, out of which grew his first full-length work, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953). In 1952, Barthes settled at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, where he studied lexicology and sociology. During his seven-year period there, he began to write a popular series of bi-monthly essays for the magazine *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, in which he dismantled myths of popular culture (gathered in the *Mythologies* collection that was published in 1957). Knowing little English, Barthes taught at Middlebury College in 1957 and befriended the future English translator of much of his work, Richard Howard, that summer in New York City.

Barthes spent the early 1960s exploring the fields of semiology and structuralism, chairing various faculty positions around France, and continuing to produce more full-length studies. Many of his works challenged traditional academic views of literary criticism and of renowned figures of literature. His unorthodox thinking led to a conflict with a well-known Sorbonne Professor of literature, Raymond Picard, who attacked the French New Criticism for its obscurity and lack of respect towards France's literary roots. Barthes' negation in *Criticism and Truth* (1966) accused the old, bourgeois criticism of a lack of concern with the finer points of language and of selective ignorance towards challenging theories, such as Marxism.

By the late 1960s, Barthes had established a reputation for himself. He travelled to US and Japan, delivering a presentation at Johns Hopkins University. During this time, he wrote his best-known work, the 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" which, in light of the growing influence of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, would prove to be a transitional piece in its investigation of the logical ends of structuralist thought. Barthes continued to contribute with Philippe Sollers to the avant-garde literary magazine *Tel Quel*, which was developing similar kinds of theoretical inquiry to that pursued in Barthes' writings. In 1970, Barthes produced what many consider to be his most prodigious work, the critical reading of Balzac's *Sarrasine* entitled *S/Z*. Throughout the 1970s, Barthes continued to develop his literary criticism; he developed new ideals of textuality and novelistic neutrality. In 1971, he served as visiting Professor at the University of Geneva.

In 1975, he wrote an autobiography titled *Roland Barthes*. In 1977, his mother, Henriette Barthes, to whom he had been devoted, died aged 85. They had lived together for 60 years. The loss of the woman who had raised and cared for him was a serious shock to Barthes. His last major work, *Camera Lucida*, is partly an essay about the nature of photography and partly a meditation on photographs of his mother. The book contains many reproductions of photographs, though none of them are of Henriette. On 25 February 1980, Roland Barthes was knocked down by a laundry van while walking home through the streets of Paris. One month later, he yielded to the chest injuries sustained in that accident.

Roland Barthes' sharp criticism contributed to the development of theoretical schools such as structuralism, semiotics, and poststructuralism. While his influence is mainly found in these theoretical fields with which his work brought him into contact, it is also felt in every field concerned with the representation of information and models of communication, including computers, photography, music, and literature. One consequence of Barthes' breadth of focus is that his legacy includes no following of thinkers dedicated to modeling themselves after him. The fact that Barthes' work was ever adapting and refuting notions of stability and constancy means there is no canon of thought within his theory to model one's thoughts upon.

Works:

Writing Degree Zero

The Fashion System

Elements of Semiology

Mythologies

The Pleasure of the Text

S/Z: An Essay

Sade, Fourier, Loyola

Image—Music—Text

Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes (In this so-called autobiography, Barthes interrogates himself as a text.)

The Eiffel Tower and other Mythologies

Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography

Critical Essays

A Barthes Reader

Empire of Signs

Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980

The Responsibility of Forms: Critical essays on music, art, and representation

The Rustle of Language

Criticism and Truth

Michelet

Writer Sollers

Roland Barthes

A Lover's Discourse : *Fragments*

New Critical Essays

Incidents , *On Racine*

The Semiotic Challenge

What is Sport

Mourning Diary

3.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

Roland Barthes is generally regarded as pioneer of modern criticism. He gave fresh ideas to the critical movement known as 'Structuralism.' "The Death of the Author" is one of the most well known and controversial essays by Roland Barthes. The essay was written in 1967. The essay challenged the traditional literary studies when it was published. It can also be taken as the articulation of the poststructuralist critical movement, though in a very provocative manner. Barthes in the essay stresses the limited meanings of the text and underscores that it is for the reader to reveal these meanings. Barthes declares, "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author." Barthes' essay argues against traditional literary criticism's practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in an interpretation of a text, and instead highlights the issue that writing and author are unrelated. The essay influenced French philosophy, particularly that of Jacques Derrida. Barthes' work has much in common with the ideas of the "Yale school" of deconstructionist critics, like Paul de Man and Geoffrey Hartman in the 1970s. Barthes, like the deconstructionists, insists upon the disjointed nature of texts, their fissures of meaning and their incongruities, interruptions, and breaks.

The ideas presented in the essay "The Death of the Author" were anticipated to some extent by the New Criticism, a school of literary criticism important in the United States from the 1940s to the 1960s. New Criticism differs from Barthes' theory of critical reading because it attempts to arrive at more authoritative interpretations of texts. Nevertheless, the crucial New Critical precept of the "intentional fallacy" declares that a poem does not belong to its author; rather, "it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it. The poem belongs to the public." Barthes himself stated that the difference between his theory and New Criticism comes in the practice of "disentangling."

Poststructuralist skepticism about the notion of the singular identity of the self has also been important for some academics working in feminist theory and queer theory. Poststructuralist writers find in Barthes' work an anti-patriarchal, anti-traditional strain sympathetic to their own critical work. They read "The Death of the Author" as a work that eradicates not only stable critical interpretation but also stable personal identity.

Michel Foucault also addressed the question of the author in critical interpretation. In his essay, "What is an Author?", (1969) he developed the idea of "author function" to explain the author as a classifying principle within a particular discursive formation. Foucault did not mention Barthes in his essay but its analysis has been seen as a challenge to Barthes' depiction of a historical progression that will liberate the reader from domination by the author.

Some scholars have rejected Barthes' argument. Camille Paglia, for example, wrote: "Most pernicious of French imports into American academia is the notion that there is no person behind a text. Is there anything more affected, aggressive, and relentlessly concrete than a Parisian intellectual behind his/her turgid text? The Parisian is a provincial when he pretends to speak for the universe." Literary theorist Seán Burke dedicated an entire book to oppose "The Death of the Author", pointedly called *The Death and Return of the Author*.

3.4 SUMMARY OF THE TEXT "THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR"

The essay "The Death of the Author" begins with the interpretation of a famous French storywriter Balzac's story "Sarrasine." Balzac describes in the story a castrato disguised as a woman. He writes, "this was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussing and her delicious sensibility." Barthes observes who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story ignorant of castrato hidden beneath woman? Is it Balzac the author professing literary ideas on feminity? Is it universal wisdom? Is it Balzac the author professing literary ideas on feminity/ Is it the simple reason that "writing is the destruction of every voice, every point of origin. Writing is that natural, composite oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." This example proves that the meaning of a narrated fact by an author outside of any function other than that of the symbol itself, disconnection between the writer and the narrator takes place, "The voice loses its origin the author enter into his own death, writing begins." The sense of this phenomenon has been changing in history of mankind. In ancient societies, the responsibility for language may be accepted. But he or she is not a 'genius' or originator. In India, the best example of such texts is *Rig-Veda* or *Upanishadhas* where one does not narrate scenes, ideas, philosophy and experiences as well as society and institutions. A reader can go through the works and find meanings. The meanings can vary with person or time and space.

In this essay, Barthes criticizes the traditional literary criticism's practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in an interpretation of a text, and instead argues that writing and its creator are not related. Barthes argues against the method of reading and criticism that relies on aspects of the author's identity—their political views, historical context, religion, ethnicity, psychology or other biographical or personal attributes—to distil meaning from the author's work. In this type of criticism, the experiences and biases of the author serve as a definitive explanation of the text. For Barthes, this method of reading may be apparently tidy and convenient but is actually sloppy

and flawed: “To give a text an Author” and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it “is to impose a limit on that text.” Roland Barthes’ ideas explored a diverse range of fields and he influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism and poststructuralism. As Barthes’ work with structuralism began to flourish around the time of his debates with Picard, his investigation of structure focused on revealing the importance of language in writing, which he felt was overlooked by old criticism. Barthes’ “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives” is concerned with examining the correspondence between the structure of a sentence and that of a larger narrative, thus allowing narrative to be viewed along linguistic lines. Barthes split this work into three hierarchical levels: functions, actions and narratives. “Functions” are the elementary pieces of a work, such as a single descriptive word that can be used to identify a character. The ‘Character’ would be an action and consequently one of the elements that make up the narrative. Barthes was able to use these distinctions to evaluate how certain key ‘functions’ work in forming characters. For example, key words like ‘dark’, ‘mysterious’ and ‘odd’, when integrated together, form a specific kind of character or ‘action.’ By breaking down the work into such fundamental distinctions, Barthes was able to judge the degree of realism and consequently highlights the authenticity a narrative can be said to reflect on reality. Thus, his structuralist theorizing became another exercise in his ongoing attempts to dissect and expose the misleading mechanisms of bourgeois culture. In the late 1960s, radical movements were taking place in literary criticism. The poststructuralist movement and the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida were testing the bounds of the structuralist theory that Barthes’ work exemplified. Derrida identified the flow of structuralism as its reliance on a transcendental signifier, a symbol of constant, universal meaning would be essential as an orienting point in such a closed off system. This is to say that without some regular standard of measurement a system of criticism that references nothing outside of the actual work itself could never prove useful. But since there are no symbols of constant and universal significance, the entire premise of structuralism as a means of evaluating writing (or anything) is hollow. Ideas presented in “The Death of the Author” were anticipated to some extent by the New Criticism. New Criticism differs from Barthes’ theory

of criticism reading because it attempts to arrive at more authoritative interpretations of texts. So this essay deals with the critical analysis of Barthes' view about literary text and the author.

Roland Barthes raises a very important point about the narrative voice and the identity of the narrator. He speaks of two different kinds of narration of fact. He believes that the facts can be narrated transitively or intransitively. The transitively narrated facts are the facts which are narrated with a view of acting directly on reality. On the other hand, the facts narrated intransitively may be without any real function. They are not motivated by any utilitarian end and in the presence of such facts, the author looses hold over the meaning of the words used. Barthes comments, "The voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death in such situations." Barthes obviously has a particular situation in mind when he speaks of the death of the author.

Barthes says that in traditional literary and critical theory, excessive importance has been given to the author. He is highly critical of the personalization of the act of writing in traditional societies. He says that the author is a modern figure, the product of our society. The capitalist ideology attached a great deal of importance to individualism. It related the meaning of a work to the author's beliefs. The author was seen as a medium or a means through whom the work got articulated. He was obviously seen as a mediator. The author centered ideology was anxious to unite the author with his work. The failure of the work was attributed to the failure of the author because the literary work was supposed to reflect his person, his life, his tastes and his passions. The text was considered to be the voice of the author. The presence of no other voice was felt in the text and the whole of the critical analysis was centered on the author. Barthes challenged this view and gave his personal ideas concerning the author and the text. Roland Barthes surveys the attempt in French literary and critical circles to depersonalize art. Though the influence of the author remains powerful, some writers have long attempted to counter it. Stephane Mallarme, a French symbolist poet, did a lot in this direction. He was the first to realize the necessity of substituting language for the author. He tries to stress the viewpoint that it is language which speaks, not the author. Paul Valery also challenged the question of the primacy of the

author. He stressed the written nature of all linguistic and philosophical projects. Finally, surrealism also played the role in weakening the hold of the author on a work's meaning. It was another literary movement which worked to demolish the myth of the author. The movement also propagated the notion of automatic writing, the view that several people can be writing together. Thus the revised theory of language decisively killed the author. Barthes shows that the act of stating of something is an empty process, which does not require the support of the speaker. The meaning of a sentence does not depend on the existence of the speaker. The signs or words themselves are enough to make the meaning of work clear. This idea obviously declined the supremacy of the author. The author disappears from behind the work. He is now understood as the past of his own book. The book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after. Barthes refuses to allow the author an authoritative role because to give an author to text is to finish it with one absolute meaning. Writing has multiplicity of meanings which are to be discovered and analysed. The structure of the writing can be followed at every point. The concept according to Barthes has no fixed meaning and thus literature can never assign an ultimate (final) meaning. A text, says Barthes, is made of multiple writings. It is the reader who deals with the multiplicity of meanings. Barthes seems to be saying that every element read in a text evokes a chain of associations in terms of which the reader interprets the meaning of that element. Thus, in order to give writing its future, it is necessary to ensure the birth of the reader which can be at the cost of the death of the author. The death of the author makes the birth of the reader in a new and more important role. The unlimited power of language can be understood in the multiplicity of meanings of a literary text. This is possible only by giving the rightful place to the reader. Structuralism is a new way of looking at literature as well as other disciplines. It identifies structures, systems of relationships which endow words, identities and meanings and show us the way in which we think. Structuralists develop analytical and systematic approaches to literary text and avoid traditional categories like plot, character, setting, theme, tone etc. Even, more significantly, structuralists tend to deny the text any inherent meaning or authority. Roland Barthes took on theoretical structuralism and added new dimensions to it. He was interested in the study of meaning contained in sign

systems. Earlier, structuralists had ignored that in their study. The application of the structuralist concept of sign system by Barthes advanced the scope of the subject in certain directions.

Barthes traces the history of the evolution of critical thought from a focus on the author to that on the text. Barthes says that in traditional literary and critical theory, excessive importance has been given to the author. The author was seen as a medium or a means through which the work got articulated. He was seen as a mediator. Therefore, the meaning was to be sought in the personality of the author. Barthes gives a high place to French thinkers who played an important role to depersonalize art. Stephen Mallarme, a French symbolist poet did a lot in this direction. He was the first to realize the necessity of substituting language for the author. He stressed the written nature of all linguistic and philosophical projects. Barthes quotes Proust to prove that literature has an essentially verbal character. It cannot be linked to the inferiority of the writer's psyche.

Another important feature of structuralism concerns the structuring of signification in a work of art. The meaning of a sentence does not depend on the existence of the speaker. The signs or words themselves are enough to make the meaning clear. This idea obviously declined the supremacy of the author. He disappears from behind the text. The concepts according to Barthes have no fixed meaning and thus literature can never assign an ultimate meaning. Roland Barthes brings to light another significant contention of poststructuralist thought when he makes the language more important than author. He believes that the unlimited power of language can be understood in the multiplicity of the meanings of a literary text. A text, says Barthes, is made up of multiple writings. It is the reader who deals with the multiplicity of meanings. Barthes seems to be saying that every element read in a text evokes a chain of association in terms of which the reader interprets the meaning of that element.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

Thus, in order to give writing its future, it is necessary to ensure the birth of the reader which can be at the cost of the death of the author. Barthes leads to the conclusion that a text can be seen properly only when the author dies. He

says, “To give that text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with final signified, to close the writing.” So, we can say that Barthes gave a great contribution towards literary theory and criticism. His theory of structuralism and poststructuralism is having a great importance in English literary theory and literary criticism.

3.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Roland Barthes was born in

a. 1913

b. 1915

c. 1917

d. 1919

2. Barthes suffered from

a. Lung cancer

b. Mouth cancer

c. Tuberculosis

d. None of the above

3. **“**The Death of the Author” was published in

a. 1968

b. 1969

c. 1970

d. 1967

4. Barthes served as visiting Professor at

a. University of Oxford

b. University of Cambridge

c. University of California

d. University of Geneva

5. The essay "The Death of the Author" begins with the interpretation of a famous story writer

a. Lacan

b. Freud

c. Spivak

d. Balzac

6. In the essay "The Death of the Author", Barthes argues that

a. author is important.

b. writing and author are unrelated.

c. writing and author are related.

d. None of the above.

7. Barthes says that a text is made of multiple writings. It is the _____ who deals with the multiplicity of meanings.

a. author

b. reader

c. critic

d. None of the above

8. The death of the author makes the birth of the _____.

a. critic

b. writing

c. reader

d. None of the above

9. Barthes says that in traditional literary and critical theory, excessive importance has been given to _____.

a. reader

b. critic

c. author

d. None of the above

10. Barthes died in

a. 1979

b. 1980

c. 1981

d. 1982

3.7 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1: How does Barthes imagine the relationship between the author and the literary work? How does his vision differ from past understandings of this relationship?

Ans: Instead of coming before the text like a kind of demigod with creative power and history, the author exists alongside the text in Barthes' view. Barthes makes the claim that the French poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé was the first to recognize that an obsession with authorship shouldn't govern literary criticism but rather language itself should be the focus of attempts to analyze literary texts. When the author "dies," the text opens up for limitless interpretation. In other words, it opens up for rigorous reading. Of course, Barthes' idea of a reader's role in "writing" the text challenges past preoccupations with authorship in which the author's biography was considered one of the keys to unlock the door to the meaning of the work, and the intentions of the author was one of the objectives of reading. However, Barthes challenges this idea by shifting the focus from the author to the interaction between text and reader.

Q2: What does Foucault argue about the author? Does Foucault's argument completely differ from Barthes'?

Ans: We might summarize Foucault's argument about the author by saying that it is a projection of how we think about texts. What I mean here is that the idea of an author of a given text assumes that these texts are created individually and that this individual creator has some bearing on how we might read the text or, at the very least, should get credit for writing it. Foucault helps us to recognize the "author function" as a projection but

reminds us that people have not always been preoccupied with attaching an author to a text. There were times in our history when literary texts like stories and folk tales stood on their own without any thought of authorship. We come, then, to Foucault's idea that what we refer to as the author is actually the "author function"—the result of our efforts to construct it, and it reflects our belief that what we see written is the product of the original efforts of an individual. Like Foucault, Barthes recognizes the author as a modern phenomenon that is a product rather than a given. Therefore, Barthes notes that the death of the author allows for the birth of the reader.

Q3: How does Roland Barthes imagine the relationship between an author and the author's literary work? How does his vision differ from past understandings of this relationship?

Ans: Barthes argues that readers should understand the literary text as more than just a reflection or product of its author. Barthes makes the claim that the nineteenth-century French poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé was the first to recognize that an obsession with authorship shouldn't govern literary criticism; rather, language itself should be the focus of attempts to analyze literary texts. That is, when the author "dies," the text opens up to the reader for limitless interpretation and analysis. Barthes' idea of the reader's role in "writing" the text in this way challenges past preoccupations with authorship—interpretations in which the author's biography was considered one of the keys to unlocking the meaning of the work, and the intention of the author was a primary focus of reading. In opposition to these previous modes of interpretation, Barthes shifts the critical focus from the author to the interaction between the text and the reader.

Q4: What does French literary critic Michel Foucault argue about the concept of the author? How is Foucault's argument about the author both similar to and different from Roland Barthes'?

Ans: We might summarize Foucault's argument about the author by saying that it is a projection of how we think about texts. The contemporary idea of

an author of a given text assumes that 1) texts are created individually and 2) the individual creator of a text influences our reading of that text—or, at the very least, the creator of a text should get credit for writing it. Foucault challenges this notion, presenting *the author function* as a projection of the reader and arguing that readers have not always been preoccupied with attaching an author to a text. That is, there have been times in our history when literary texts such as stories and folk tales stood on their own with little consideration for authorship. According to Foucault, what we refer to as *the author* is actually *the author function*—the result of our effort to construct an author, an effort that reflects our belief that what we see written on the page is the product of the original efforts of an individual. Like Foucault, critic Roland Barthes argues that the concept of the author, as a modern phenomenon, is a product of our cultural and historical context rather than a given circumstance. But Barthes further argues that the "death" of the author subsequently allows for the "birth" of the reader as an active participant in creating the meaning of a text.

3.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Critically examine the summary of Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author."

Q2. Discuss Barthes' views about the Author in his essay "The Death of the Author."

Q3. Describe briefly Barthes' views in "The Death of the Author."

3.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1.	b	6.	d
2.	c	7.	b
3.	d	8.	c
4.	d	9.	c
5.	d	10.	b

3.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Knight, Diana. *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes.* New York: G.K Hall, 2000.
2. Kolesch, Doris. *Roland Barthes.* New York: Campus, 1997.
3. Moriarty, Michael. *Roland Barthes.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.

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JACQUES DERRIDA'S "STRUCTURE, SIGN AND PLAY IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES"

STRUCTURE

4.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learner to Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" to help the learner to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learner to prepare for the semester end examination.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

"Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (French: La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines) was a lecture presented at John Hopkins University on 21 October 1966 by philosopher Jacques Derrida. The lecture was then published in 1967 as a chapter of *Writing and Difference* (French: L'écriture et la différence).

"Structure, Sign, and Play" identifies a leaning for philosophers to denounce each other for relying on problematic discourse, and argues that this reliance is to some degree inevitable because we can only write in the language we inherit. Discussing the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Derrida argues that we are all bricoleurs, creative tinkerers who must use the tools we find around us.

4.3 JACQUES DERRIDA'S "STRUCTURE, SIGN AND PLAY IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES"

Deconstruction can roughly be described as applied post-structuralism. Deconstruction is often referred to as 'reading against the grain' or 'reading the text again itself' with the purpose of 'knowing the text as it cannot know itself.' Deconstruction is not synonymous with destruction. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word analysis, which etymologically means to undo. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text.

"The Death of the Author" (1968) is the hinge round which Barthes turns from structuralism to post-structuralism. In the essay, he announces the death of the author, which is a rhetorical way of asserting the independence of a literary text and its immunity to the possibility of being unified or limited by any notion of what the author might have intended, or crafted into the work. Instead, the essay makes a declaration of radical textual independence: the work is not determined by intention, or context. Rather, the text is free by its very nature of all such restraints. Hence, as Barthes says in the essay the corollary of the death of the author is the birth of the reader.

Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" was presented at a symposium on Structuralism at the John Hopkins University. Throughout the 1970s, it remained an influential piece of critical writing in America. In this essay, he takes a circle as a metaphor for structure, which defines its organization and shape in terms of its relation to its centre. According to Derrida, "The whole history of the concept of structure must be thought of as series of substitutions of center for center.. successively, and in a regulated fashion the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the

history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix .... is the determination of being as presence in all the senses of this word. It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles or to the center have always designated the constant of presence."

Derrida believes that a text does not have fixity of meaning, on the other hand, it has potentials for meaning and it admits of several interpretations (certainly more than one), into what Derrida has called a "free play" of meaning.

Derrida borrows a set of binary distinctions from Saussurean linguistics (such as nature / culture, raw / cooked etc.) to contest the claims of Western metaphysics. Language, Derrida believes, is a system of signs and the relation between language and reality is taken as the relation between a set of signifiers and a corresponding set of signified.

Derrida in this essay contests the claim of western metaphysics with reference to speech and writing. Logos, in western Metaphysics, is the divine will or the word of God. Derrida comments on the metaphysical background of the spoken word and the written word in the following way :

God's understanding is the other name for logos as self-presence. The logos can be infinite and self present, it can be produced as auto-affection, only through voice : an order of the signifier by which the subject takes from itself to itself, does not borrow outside of itself the signifier that it emits and that affects it as the same time. Such is at least the experience of the voice.

Thus to Derrida, the traditional concepts of speech and writing are "Logocentric." Apart from "Logocentrism", Derrida introduces another term "graphocentrism." Graphocentrism can mean the shift in importance from speech to writing. It is a reversal of the traditional concept of the superiority of speech or the spoken word over the writing or the written word. There are critics who observe that Derrida is effecting a shift from logocentrism to graphocentrism.

Derrida groups metaphysics, linguistics and structuralism into one category. Because all these three disciplines have taken writing as secondary, as something that exists only to represent the voice that it embodies, the voice that reveals the meaning. Derrida calls this concept of writing, the "vulgar concept." He makes an

attempt as it were to liberate language and criticism from the totalizing and totalitarian influence of metaphysics.

The new concept of writing proposed by Derrida has three complex words : "difference", "trace" and "arch writing." Difference has two aspects : differing and deferring. Differing is the one not being the other. It is spatial. Deferring is something being delayed or postponed. It is temporal. Each sign according to Derrida performs two functions : differing and deferring. Thus differing and deferring, not by the signifier and the signified condition the structure of the sign. In fact, every sign differs from every other sign. The difference is one of the two forces of each sign. The other force of the sign is its power of deferment, the capacity to postpone. Therefore, a sign is something that is not there. For example the "rose" in a poem begins to reveal meaning only when we realize that it is not the flower, which we see in reality. It has to be something else, what it has to be discovered. Therefore, half of the sign is what it is not and the other half is what is not there. These two forces inhabit each sign. It follows that the sign has to disappear to give meaning. That means, each sign is half adequate and half inadequate, because it does not convey the idea perfectly, but it has to be used under necessity since no more adequate sign is available. No sign is fully adequate. And therefore every sign is written "under erasure", "sous rapture" a term that Derrida coins to express "the inadequacy of the sign."

While accepting Saussure's basic tenets of language, Derrida reinterprets them in order to evolve his own concept of deconstruction in language. For instance, he has put "difference" in place of Saussure's "difference." which means French sense of "deferment" together with Saussure's meaning of "difference." Derrida goes beyond Saussure in his emphasis on deferment which implies that the present is constantly postponed and the ultimate remains unsaid. The nature of language that conveys meaning through differences between linguistic signs and where the sign present is marked by the traces of the signs absent precludes the possibility of saying anything with finality.

Derrida groups literature and other allied disciplines like psychology, philosophy, politics, linguistic etc., under one head called "human sciences." He has dissolved the distinction between philosophy in the wider sense including the

philosophy of language and literature. Writing because of the free play of differences and the use of tropes is always marked by deconstruction. Deconstruction implies that the writer himself unbuilds whatever he builds. It views poetic structure as temporal resulting in free play of signifiers.

Deconstruction attempts to demolish the myth of language by exposing the metaphysical foundation of our understanding of language. Commenting on Derrida's concept of writing, Gayatri Spivak states that it is "something that carries within itself the trace of perennial alterity; the structure of the psyche, the structure of the sign. To this structure, Derrida gives the name writing." Further elaborating the concept of writing, Spivak writes: "Writing then is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace. This is a broader concept than the empirical concept of writing, which denotes an empirical system of notation on the material substance."

Derrida points out that "as there is no origin or centre outside, the discourse for establishing boundaries for the play of linguistic signifiers, each sign in itself is not the thing or presence that offers itself to interpretation but the interpretation of other signs; a centre diminishes the structurality of the structure by posting an objective reality."

Derrida believes that literature is only a free play of signifiers without a centre. He argues that "far from presenting any meaning words carry with them a certain absence or indeterminacy of meaning." Derrida has established that the Western text has made language subservient to the presence of God, the logos, and subjectivity. His theory of deconstruction aims at liberating language from the traditional western concept of text along with ways of dealing with it. It is in this regard that Derrida proposes "dissemination" as an alternative to the polysemy of interpretation. In the words of Derrida:

There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of free play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin, which is free from free play and from the order of the sign, and lives like an exile the necessity of interpretation. The other, which is no longer turned towards the origin, affirms free play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name man being the name of that being who throughout the history of metaphysics or of

ontotheology in other words, through the history of all his history has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game.

Thus according to Derrida, in spite of the "difference" (difference + deference) that the author makes between one word and another, he can never express his meaning accurately and exactly. He must always mean more than and something different from that he indicates through writing (ecriture). The critic should take the words of the poet or writer not as outward, visible grab of his meaning but merely as "trace" or indicator of his meaning. Every word used by an author is to be taken as under erasure. Thus the critic taking his cue from the "trace", must go out on a quest of a closer approximation to the actual meaning intended by the author. Thus criticism becomes an endless pursuit and the critic becomes a co-creator who takes the text over from the author. The theory of deconstruction takes off well but it does not land us anywhere. Therein lies both the strength and weakness of this theory, and Derrida' s essay proves this point.

4.4 LET US SUM UP

Derrida says that it is naive to refer to an event, doctrine or an author to designate the occurrence of decentering and a thinking of structurality of structure, as it is no doubt part of the totality of an era, but still it has always already begun to proclaim itself and begun to work. (Derrida, 1980: 355) The names he chooses, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger are indications only of a movement and a thinking of decentering and the structurality of structure that always has been already inscribed in the discourse itself. He thus implies that the thinking of the structurality of structure has always been implicit in discourse and these names that he chooses could be entirely arbitrary but are those that have formulated the thinking of the structurality of structure in its most radical formulation. (Derrida, 1980: 356)

There is no thought that escapes structure, whether it involves building a system around an arche or a system that decenters it. There is no language outside metaphysics and the structures that determine it. All languages and thought affirm the structurality of structure. As Derrida puts it: "This event I call a rupture, the disruption I alluded to at the beginning of this paper, presumably would have come about when the structurality of structure had begun to be thought, that is to say, repeated, and this is

why I said this disruption was repetition in every sense of the word." (Derrida, 1980: 353) The rupture of metaphysics thus involved repetition and redoubling rather than being any simple decentering of metaphysics. Derrida argues that the event of a rupture that comes with the decentering of metaphysics involves a redoubling of metaphysics and an opening of metaphysics to think its Other. To quote Derrida, "What would this event be then? Its exterior form would be that of a rupture and a redoubling." (Derrida, 1980: 351) Structure is something that has either been affirmed or deviated from, all the time being re-inscribed in discourse. No discourse escapes structure and the metaphysical constraints it imposes in the form of the structurality of structure, whether the center is affirmed or negated. As Derrida argues:

> There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax or lexicon- which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest." (Derrida, 1980: 354)

Derrida thus argues that we have no language which is not already informed by metaphysical presuppositions; hence, all destructions of metaphysics that proceed from within the confines of language repeat the metaphysics they seek to destroy.

There is thus nothing outside the text, the text being the structurality of structure, whether it negates or affirms presence all thought affirms that the possibility of metaphysics comes about through its repetition, or iterability. The sense of history implied by the structure of repeatability is the history of the determination of being as presence, where there is an origin that is referred to and recalled in its repetition. The nostalgia for a lost origin, a presence and self-presence of innocence of a prior time untainted by chance and skepticism, is what has determined the structure of repeatability, a history of being as presence. (Derrida, 1988: 367) Derrida argues that this historic determination of being as presence is a myth. The mark only exists through its mediation and iteration. It does not exist separately from its iteration. As Derrida argues, "The Absolute is passage." Ideality is constituted through repetition. Hence

there is no instance of the mark that lies outside the structure of its iteration. All thought is always delayed; it is communicated to us through the passage of differance. It follows that the structurality of structure has determined human thought and philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche; metaphysics has always re-inscribed itself in human thought whether as a positive or a negative.

4.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What does Derrida say about structure, sign and play in his essay "structure, sign and play in the Discourse of the Human sciences"?
2. What is the deconstruction theory attributed to Derrida?
3. Derrida, in his work "Differance," has used many binary oppositions to explain his work "Difference". Please cite all the binary oppositions to frame the answer.

4.6 SUGGESTED READING

1. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences," ed. B. Das and J. M. Mohanty, Literary Criticism : A Reading Calcutta: O.U.P., 1985
2. Sankaran Ravindran, "Jacques Derrida and the Theory of Deconstruction", The Indian Journal of English Studies, Vol.XX, 1980.
3. Gayatri Spivak, "Preface to of *Grammatology*" by Jacques Derrida,
4. Baltimore and London : John Hopkins University Press, 1974

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ELAINE SHOWALTER : "TOWARDS A FEMINIST POETICS"

STRUCTURE

5.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learner to Elaine Showalter's "Towards a Feminist Poetics" to help to learner to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learner to prepare for the semester end examination.

5.2 ELAINE SHOWALTER "TOWARDS A FEMINIST POETICS"

Elaine Showalter (b. 1941) taught English and Women's Studies for many years at Rutgers University, and is now a Professor of English at Princeton. Her book, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) quickly established itself as an authoritative study of its subject, and a standard textbook in the rapidly burgeoning field of women's studies.

Contemporary feminist criticism obviously derived its original impetus from the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s, Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* (1968) and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) being pioneering books in this respect. The initial effort of feminist critics was to revise orthodox 'male' literary history, exposing sexual stereotyping in canonical texts and reinterpreting or reviving the work of women writers. Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* was a major contribution to this project, but by the late 1970s it seemed to her that feminist criticism had reached 'a theoretical impasse.' In a lecture delivered in 1978, entitled 'Towards a Feminist Poetics' (published in *Women's Writing and Writing About Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus [1979], reprinted in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Showalter [1985]), she attributed this impasse to the essentially male character of 'theory' itself, as practised and professionally institutionalized in the academy.

In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", first published in *Critical Inquiry* in 1981, she finds feminist criticism no more unified, but more adventurous in assimilating and engaging with theory: 'it now appears that what looked like a theoretical impasse was actually an evolutionary phase.' This lucid and informative survey of contemporary feminist criticism is backed up with notes that constitute a valuable bibliography of the field. It is reprinted here from *The New Feminist Criticism*, edited by Elaine Showalter (1985).

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

before us. It is no longer the ideological dilemma of reconciling revisionary pluralisms but the essential question of difference. How can we constitute women as a distinct literary group? What is the difference of women's writing?

Feminist literary criticism offers strategies for analyzing texts to emphasize issues related to gender and sexuality in works written by both men and women, but is particularly concerned with women's writing. Inherently interdisciplinary, it is not singular but plural, assuming a variety of forms and approaches to texts. Feminist literary analysis may examine:

(i) Images of women and representations of female experience in texts written by authors of either sex.

(ii) Women writers, including the specific qualities and concerns of female authorship and the creation of a female tradition or canon.

(iii) Women readers, focusing on the role gender plays in the reception of literary texts and the emergence of a distinct female readership.

(iv) Language, attempting to define a distinctly feminine mode of writing or *ecriture feminine.*

(v) Literary form, particularly the relationship between literary genre and gender.

(vi) Publication, noting the impact of the publishing system on the production and consumption of texts by women.

In the early 1960s, feminist criticism and theory established itself as a distinct form of literary and cultural analysis. It emerged as a part of the larger political movement for women's rights and was preceded by a long and rich tradition of literary criticism by women dating from the medieval period. The earliest critics, such as Aemilia Lanyer, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn, expressed the fundamental ambivalence of early female literary critics: faith in their powers of judgment but fear that expressing such conviction may be "unfeminine." Christine de Pisan appealed to the authority granted by her position as a woman: "in that I am indeed a woman, I can better bear witness on this aspect than he who has no experience of it." In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women presiding over literary salons in France and England, such as

the bluestocking circle, established themselves as judges of literary excellence and adjudicators of fame. With the rise of criticism as a separate literary establishment in the eighteenth century, women's contributions-like men's-became more formalized.

By the nineteenth century, the first wave of feminism-the push for access to equal education, the professions, and political institutions-challenged separate standards of appropriateness for female readers and highlighted the connection between gender and genre, particularly in defense of the novel as a respectable literary form. In *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Jane Austen used Fanny Burney's novels to justify novels as works "in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language."

A century later, Virginia Woolf again justified women's choice of the novel but with a difference, identifying a distinctly female literary tradition. She praised Austen and Emily Bronte for writing "as women write, not as men write." In *A Room of One's Own* (1928), Woolf noted the odd dichotomy between the "woman in fiction," as she is represented in the works of men, and the woman as author: "she pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history."

The second wave of feminist criticism that emerged in the early 1960s followed Woolf's lead in focusing on the place of women in literary history, creating a female canon and establishing forms of literary criticism that highlighted gender distinctions in writing, culture, and society. As a separate area of investigation, feminist literary criticism emerged in the late 1960s in the context of the contemporary women's movement and increased attention to civil rights in the United States, the intellectual revolutions undertaken by students and workers in France that toppled the government of President de Gaulle, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the resurgence of Marxism and trade unionism in Britain. What distinguished contemporary feminist criticism from that of previous eras was the self-consciousness or self-awareness of its enterprise. Feminist literary criticism became

institutionalized, conceiving itself as a collective endeavor of female writers and scholars engaged not only in the practice of literary criticism but also in establishing a tradition of women's literature and feminist critique.

In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Elaine Showalter not only engaged in recovering a buried or suppressed feminine tradition but also sought to give it shape and direction. She organized English women's writing into three periods-Feminine, Feminist, and Female-divided not simply chronologically but in terms of their subject matter and their authors' conscious awareness of women's position in society and culture. During the "Feminine" period (1840-80), "women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female nature" ("Toward," 137). Examples include George Eliot for the "distinguishing sign" of the male pseudonym, signalling women writers' desire to be accepted as the equivalent of men. Authors identified as "Feminist" (1880-1920) "reject the accommodating postures of femininity and. . . use literature to dramatize the ordeals of wronged womanhood" (138). The "purest" examples are the Amazon utopias of the 1890s, "fantasies of perfected female societies set in an England or America of the future" (138). Finally, authors of the "Female" period (1920-present) "reject both imitation and protest-two forms of dependency-and turn instead to female experience as a source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature" (139). Showalter examined the work of Dorothy Richardson and, not surprisingly given her title's obvious allusion to *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf herself as evidence of a distinct and separate female tradition.

By the late 1970s, feminist criticism revealed self-consciousness about the practice of feminist literary history and the feminist critical enterprise itself. In "Toward a Feminist Poetics" (1979), Showalter identified "two distinct varieties of feminist criticism." The first, "feminist critique," is focused on *Woman as reader*—with woman as the consumer of male-produced literature, and with the way in which the hypothesis of a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes. . . . [I]t is a historically grounded inquiry which probes the ideological

assumptions of literary phenomena. Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions of and misconceptions about women in criticism, the fissures in male-constructed literary history. It is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulations of the female audience, especially in popular culture and film; and with the analysis of woman-as-sign in semiotic systems. (128)

Representative works of this form of critique included Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader* (1978). Fetterley contended that "American literature is male. To read the canon of what is currently considered classic American literature is perforce to identify as male" (564). She advocated, by contrast, that "the first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcising the male mind that has been implanted in us" (570).

Showalter's second type focused on "woman as writer-with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women. Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works" (128). She termed this form "gynocriticism," adapted from the French term *la gynocritique*.

Despite Showalter's contention that "both kinds are necessary," the second-"woman as writer" -in fact predominated from the late 1970s and into the 1980s. Feminists emphasized not women's equality with, but their difference from men, noting that such differences are not natural or essential but culturally determined. According to Stephen Heath:

> Difference . . . speedily comes round to an essence of woman and man, male and female, a kind of anthropologico-biological nature. But men and women are not simply given biologically; they are given in history and culture, in a social practice and representation that includes biological determinations, shaping and defining them in its process. The appeal to

> an "undeniable" biological reality as essential definition is always itself a form of social representation, within a particular structure of assumption and argument. (222)

For literary critics, the social construction of difference could potentially account for issues of female authorship and provide a framework for discussion of texts as distinctly feminine. Their critical claim clearly echoes Virginia Woolf's discussions of sexual difference and androgyny written decades earlier.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) offered at once a revisionist literary history focused on women authors of the nineteenth century and a theory of female literary creation derived from a feminist reinterpretation of the "anxiety of influence", Harold Bloom had traced in male authors. Bloom had argued that male authors suffer anxiety when confronted by the literary achievements of their predecessors; Gilbert and Gubar argued that the female artist faced a doubled anxiety, cowed not only by her male literary predecessors but also by strictures against feminine authorship. They asserted that the pen is a "metaphorical penis" and that traditional metaphors of authorship focus on the writer as "father" of his text. How can a woman thus pick up the pen? Further, they argued that "for the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself" (17). Patriarchal texts have offered two competing visions of woman as the "eternal feminine" -the "angel in the house" who is passive, docile, and selfless-or as the monstrous creature, the "madwoman," who refuses this submissive role and asserts herself-in action and in writing.

Women writers of the nineteenth century, they argued, resolved this dilemma through duplicity and subversion:

> Women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards. (73)

In Dickinson's words, the woman writer would "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant." By such duplicity, according to Gilbert and Gubar, the female author could appear as an "angel" by ostensibly conforming to patriarchal conventions while in fact subverting them in her texts.

The result is a "female schizophrenia of authorship," the figure for which is the madwoman, such as Bertha Mason in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. She is the "author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage." As such, the female writer's monster is a parody of patriarchal conventions:

In projecting their anger and dis-ease into dreadful figures, creating dark doubles for themselves and their heroines, women writers are both identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them. All the nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary women who evoke the female monster in their novels and poems alter her meaning by virtue of their own identification with her. For it is usually because she is in some sense imbued with inferiority that the witch-monster-madwoman becomes so crucial an avatar of the writer's own self. (79)

Gilbert and Gubar's readings of these texts served as a model of feminist literary criticism in which the reader is attentive to textual strategies, to subversions and parodies of traditional plots, images, and characters as a means of recuperating the female author and her text. This strategy of reading against the grain proved influential for feminist criticism in the 1980s.

A Critical Summary of Elaine Showalter's "Toward a Feminist Poetics." Women's Writing and Writing About Women. Ed. Mary Jacobus. London: Croom Helm, 1979. Rpt. in The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends. Ed. David H. Richter. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford, 1998. 1375-86.

Feminist criticism has often been attacked by those who do not understand it. Detractors have described it as "women's lib propaganda masquerading as literary criticism" (qtd. in Showalter 1375). In "Toward a Feminist Poetics," Elaine Showalter suggests that such attacks have resulted from a failure or unwillingness of feminist critics to articulate clearly a theory for

their practice. Showalter sets out to offer an introduction to feminist criticism by comparing two types: the feminist critique and gynocritics.

The feminist critique focuses on the woman as a reader of male-produced and male-oriented texts. As "a historically grounded inquiry," the feminist critique probes the engendered "ideological assumptions" of literature (1377). It evaluates the "sexual codes" of the literary text and explores how "the hypothesis of a female reader" effects an assessment of meaning (1377). Such criticism is "essentially political and polemical," but Showalter concludes that it is still male-oriented (1377). The subject being studied is not a woman's experience, but "what men have thought woman should be" (1378).

Showalter argues that the focus of feminist criticism should not be delineated by male perceptions and assumptions. Rather, it should be on the woman's experience. Literature written by women inevitably contains just that. Because of their "educational, experiential, and biological handicaps," women develop their "sympathy, sentiment, and powers of observation" to bring the substance and significance of the female experience to readers (1382). In women's literature, these qualities become what Virginia Woolf termed the "'precious specialty,' [of] a distinctly female vision" (1383).

Showalter identifies the "precious speciality" as the essential focus of gynocritics. Concerning itself with woman as a writer, gynocritics approach woman as "the producer of textual meaning" (1377). From this view, literary criticism must create and elucidate new models that are based on female experiences. The "precious specialty" of feminist criticism is in part a result of the relationships that women have with one another. By describing and evaluating this female subculture, a framework for the new models of analysis can be built. Gynocritics is based upon "research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which developed hypotheses of a female subculture" (1379). Emerging from this research, one focal point of criticism has been the mental suffering of women in an inhospitable social environments. Another has been "the alienation from and rejection of the mother that daughters have learned under patriarchy" (1382). In recent years, however, the evolution of the female subculture has noted as "the death of the mother as witnessed and

transcended by the daughter has become one of the most profound occasions of female literature" (1382).

Yet another important focus of gynocritics has been the recovery of a female literary history and tradition. Gynocritics seek "to rediscover the scores of women novelists, poets, and dramatists whose work has been obscured by time, and to establish the continuity of the female tradition" (1383). They seek to "re-create the chain of writers [. . .] the patterns of influence and response from one generation to the next" (1383).

According to Showalter, there have been three phases of female literary evolution: the Feminine phase, the Feminist phase, and the Female phase.

During the Feminine phase (1840-1880), women wrote in attempt to "equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture" (1383). One sign of this stage was the popularity among women writers of the male pseudonym. Female English writers such as George Eliot used masculine camouflage beyond the name itself. The tone, structure, and other literary elements were also affected by the method of dealing with a double literary standard. American writers, too, used pseudonyms. These women, however, chose superfeminine names, such as Fanny Fern, in order to disguise their "boundless energy, powerful economic motives, and keen professional skills" (1383).

During the second stage of literary evolution, the Feminist phase (1880-1920), women rejected "the accommodating postures of femininity" and used literature "to dramatize the ordeals of wronged womanhood" (1384). Writing from this period often dramatizes the social injustice suffered by women. Other texts fantasize about the utopian possibilities of female societies.

This "Feminist Socialist Realism" has given way to the Female phase in progress since 1920. Writers of the Female phase reject what those of the Feminine and Feminist stages promote because these both depended on masculinity and were ironically male-oriented. Literature of the Female phase "turn[s] instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature" (1384).

In discussing these three phases, Showalter notes that some feminist critics

have tried to adopt and adapt the methods of Marxism and Structuralism to accommodate their own needs, "altering their vocabularies and methods to include the variable of gender" (1384). Showalter, however, seeks to steer feminist criticism from this path. Marxism and Structuralism label themselves as "sciences" and "see themselves as privileged critical discourses" (1385). As such, these methodologies have tended to impose intellectual concepts and categories upon human experience. Mature feminist criticism, on the other hand, explores experience. Indeed, feminist criticism asserts "The Authority of Experience" (1386).

5.3 LET US SUM UP

For Showalter, the job of feminist criticism is to rediscover and articulate the female experience. The only "roadblock" that Showalter foresees for gynocritics is "our own divided consciousness, the split in each of us" between the desire for analytic detachment and social engagement (1386). "The task of feminist critics," then, is to bridge this female self-division by finding "a new language, a new reading that can integrate our intelligence and our experience, our reason and our suffering, our skepticism and our vision" (1386). In order to find this new language, both the feminist critique and gynocritics are needed, "for only the Jeremiahs of the feminist critique can lead us out of the 'Egypt of female servitude' to the promised land of the feminist vision" (1377).

5.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the basic tenets of Feminist criticism?
2. Write a short note on Gynocriticism.
3. What does Showalter mean by feminine phase?
4. Give the important contribution of Elaine Showalter in the field of criticism.

5.5 SUGGESTED READING

1. *New Feminist Criticism* by Elaine Showalter
2. *Sexual Anarchy : Gender and Culture* by E. Showalter.

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BARBARA SMITH: "TOWARDS A BLACK FEMINIST CRITICISM"

STRUCTURE

6.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learners to Barbara Smith's "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism" to help the learners to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learners to prepare for the semester end examination.

6.2 BARBARA SMITH: "TOWARDS A BLACK FEMINIST CRITICISM"

Feminist literary critics of the 1970s were taken to task for claiming to speak for all women when in fact they spoke largely for white, Western, heterosexual women of the middle class. Black feminists, such as Alice Walker, Barbara Smith, Deborah McDowell, Bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Susan Willis, argued that black women writers were doubly oppressed, ignored by both

white feminists and black literary critics, who were predominantly male. Two important volumes published in the early 1980s collected essays originally published in feminist journals in the late 1970s that were critical of white mainstream feminism and outlined plans of action for drawing attention to women of colour: *This Bridge Called My Back*: *Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, and *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982), edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith. Both books gave impetus to creating a separate canon of works by women of colour and defining critical approaches that would account for their differences from white women as well as from men.

A collection of essays, poems, and testimonials, *This Bridge Called My Back* gave voice to marginalized women of colour:

> We are the colored in a white feminist movement.
>
> We are the feminists among the people of our culture.
>
> We are often the lesbians among the straight.

Deliberately heterogeneous and highly personal, the pieces in the volume reflected the contributors' "flesh and blood experiences to concretize a vision that can begin to heal our 'wounded knee.' As the title suggests, the collection was an effort to "bridge" the emerging divide among feminists. It was a form of consciousness raising for both women of colour and white, middle-class women.

While *This Bridge Called My Back* did not explicitly outline a new feminist project, *But Some of Us Are Brave* set out to advance the cause of black women's studies, supplying reading lists and syllabi listing the literary works of black women. The collection also included Smith's influential essay, "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism" (1977). She contended, "Black women's existence, experience, and culture and the brutally complex systems of oppression which shape these are in the 'real world' of white and/ or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown" (168). Launching a savage attack on Showalter, Moers, and Spacks for overlooking black and Third World women,

Smith outlined three principles for a black feminist literary criticism: (1) It would "work from the assumption that Black women writers constitute an identifiable literary tradition"; (2) it would be "highly innovative, embodying the daring spirit of the works themselves"; and (3) it would trace the "lesbian" subtext in black women's novels (174-75). Smith applied these principles in a highly personal reading of Toni Morrison's *Sula*. She sees Nel and Sula's friendship as "suffused with an erotic romanticism," a bond strengthened by race, as "Morrison depicts in literature the necessary bonding that has always taken place between Black women for the sake of barest survival" (176-77). In Smith's view, Nel falls prey to convention by marrying an unexceptional man, while Sula defies patriarchal values by rejecting heterosexual marriage. As such, "Sula's presence in her community functions much like the presence of lesbians everywhere to expose the contradictions of supposedly 'normal' life" (178). Although Sula has sex with men, she does so, according to Smith, only to delve further into herself. Instead, "the deepest communion and communication in the novel occurs between two women who love each other" (180). Thus, Morrison's novel is an "exceedingly lesbian novel" (180). Smith's own essay, she hoped, would "lead everyone who reads it to examine *everything* that they have ever thought and believed about feminist culture and to ask themselves how their thoughts connect to the reality of Black women's writing and lives" (183).

Smith's essay did provoke a response from Deborah McDowell, who agreed that black women writers were "disenfranchised" by white feminist critics and by black scholars, "most of whom are males." She pointed out, however, that Smith's articulation of a black feminist aesthetic raised difficulties of its own. McDowell noted that some of the key features of black women's texts could be found in male texts as well and pressed for greater attention to how such elements were used differently by women, a project later taken up by Susan Willis and others in the mid-1980s. She further asked, "Are there noticeable differences between the languages of Black females and Black males?" (189), anticipating the critical turn toward the examination of language that would characterize the 1980s. Finally,

McDowell argued that Smith's definition of lesbianism was "vague and imprecise," that Smith had "simultaneously oversimplified and obscured the issue of lesbianism" and in so doing overlooked *Sula's* "density and complexity, its skillful blend of folklore, omens, and dreams, its metaphorical and symbolic richness" (190). Following the example of author Alice Walker, who had begun to trace a tradition of black women writers in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1974), McDowell advocated a "contextual approach to Black women's literature" that would expose "the conditions under which literature is produced, published, and reviewed" (192).

Despite its limitations, Smith's essay drew attention to two distinctly marginalized groups within feminist literary criticism-women of colour and lesbians-and focused on the identity of the female reader and author, not simply on the basis of her sex, but on her race and sexuality. Lesbian feminists argued that they, like black women, experienced a doubled oppression—sexism and homophobia. The neglect of lesbian authors and lesbian themes in literature was a serious oversight by feminists that seemed all the more striking, given the role of lesbians in radical feminist politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Shulamith Firestone published *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for a Feminist Revolution* in 1970, which argued that women had been oppressed on the basis of their reproductive capacity and advocated an end to "the tyranny of the biological family" through women's control of their reproductive functions and a return to a polymorphous sexuality. Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Amazon Odyssey* (1974) took Firestone's thesis a step further, contending that "love" was in fact an institution of heterosexual sex and that feminist revolutionary practice could be found in its rejection. Charlotte Bunch argued that true feminism was lesbianism. Poet Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) outlined a lesbian continuum, a range of "woman-identified experience" from friendship to sexual intimacy.

The woman-identified woman should be a focus of feminist literary criticism, according to Bonnie Zimmerman. In "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism" (1981), she noted a profound absence

of lesbian material in the anthologies and collections produced by influential American literary critics, including Moers, Spacks, Showalter, and Gilbert and Gubar. She sought to define a lesbian criticism or "world view" based on the assumption "that a woman's identity is not defined only by her relation to a male world and male literary tradition ..., that powerful bonds between women are a crucial factor in women's lives, and that the sexual and emotional orientation of a woman profoundly affects her consciousness and thus her creativity" (201). The lesbian critic would be attentive to heterosexist assumptions and contribute to the development of a lesbian canon, a project initiated by Jeannette Foster in *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956) and extended by Jane Rule in *Lesbian Images* (1975) and Lillian Faderman in *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981). According to Faderman,

> "Lesbianism" describes a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed toward each other. Sexual contact may be part of the relationship to a greater or lesser degree, or it may be entirely absent. By preference the two women spend most of their time together and share most aspects of their lives with each other. (17-18)

Based on this definition, the lesbian literary tradition would extend from Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Seward, and Sarah Orne Jewett to the women of the "first self-identified lesbian feminist community in Paris" in the early twentieth century (Natalie Barney, Colette, Djuna Barnes, Radclyffe Hall, Renee Vivien, and peripherally Gertrude Stein.) Analysis would focus on "the images, stereotypes, and mythic presence of lesbians in fiction by or about lesbians" as well as a lesbian literary style.

6.3 LET US SUM UP

Critics attentive to race and sexuality introduced a necessary corrective by pointing out the dangers of taking gender alone as a lens for critical investigation and reminding feminists to take differences among women into account as they investigated images of women in literary texts and expanded

the canon to include works by women. In many respects, however, the projects of black and lesbian critics shared, or perhaps augmented, the weaknesses of the mainstream feminism they criticized. Feminine identity was more firmly grounded in biology, given additional emphasis on race and sexuality. While the positive reconstruction of a group identity was strategically essential as a response to degrading and marginalizing cultural practices, the newly created categories of "black female" and "lesbian" risked becoming as monolithic as "woman."

6.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. According to Barbara Smith, what changes might the greater recogintion of black women have on other social movements and culture as a whole?
2. Which aspects of Toni Morrison's novel Sula does she believe have been under represented in the criticism?
3. Why does Smith seem to conflate or move back and forth between notions of black lesbianism and portrayls of black women in general?

6.5 SUGGESTED READING

1. *Black Feminist Thought : knowledge, consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* by Patricia Hill Collins.
2. *How we get free : Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* by Keeanga - Yamahtta Taylor.

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HELENE CIXOUS : "THE LAUGH OF THE MEDUSA"

STRUCTURE

7.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learners to Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" to help the learners to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learners to prepare for the semester end examination.

7.2 HELENE CIXOUS : "THE LAUGH OF THE MEDUSA"

Helene Cixous (b. 1938) was born in Algeria and teaches at the University of Paris, Vincennes. A sophisticated literary critic in the post-structuralist mode, and the author of a major study of James Joyce which has been translated into English (*The Exile of James Joyce* [1976]), Helene Cixous is also the author of novels and plays. These two aspects of her life and work, the critical and the creative, converge in the radical feminist writing exemplified by 'Sorties', reprinted below. Although Helene Cixous has, on occasion, repudiated the label 'feminist', on the grounds that it perpetuates

the hierarchical opposition of masculine/feminine which she is trying to deconstruct, the import of her work is consistent with that of many self-styled feminist writers.

Helene Cixous represents a distinctively French brand of radical feminism which centres on the concept of *ecriture feminine*, or feminine writing - 'the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text', as Elaine Showalter defines it. Though it has affinities with the criticism that arose out of the Anglo-American Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and 70s, it is perhaps more directly indebted to the work of Simone de Beauvoir and the intellectual ferment generated by *les evenements* of 1968 in Paris. Its emphasis is psychological rather than sociological, theoretical rather than pragmatic.

Lacan's revisionist reading of Freud, and Derrida's critique of logocentrism, are enlisted and to some extent implicated in Cixous's attack on patriarchal culture: Lacan's symbolic 'phallus' and Derrida's "logocentrism" are seen as two aspects of a pervasive and oppressive 'phallocentrism.'

'Sorties', which can mean in French, escapes, departures, outcomings, as well as having the military meaning which it has in English was originally published in *La Jeune Nee* ('The Newly Born Woman') in 1975. This extract, translated by Ann Liddle, is reprinted from *New French Feminism* edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (1980).

In the early 1980s ("around 1981," according to Jane Gallop) feminist literary criticism underwent a sea change with the introduction of poststructuralist theory. Broadly defined, post-structuralist theory is concerned with language in shaping identity and history, and its premises are drawn from philosophy. From deconstruction to psychoanalysis, post-structuralist theory challenged traditional intellectual categories and practices, calling into question the concept of the individual as a unified subject, the stability of meaning, and the "truth" of history.

The first feminist theories influenced by post-structuralist philosophy emerged in France and came to be known collectively as "French feminism" to

Anglo-Americans. Contemporary French feminist thought, however, derived from both Anglo-American and French feminist traditions. Virginia Woolf's own position as a literary stylist and experimenter led her to ponder the possibility of a distinctly feminine mode of writing, to question what, if anything, distinguished women's writing from men's. The same impulse can clearly be seen in attempts to define *ecriture feminine* (feminine writing). Feminists working in France were also profoundly influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), which applied existential philosophy to the position and condition of women. In her classic text, Simone de Beauvoir argued that woman has been defined as man's "Other," that she has been conceived of as an object with no right to her own subjectivity. She notes that this is not a natural condition, but a social and cultural construction: "One is not born a woman; one becomes one." De Beauvoir sought to explain the definition of woman as Other in biology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, emphasizing that women internalize their objectified status.

The "new" French feminists-most notably Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva-emphasized that woman is constructed as Other through language. In "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976; "Le Rire de la meduse," 1975), Cixous argued that "nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason. . . . It has been one with the phallocentric tradition" (249). Consequently, "writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, that space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (249). The identification and practice of *ecriture feminine* thus has the potential for undermining woman's position as Other by establishing her as the subject of her own writing, and further transforming her position in culture and politics as well.

In asserting the primacy of language, Cixous borrowed from poststructuralist thought, the deconstructive theory of Jacques Derrida, and the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. Derrida, following Martin Heidegger, offered a critique of Western metaphysics, arguing that Western thought is grounded in a series of binary oppositions: light/darkness, good/evil, soul/body,

life/ death, mind/matter, speech/writing, and so on. The terms are not conceived of as equal, but exist in a hierarchical structure (light is privileged over darkness, good over evil, etc.). Fundamentally, Derrida argued, Western thought has privileged unity, identity, and immediacy, or presence over absence (light is presence; darkness is its absence). In "Sorties" (1980; from *La Jeune nee* [*The Newly Born Woman*], 1975), Cixous extended Derrida's argument by focusing on gender, contending that implicit in each binary opposition is a distinction between man/woman, masculine / feminine. Thus she accounted for woman's position in Western culture as Other: She is defined in opposition to, and in terms of, man. He is present; she is absent. He is associated with being, she is associated with death.

According to Derrida, such meanings are produced in language. The structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure argued that the process of signification was characterized by difference. Meaning was produced not on the basis of the sign's relation to its referent (e.g., the word "cat" meaning the furry little animal). Instead, Saussure argued that the sign (word) was composed of two parts, the spoken or written word (signifier) and its mental concept (signified). The bond between the signifier and the signified was arbitrary; there is no natural connnection, for instance, between the signifier "light" and idea of light itself. Meaning emerges only through the distinction of one signifier from another. We understand the signifier "light" only in opposition to the signifier "dark." We understand "light" as different not only from "dark" but also from other signifiers ("might," "bright," "tight"). Meaning also unfolds in time, along the chain of signification, the sequence of signifiers that unfolds in time as we speak (or read) words.

Derrida complicated this understanding-hence his theory is poststructuralist-by arguing that "within the system of language, there are only differences." The process of making meaning obviates the possibility of a sign bearing a stable, unified meaning. For instance, we understand the word "cat" in part because it is not "dog" or "hat." In the jazz world, "cat" refers not to the furry creature but to a human being, a "cool cat." Signification is not a static process, but a never-ending play of one signifier (that is present in language)

against a series of others (that are absent). It is characterized not only by difference, but deferral, for meaning is deferred along the chain of signification, which never ends. Derrida's critique of Western thought focused, then, on how we have tended to stop the play of signification and arbitrarily privilege one meaning over other possible meanings.

In perhaps his most famous example, taken from Plato's *The Phaedrus*, Derrida examined the apparent contradiction between the two meanings of the Greek word "pharmakon" (from which the word "pharmacy" is derived). In Greek, "pharmakon" is an ambiguous term, meaning both poison and remedy. In *The Phaedrus*, Plato refers to writing as a "pharmakon," typically taken to mean that writing is poisonous, open to misinterpretation and misuse. Writing is seen to be dangerous, in the absence of the speaker who can confirm its meaning. Derrida, however, noting that "pharmakon" may also mean remedy, argues that writing may serve a positive role. It can enhance speech, aid memory, and serve as a record of history that lives on beyond the speaker. Writing, can, in fact, not be seen as either poison or remedy but as embodying both elements simultaneously. Deconstructive practice thus undermines or subverts the closure of the binary opposition. Derrida conceived of deconstruction as a two-stage process that first exposes binary thought in language and then demonstrates the continuing play of difference at work.

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous emphasized that writing has sustained the opposition between male and female. "Woman" has been defined in language, as a signifier defined in opposition to "man." Cixous advocated the deconstruction of this opposition :

> If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within," to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (257)

Defined in opposition to man, woman has been relegated to a subordinate

position within language. Cixous proposed an alternative discursive practice—a *new insurgent* writing-as a means of unsettling the opposition that devalues the feminine. Writing, in this sense, means "working (in) the in between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live." Cixous capitalized on Derrida's assertion that Western thought is "phallogocentric," that its binary logic privileges the masculine, through the "transcendental signifier" of the phallus. The term "phallus" refers not simply to the male organ but to the power accrued to its possessor in language and in culture.

In her analysis of phallogocentrism, Cixous also relied on innovations in psychoanalytic theory. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan traced the origins of patriarchal authority in the process of human maturation, transforming Freud's theory of psychosexual development by focusing on the acquisition and role of language. Lacan distinguished between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders: the Imaginary refers to the infant's early, preverbal relationship to the mother, the Symbolic to the order of language, an order associated with the father. Prior to acquiring language, the child experiences an imaginary unity with the mother's body and has no sense of itself as an independent being.

According to Lacan, separation of the infant from the mother begins during the mirror stage, normally when the child is six to eight months old. During this period, the child encounters its reflection—not necessarily in an actual mirror but even in its mother's eyes or the sight of another child—and thus perceives itself as separate from the mother's body. But what the child perceives is not the self, but an image of the self. It perceives itself as an independent entity when, in fact, it is still physically dependent on the mother for its survival. Hence the origin of the self emerges from a misrecognition that the child can stand on its own, move of its own volition, and control physical space. A radical split has been introduced between the projected mirror ideal and the actual self that perceives the image.

The psychological construction of selfhood begun during the mirror stage is only resolved during the Oedipal crisis. Following Freud, Lacan argued that the dyadic unity the child perceives between itself and the mother is

broken by a third, the father, through the threat of castration. According to Freudian theory, the boy perceives his difference from his mother in the recognition that he possesses a penis, like the father, and that she does not. Forced, owing to the incest taboo, to repress his desire for the mother, the boy identifies with the father as the figure of authority and the law. In other words, while the physical manifestation of difference is the penis, the psychological manifestation is the power accorded to the father as head of the household. For girls, the Oedipal crisis is far more complicated, as Freud himself noted in his essay "On Femininity" (1932). He posited that the girl recognizes that she, like the mother, is already "castrated," that is, lacking in authority because she lacks a penis: "She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it, and wants to have it." She thus turns her desire from the "castrated" mother to the father.

Feminists from Charlotte Perkins Gilman to Kate Millett have mocked Freud's account, noting that by focusing on the presence or absence of the penis, it emphasizes biological determinism. It institutes, in Gilman's words, "phallic worship" and reduces women to passivity and absence. Others, like Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), have noted that psychoanalysis is not a justification but an explanation, a description and not a prescription, for the privileging of masculinity in Western culture. Freudian theory has, in fact, potential value for feminist theory because it demonstrates that sexual definition is not innate or inborn, but constructed and precarious:

> Freud's writing shows that sexual difference is . . . a hesitant and imperfect construction. Men and women take up positions of symbolic and polarised opposition against the grain of a multifarious and bisexual disposition. . . . The lines of that division are fragile in exact proportion to the rigid insistence with which our culture lays them down; they constantly converge and threaten to coalesce. (Rose 226-27)

Boys are taught at an early age not to cry, not to show weakness, not to reveal their emotions, to be instead competitive and independent. Girls learn to acquiese to authority, care for others, display their emotions and sexuality, and repress their independence and self-determination. As we acquire a sense

of selfhood we are forced to take up a position on one side of the sexual divide between masculinity and femininity. Identifying the psychosocial processes that privilege masculinity may enable women to challenge and subvert them.

Lacan thus provided feminist theorists with an additional insight and opportunity, for he added to Freud's account that the development of a sense of self coincides with the acquisition of language, with entry into the Symbolic order. As we take up a subject position on one side of the sexual divide, we also take up a position in language. When we identify ourselves as subjects, as "I," we define ourselves in terms of the Other; we are stating, in effect, that we are not "you" or any other available subject position. When we say "I am" we mean "I am she (or he)." Gender difference is the ground for identity. Lacan contended that the Symbolic realm is governed by the Law of the Father owing not simply to the incest taboo and threat of castration, but to the fact that in the definition of subjectivity, the phallus becomes the "transcendental signifier," the basis by which gender is determined and subject position assigned. The subject, however, is constructed through separation and denied imagined wholeness with the mother due to the intrusion of paternal law. As a result, woman is associated with lack and with the "repressed."

Feminists working in the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition sought to subvert the position accorded to woman in the phallogocentric symbolic order. As Cixous argued, "Their 'symbolic' exists, it holds power. . . . But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their bank of lack. . . . We have no womanly reason to pledge allegiance to the negative" (255). Instead, she envisioned a feminine response in language, an *ecriture feminine*:

> It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem. (251)

She advocated the paradoxical action of making the silence speak, of giving voice to that which has been marginalized and repressed. The result would be revolutionary: "when the 'repressed' of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering return" (256).

Ecriture feminine is associated with the pre-Oedipal stage of imagined wholeness with the maternal body:

> Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence." (256)

Associated with the body, *ecriture feminine* is characterized by its drives and rhythms, its suppleness and fluidity. It would inscribe women's sexuality, "its infinite and mobile complexity." Cixous further envisioned that, repressed within the symbolic, within writing, women's language exists in a "privileged relationship with the voice." An *ecriture feminine* would thus capture the patterns of speech.

Cixous' idea of an *ecriture feminine* was visionary, an outline of a practice that does not yet exist. She had encountered glimpses of it in the avant-garde practices of modernist texts written by male authors, in James Joyce's *Ulysses* when Molly Bloom affirms . . . "And yes," and in Jean Genet's Pompes funebres when "he was led by Jean." If it did exist, it would resist definition:

> It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded-which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. (253)

Cixous challenges the primacy of philosophical categories and hierarchies, deliberately avoiding "rational" discourse in favour of a poetic style. Thus, Cixous-in an apparent contradiction-did not "define" *ecriture feminine* but

instead demonstrated its practice in her own writing. Her texts are not organized in a linear narrative, and frequent punning enacts the doubleness or multivalence of language. Cixous' assertion that "she writes in white ink," for instance, embodies the principles she outlines. "She" refers at once to woman, to the maternal, and to Cixous herself. Writing in "white" ink is a contradictory image of the feminine practice of making the silence speak. And white ink is a literary equivalent of mother's milk.

Let us start looking at poststructuralist feminist literary theory (or theories of writing and language) by looking at Alice Jardine's "Gynesis" published in 1982, this article worked to explain poststructuralist feminist thought to an American audience of academics and feminists who were almost completely unfamiliar with the ideas she was presenting—so Jardine provides a good introduction to poststructuralist ideas in general. Her article starts out by talking about developments in Paris intellectual circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She points out that "french feminism," as she calls it, wasn't like American "women's liberation," in that it wasn't a separatist movement, one favoring women and excluding or vilifying men. Rather, "french feminism" (or what we will call "poststructuralist feminist theory") emerges from women theorists who are direct disciples of male poststructuralist theorists, including Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and Althusser.

Jardine introduces a new concept, which she calls "gynesis," and which she describes as the process of putting woman into discourse. She is again following Lacan here: "woman," as a subject position within the Symbolic, is defined by/as other, as lack, as absence; how then could such a position speak, and what would it say if it could? Jardine posits a "gynema" as a place where fixed meaning starts to break down, become destabilized—a place in a text where a "rupture" occurs, and where this woman/feminine/otherness disrupts the coherence, the seamlessness, the stability of the masculine structured text.

It is in this sense that Jardine argues that poststructuralist feminist theory isn't about women at all; rather, it's about "woman" and "man" as subject positions within the structure of language. Feminist theory in France

in the early 80s, she points out, isn't interested in women writers or women theorists, but in positing "woman" as a binary opposition to "man," and examining/deconstructing the other binaries that reinforce and uphold that opposition: man/woman, masculine/feminine, presence/absence, rational/irrational, moral/immoral, light/dark, life/death, good/evil, etc. All the things on the right side of the slashes are things that Western culture works to control, to suppress, or to exclude, positing them as disruptive or destructive of the concepts on the left side of the slash. Hence "woman" and the "feminine" are constituted as otherness, as non-being, as alterity, as something outside of consciousness and rationality, and dangerous to those categories.

Jardine then turns to Lacan, and discusses Lacan's idea that woman is "not All"—that the position of "woman" in the Symbolic is founded on Lack or Absence, so that "woman" can't (mis)identify with the Phallus as the center of the Symbolic. "Woman" is a position on the edge of the Symbolic, not firmly governed by the center, and hence there's something in that position that "escapes discourse," is not fully controlled by the center and the system of language.

This is something that escapes or evades the structuring rules of the center and the system is what Lacan, and Jardine, call jouissance, which is the French word for orgasm. In this context, the word means-a form of pleasure that is beyond language, beyond discourse, something that can't be expressed in words or in the structure of language. More specifically, this form of pleasure that escapes or exceeds the rules and structures held in place by the Phallus is a specifically feminine pleasure, a feminine jouissance, which is unrepresentable in language—which in fact works as a "gynema," something that disrupts, interrupts representation, disturbs the linear flow of language and narrative. This jouissance can also be considered a type of deconstruction, as it shakes up the fixity and stability of language(where meaning is held in place by the phallus) and puts signifiers into play, making them slippery and indeterminate.

Jardine equates this feminine jouissance with the female body, which

takes us back to where we left off with Sandra Gilbert: is women's writing, or women's language, somehow related to female bodies and female biology? The rest of Jardine's article looks at poststructuralist feminist theories which explore the connection between female bodies and the structure of language; this part will be more comprehensible once we've examined what Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray have to say on this topic.

Helene Cixous takes up where Lacan left off, in noting that women and men enter into the Symbolic Order, into language as structure, in different ways, or through different doors, and that the subject positions open to either sex within the Symbolic are also different. She understands that Lacan's naming the center of the Symbolic as the Phallus highlights what a patriarchal system language is—or, more specifically, what a phallo(go) centric system it is.

This idea, that the structure of language is centered by the Phallus, produced the word "phallocentric." Derrida's idea that the structure of language relies on spoken words being privileged over written words, produced the word "logocentric" to describe Western culture in general. Cixous and Irigaray combine the two ideas to describe Western cultural systems and structures as "phallogocentric," based on the primacy of certain terms in an array of binary oppositions. Thus a phallogocentric culture is one which is structured by binary oppositions—male/female, order/chaos, language/silence, presence/absence, speech/writing, light/dark, good/evil, etc.—and in which the first term is valued over the second term; Cixous and Irigaray insist that all valued terms (male, order, language, presence, speech, etc) are aligned with each other, and that all of them together provide the basic structures of Western thought.

Cixous follows Lacan's psychoanalytic paradigm, which argues that a child must separate from its mother's body (the Real) in order to enter into the Symbolic. Because of this, Cixous says, the female body in general becomes unrepresentable in language; it's what can't be spoken or written in the phallogocentric Symbolic order. Cixous here makes a leap from the maternal body to the female body in general; she also leaps from that female body to female sexuality, saying that female sexuality, female sexual pleasure, feminine jouissance, is unrepresentable within the phallogocentric Symbolic order.

To understand how she makes that leap, we have to go back to what Freud says about female sexuality, and the mess he makes of it. In Freud's story of the female Oedipus complex, girls have to make a lot of switches, from clitoris to vagina, from attraction to female bodies to attraction to male bodies, and from active sexuality to passive sexuality, in order to become "normal" adults. Cixous rewrites this, via Lacan, by pointing out that "adulthood," in Lacan's terms, is the same as entering into the Symbolic and taking up a subject position. Thus "adulthood," or becoming a linguistic subject, for Cixous, means having only one kind of sexuality: passive, vaginal, heterosexual, reproductive. And that sexuality, if one follows Freud to his logical extreme, is not about female sexuality per se, but about male sexuality: the woman's pleasure is to come from being passively filled by a penis (remember, Freud defines activity as masculine, and passivity as feminine). So, Cixous concludes, there really is not any such thing as female sexuality in and of itself in this phallogocentric system—it is always sexuality defined by the presence of a penis, and not by anything intrinsic to the female body or to female sexual pleasure.

If women have to be forced away from their own bodies—first in the person of the mother's body, and then in the person of their unique sexual feelings/pleasures—in order to become subjects in language, Cixous argues, is it possible for a woman to write at all? Is it possible for a woman to write as a woman? Or does entry into the Symbolic, orienting one's language around a center designated as a Phallus, mean that when one writes or speaks, one always does so as a "man"? In other words, if the structure of language itself is phallogocentric, and stable meaning is anchored and guaranteed by the Phallus, then is not everyone who uses language taking up a position "male" within this structure which excludes female bodies?

Cixous also discusses writing on both a metaphoric and literal level. She aligns writing with masturbation, something that for women is supposed to be secret, shameful, or silly, something not quite adult, something that will be renounced in order to achieve adulthood, just like clitoral stimulation has to be renounced in favour of vaginal/reproductive passive adult sexuality. For

women to write themselves, Cixous says, they must (re)claim a female-centered sexuality. If men write with their penises, as Gilbert argues, then Cixous says before women can write they have to discover where their pleasure is located. (And don't be too quick to decide that women write with their clitorises. It's not quite that simple).

She also links these oppressive binary structures to other Western cultural practices, particularly those involving racial distinctions. She follows Freud in calling women the "dark continent," and expands the metaphor by reference to Apartheid, to demonstrate that these same binary systems which structure gender also structure imperialism: women are aligned with darkness, with otherness, with Africa, against men who are aligned with lightness, with selfhood, and with Western civilization. In this paragraph, note that Cixous is referring to women as "they," as if women are non-speakers, non-writers, whom she is observing: "As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black:"—i.e. entry into the Symbolic order, into language, into having a self and a name, is entry into these structures of binary oppositions.

Cixous argues that most women do write and speak, but that they do so from a "masculine" position; in order to speak, women (or "woman") has assumed she needed a stable, fixed system of meaning, and thus has aligned herself with the Phallus which stabilizes language. There has been little or no "feminine" writing, Cixous says (p. 311). In making this statement, she insists that writing is always "marked," within a Symbolic order that is structured through binary opposites, including "masculine/feminine," in which the feminine is always repressed. Remember here, when Cixous speaks of "feminine," it is both literal and metaphoric—it's something connected to femaleness, to female bodies, and something which is a product of linguistic positioning. So Cixous is arguing both that only women could produce feminine writing, and it must come from their bodies, and that men could occupy a structural position from which they could produce feminine writing.

Cixous coins the phrase "I'ecriture feminine" to discuss this notion of feminine writing (and masculine writing, its phallogocentric counterpart).

She sees "I'ecriture feminine" first of all as something possible only in poetry (in the existing genres), and not in realist prose. Novels, she says, are "allies of representationalism"—they are genres (particularly realist fiction) which try to speak in stable language, language with one-to-one fixed meanings of words, language where words seemingly point to things (and not to the structure of language itself). In poetry, however, language is set loose—the chains of signifiers flow more freely, meaning is less fixed; poetry, Cixous says, is thus closer to the unconscious, and thus to what has been repressed (and thus to female bodies/female sexuality). This is one model she uses to describe what "l'ecriture feminine" looks like. (It is worth noting, however, that all the poets and "feminine" writers Cixous mentions specifically are men.)

There are two levels on which "I'ecriture feminine" will be transformative, Cixous argues (p. 311-312), and these levels correspond again to her use of the literal and the metaphoric, or the individual and the structural. On one level, the individual woman must write herself, must discover for herself what her body feels like, and how to write about that body in language. Specifically, women must find their own sexuality, one that is rooted solely in their own bodies, and find ways to write about that pleasure, that jouissance. On the second level, when women speak/write their own bodies, the structure of language itself will change; as women become active subjects, not just beings passively acted upon, their position as subject in language will shift. Women who write—if they don't merely reproduce the phallogocentric system of stable ordered meaning which already exists (and which excludes them)—will be creating a new signifying system; this system may have built into it far more play, more fluidity, than the existing rigid phallogocentric symbolic order. "Beware, my friend," Cixous writes towards the end of the essay (p. 319) "of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified!"

Without the dichotomy of self/other, all other dichotomies would start to fall apart, Cixous says: her other bisexuality would thus become a deconstructive force to erase the slashes in all structuring binary oppositions.

When this occurs, the Western cultural representations of female sexuality—the myths associated with womanhood—will also fall apart. Cixous focuses in particular on the myth of Medusa, the woman with snakes for hair, whose look will turn men into stone, and on the myth of woman as black hole, as abyss. The idea of woman as abyss or hole is pretty easy to understand; in Freudian terms, a woman lacks a penis, and instead has this scary hole in which the penis disappears (and might not come back). Freud reads the Medusa as part of the fear of castration, the woman whose hair is writhing penises; she is scary, not because she's got too few penises, but because she has too many. Cixous says those are the fears that scare men into being complicit in upholding the phallogocentric order: they are scared of losing their one penis when they see women as having either no penis or too many penises. If women could show men their true sexual pleasures, their real bodies—by writing them in non-representational form—Cixous says, men would understand that female bodies, female sexuality, is not about penises (too few or too many) at all. That is why she says we have to show them "our sexts"—another neologism, the combination of sex and texts, the idea of female sexuality as a new form of writing.

7.3 LET US SUM UP

Cixous concludes the essay (starting on p. 318) by offering a critique of the Freudian nuclear family, the mom-dad-child formation, which she sees as generating the ideas of castration (Penisneid) and lack which form the basis for ideas of the feminine in both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. She wants to break up these "old circuits" so that the family formations which uphold the phallogocentric Symbolic won't be recreated every time a child is born; she argues that this family system is just as limiting and oppressive to men as to women, and that it needs to be "demater-paternalized." Then she discusses other ways to figure pregnancy, arguing that, like all functions of the female body, pregnancy needs to be written, in "I'ecriture feminine." When pregnancy is written, and the female body figured in language as the source of life, rather than the penis, birth can be figured as something other than as separation, or as lack.

7.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Analyse "Ecriture feminie" in 'The Laugh of Medusa'.
2. Comment on Helen Cixous and the myth of Medusa.

7.5 SUGGESTED READING

1. *The Second Sex* by Simone, de Beavoir.
2. *Feminism : A Very Short Introduction* by Walters.

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EDWARD SAID: SELECTIONS FROM "ORIENTALISM"

STRUCTURE

8.1 OBJECTIVES

Our objective in this lesson is to introduce you to Edward Said's "Orientalism" to help you explain the concept of Orientalism in detail and also to help you to prepare for the semester end examination.

8.2 EDWARD SAID'S "ORIENTALISM"

Born in Jerusalem, Palestine, Edward Said attended schools in Jerusalem, Cairo, and Massachusetts (U.S.A.). He received his Ph.D. degree from Harvard in 1964, and thereafter remained Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University (New York) until he died in 2003. Known as a literary and cultural theorist, Said also had the honour of being a Visiting Professor at the universities of Harvard, Stanford. John Hopkins, and Yale all American. As

a thinker, he can be said to have embraced three broad imperatives: firstly, to articulate the cultural position and task of the intellectual and literary critic. In the English literary tradition, major critics after Matthew Arnold have been general critics of ideas dominating their times, especially those related to culture and society. We know how T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, Lionel Trilling, Raymond Williams etc., wrote on culture and society as well as on literature. Edward Said is a critic very much in that tradition, his critique of the imperial nations and intellectuals notwithstanding.

In his criticism of culture, Edward Said was greatly influenced by the French intellectual, Foucault, who had provided in the 1980's a crucial impetus to what is popularly called New Historicism. As a matter of fact, New Historicism was, at least in part, a reaction against the tendency of American adherents of Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction either to disinfect a literary text from all its historical contexts or to reduce those contexts to an indiscriminate "textuality." Said's second concern has been to examine the historical production and motivations of Western discourses about the Orient in general, and about Islam in particular. His third pursuit is defined by his own origin (or "beginning" as he would prefer it), more immediately political commitment: an attempt to bring to light and clarify the Palestinian struggle to regain a homeland. He has often been regarded as a model of the politically engaged scholar, although some have viewed his political enterprise as incoherent. Since the last of his three pursuits is not of any relevance to us, we shall confine ourselves to the study of his first two engagements.

Edward Said's first book, entitled *Beginnings,* came out in 1975. As the title suggests, Said is engaged here in exploring the ramifications and diverse understandings of this concept in history. Adapting insights from the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1744), Said makes a distinction between "origin," which is divine, mythical, and privileged, and "beginning," which is secular and humanly produced. As it is used in classical and neo-classical writings, an "origin" is endowed with linear, dynastic, and chronological eminence, centrally dominating whatever derives from it. On the other hand, a "beginning," especially as it is used in modern writings, encourages orders of dispersion, adjacency, and

complimentarity. As Said defines it, beginning is its own method, as a first step in the intentional production of meaning, and as the production of difference from pre-existing traditions. If beginning comprises such an activity of subversion, it must be informed by an inaugural logic which authorizes subsequent texts; it both enables them and limits what is acceptable. Relying on some of the insights offered by Vico, Valery, Nietzsche, Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Husserl, and Foucault, Said goes on to argue that among the literary forms, novel represents the major attempt in Western literary culture to give beginnings an authorizing function in experience, art, and knowledge. In postmodernist literature, beginning embodies an effort to achieve knowledge and art through a "violently transgressive" language.

In Said's view, the problematics of language lie at the heart of "beginnings." Given their exposure of the hierarchical and often oppressive system of languages, Foucault and Deleuze, in Said's view, belong to the "adversary epistemological current," which has as its predecessors Vico, Marx, Engels, Lukacs, and Fanon. Closely following Foucault, his mentor, Said redefines writings as the act of "taking hold" of language, which means beginning again rather than taking up language at the point ordained by tradition. To do so is an act of discovery and is indeed the "method" of beginning, which intends difference and engages in an "other" production of meaning. Therefore, according to Said, the task for the intellectual or critic is to oppose institutional specialization, ideological professionalism, and a hierarchical system of values which rewards traditional literary and cultural explanations and discourages "beginning" critiques. Criticism, in his view, should be a constant re-experiencing of beginning, promoting not authority but non-coercive and communal (from community) activity.

In his next book, *The World, The Text, and the Critic* (1983), Edward Said argues that critical theory has retreated into a "labyrinth of textuality" whereby it betrays its "insurrectionary" beginnings in the 1960's. In his view, both "radical" factions of the intellectual establishment as well as the traditional humanists have sold themselves out to the "principle of non-interference" and the triumph of the ethic of professionalism, a self-domestication, which Said sees as concurrent with the rise of Reagnism in America. In his view, the contemporary criticism had become an institution for publicly affirming the values of culture as

understood in a Eurocentric, dominative, and elitist sense. Consequently, criticism in the dominant stream had lost touch with the "resistance and heterogeneity of civil society." As such, it had effectively presided over its own (paradoxically) cultural marginalization and political irrelevance. The notion of the text as autotelic, totally detached from the world is what Said is not prepared to accept. That is why he redefines the text as "worldly," as implicated in real social and political conditions in a number of ways. For Said, the most important aspect of a text is the fact of its production. The specific conditions of a text's production are constitutive of its capacity to produce meaning; it is these very conditions that constrain their own interpretation by placing themselves, intervening in given ideological and aesthetic conjunctures. In his view, texts are marked by an interplay between their speech and the contours of its projected reception. Above all, as texts dislodge and displace other texts, they are essentially facts of power, not of democratic exchange. Following Foucault, Said rejects formulations of the discursive situation as one of democratic equality or political neutrality but likens it to the relation between colonizer and colonized, or oppressor and oppressed. In short, "texts are a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture at some human cost to its various components."

Pursuing Foucault's line of argument, Said views culture as that which fixes the range of meanings of "home," "belonging," and "community"; beyond this is anarchy and homelessness. It is within this outright opposition that Said wishes to carve out a space within civil society for the intellectual and critic, a space of "inbetweenness." Echoing Arnold, Said suggests that the "function of criticism at the present time" is to stand between the dominant culture and the totalizing forms of critical systems, though he rejects Arnold's ultimate identification of culture with state authority. He articulates it in terms of the notions of filiation (which embodies given ties of family, home, class, and country) and affiliation (an acquired allegiance, part voluntary and part historically determined, of critical consciousness to a system of values). As he argues, much of the Modernist literature, having experienced the failure of filiative ties, turned to compensatory affiliation with something broader than the parameters of their original situation in the world. The familiar examples he cites are those of Joyce and Eliot who both shed their

original ties of family, race, and religion to affiliate themselves, from an exilic position, with broader visions of the world. The type of criticism, Said is trying to advocate here lies precisely in its difference from other cultural activities as well as from totalizing systems of thought and method. This criticism of his favour is "secular" in character; it focuses on local and worldly situations, placing itself in opposition to the production of massive henuetic systems. It is firmly committed to oppose every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse: and, inversely, to promote non-coercive knowledge in the interests of human freedom, as also to articulate possible alternatives to the prevailing orthodoxies of culture and system. In Said's view, writers like Vico and Swift are important prototypes of the oppositional stance. His description of Swift as "anarchic in his sense of the range of alternatives to the status quo" might as well be applied to Said himself.

It is quite interesting to note that Said traces the emergence of Euro-centricism in culture, literature, and criticism to Renan's transference of authority from sacred, divinely authorized texts to an ethnocentric philology which diminished the status of both Semitic languages as well as the "Orient." The theme of the "Orient" Said developed in his next full-length study, *Orientalism* (1978), in which he examines the vast tradition of Western "constructions" of the Orient. According to him, this tradition of orientalism has been a "corporate institution" for coming to terms with the Orient, the people of the East, for authorizing views about it and ruling over it. Central to Said's argument is that the construction of the Orient by the West is actually a production of the Western discourse, a means of self-definition of Western culture as well as of justifying imperial domination of Oriental people. To prove this, Said examines the modern history of Britain, France, and America's engagement with primarily the Islamic world. Here, the emphasis on the "Islamic world" seems to have been owing to Said's own position as a Palestinian. For we do not see any such preference in the Western imperial engagement with the Orient, which is inspired by political and economic considerations, not by religious and ethnic. However, no one would disagree with Said when he argues that Orientalism is a matter of Western discourse, a cultural and linguistic construction. Said's aim, clearly, is not to show that this politically motivated edifice of language somehow distorts a "real" Orient, but rather to show that it is

indeed a language, with an internal consistency, motivation, and capacity for representation resting on a relationship of power and hegemony over the Orient. It also needs to be mentioned here that Said's thesis about "Orientalism" is evidently inspired by his intellectual mentor, Foucault, whose book entitled *Power/Knowledge*: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (1980) finds repeated echoes in "Orientalism", Said's subsequent book on his favourite elaboration of his ideas related to this subject. With these introductory remarks on Said's work, we can now take up in detail the various implications that emerge from his widely influential theory of "Orientalism."

For the postcolonial writers as well critics, Said's "Orientalism" has been a sort of Bible; Gayatri Spivak calls it a "source book," Homi Bhabha refers to it as "inaugurating the postcolonial field." The salient features of Said's theory of Orientalism are as under: (i) His argument comes from Foucault's dual notions of "discourse" and knowledge as vitally linked to power. As Foucault explains, discourse is the conceptual terrain of thought, a system of ideas and opinions that gives sanction to certain forms of knowing, and expressions of certain knowledges. He goes on to say that all "will to knowledge" is tied up with the will to power. There can be no expression/imposition of power without prior knowledge about the subject of power. Using this relationship between knowledge and power, Said argues that knowledge about the Orient, which the European nations willed to acquire, was not without their will to exercise power over the oriental people. It was not disinterested knowledge, acquired for the sake of knowledge itself; it preceded actual colonial practices. As a matter of fact, colonial practices (political, economic) necessitated the production of such knowledge. Thus, knowledge is bound up with power.

Said also appropriates some of the ideas of Italian thinker Gramsci, such as his notion of the modes of hegemonic oppression - coercion and consent. The colonial power based on Orientalist knowledge does not rely on physical force as much as the consent of the native. Also, these texts and discourses present the imperialist programme as natural and necessary. The native agrees to be colonized when he accepts the colonial stereotypes of himself. The civil society apparatus of education, religion after adopting the stereotype, justifies and consents to being

colonized subjects. With these two thinkers as his foundational premise, Said proceeds to apply their notions to the concrete and specific case of the colonized oriental nations by the various European powers. As a first step, Said describes how originally the term Orientalism referred to the work of lndologists like Sir William Jones and H.H. Wilson, who translated and compiled Indian literary works, laws and codes for use by colonial administrators. Said's use of the term sums up the colonial project when he defines Orientalism as "a manner of regularized (or Orientalised) writing, vision, and study dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced in certain discrete ways." He further adds that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'.....Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."

Thus, in Said's view, the discourse of Orientalism is the production of ideas, knowledge and opinions about the Orient. This included certain modes of representation of the Orient through Othering (where the Orient is Europe's dark Other). Offering an analysis of this discourse, Said makes a reading of a range of texts; literary, philological, philosophical, administrative, ethnographic and others. Said shows that these texts acted as lens through which the Orient was viewed primarily to be ruled. In his view, the texts were "worldly" in the sense that they exhibited the pressures, preoccupations and prejudices of the world around them. Said's contention is that no text is free from its contexts of production. Well!, to the extent that a text gets the colouring of the context, no one would disagree with Said, although there have been writers who wrote only about their feelings in relation to non-political, non-ideological subjects or objects of life. But to say that every text gets one particular colour of politics, of colonizer and colonized, is to be as dogmatic and theory-blind as those he and Foucault would condemn for their "naturalism," "essentialism," "universalism," etc. In Said's view, "the Orient is something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), or illustrates (as in a zoological museum)."

Said shows how certain kinds of ideological assumptions informed these texts and produced stereotypes of the native: the ignorance of the natives, their effeminacy and indolence, their oversexed nature, their essential untrustworthiness, the superiority of the European and his knowledge, and similar other stereotypes. These stereotypes of the weak and foolish native helped justify and even necessitate Western presence as the masculine, strong and rational protector. The logical next step then is that the superior Westerner, the white man, must look after the poor native who could not look after himself. As Said puts it, the Oriental man was first an Oriental and only secondly a man. But is not a Roman, or a Dane, or a Jew, one feels tempted to ask, a Roman, a Dane, or a Jew first, and only secondly a man, even in the greatest of writers, William Shakespeare (Horatio in *Hamlet* says I am more a Roman than a Dane). The point one would like to make here is that every writer tends to stereotype people he knows less about, the "others," be they the Orientals or the Occidentals, and not necessarily for the end of colonizing them.

Said lists a number of indices by which Orientalism was set up as a field of study. According to him, the period between 1765 and 1850 marked the time of discovery. The Europeans "found" the Orient exotic, profound, and mysterious. The Orientalist, usually an expert in language, travelled through the country, seeing the Orient through European eyes. But can you see through someone else's eyes? Also, are there such eyes as European or Asian? One should not be colour-blind to see all as one, and one as all. There are eyes on both sides of the divide, and all eyes are not set on the political or ideological agenda of the coloniser. Can we really say that there have never been scholars or poets who would be interested in a language, a thought, a people for its own sake? Matthew Arnold "finds" in the same Orient the "virtue of detachment," the quality of disinterestedness, the ability to be able to see the thing as in itself it really is. He did so because he was interested in thought only, not in the politics of imperialism.

According to Said, in the next stage, second-order knowledge was produced. This was the Oriental tale, the mythology of the mysterious Orient. All things in history, the History itself, were created for the Orient: it was set up as mysterious and barbarous long before anything was known about it. Once again, one feels to

cite the example of Arnold, who considered his own countrymen, the White Englishmen, arrogant and barbarous and philistines. Sensibly, Arnold talks of classes, not continentals. Elaborating further, Said surmises that for the Europeans, the Orient was static, an essential vision rather than a vibrant and changing narrative. One would not deny Said an insight into the European stereotype of the Orient, but one cannot ignore the fact that the moment an attempt is made to work out a theory from that insight, the trouble begins, as it has always begun with every attempt at theorization in philosophy, psychology, or literary criticism. It is for this very reason that every theory in philosophy or literature has been followed by a counter-theory: Realism has followed romance, just as Humanism had followed Medievalism, just as postmodernism has followed modernism, just as, earlier, Existentialism had followed Idealism, etc. The fact of the matter is that life as well as literature are hard cases for theorization and generalization. Great writers have known it, and have not attempted theorization.

Said also distinguishes between "latent" and "manifest" Orientalism. "Latent Orientalism," we are told, is the unconscious positivity. Here ideas and prejudices of Oriental backwardness, racial inequality, and degeneracy exists. "Manifest Orientalism" is the set of various stated views about Oriental society, language and culture, all of which relegate the native to a "dreadful secondariness." All the changes occurring in the knowledge of the Orient take place in manifest Orientalism.

8.3 LET US SUM UP

His early comments on culture are useful in making sense of his general thesis of Orientalism. His argument now is that the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the principal connections between them. Nations themselves are narrations. Said suggests that we need a "contrapuntal" perspective - that is, to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its own agenda, pace of development, internal formation and coherence, system of external relationships, all coexisting and interacting with one another.

8.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What does Said mean by Orientalism? Discuss.
2. How are the concepts of Culture and Imperialism related? Discuss.
3. What does Said mean by Latent and Manifest Orientalism?
4. How does "Orientalism" lead to Post-colonialism?
5. Critically examine the validity of Said's theory of Orientalism.

8.5 SUGGESTED READING:

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism.* (London: Penguin, 1985).
2. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism.* (London: Vintage, 1994).
3. Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures.* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
4. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
5. Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee (eds.), *Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context.* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1999).

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HOMI BHABHA "OF MIMICRY AND MAN : THE AMBIVALENCE OF COLONIAL DISCOURSE"

STRUCTURE

9.1 OBJECTIVES

Our Objective in this lesson is to introduce the learners to Homi Bhabha and Postcolonialism to help the learners to explain the concept in detail and also to help the learners to prepare for the semester end examination.

9.2 HOMI BHABHA AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Homi K. Bhabha's role in the movement of Postcolonialism has been similar to that of Gayatri Spivak. He extended certain tenets of poststructuralism into discourses about colonialism, nationality, and culture. These tenets include an interrogation of the notion of fixed identity, the undermining of binary oppositions, and an emphasis on language and discourse. Added to these is the tenet of power relations in which these are imbricated as underlying our understanding of cultural phenomena. However, as in the case of Spivak, this "extension" is not a simple application of poststructuralist principles to the

subject-matter of colonialism; Bhabha uses the very process of extension to display the limits of these principles and the altered nature of their applicability. His source for some of these ideas is Jacques Derrida, as also Mikhail Bakhtin; from the latter Bhabha draws the notion of the "dialogic" (indicating the mutuality of a relationship) in order to characterize the connection between coloniser and colonised. Another source Bhabha draws upon is Frantz Fanon's revolutionary work on colonialism. No less influential a source for Bhabha has been Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), where the concept of "nation" is defined from the present-day perspective.

Central to Bhabha's critical theory is the notion of "hybridity," which challenges the notions of identity, culture, and nation as coherent and unified entities that exhibit a linear historical development. "Hybridity," on the contrary, expresses a state of "in betweenness," as in a person who stands between two cultures. In a sense, the concept of "hybridity" is embodied in Bhabha's own life (as in the lives of many intellectuals from colonial nations who have been raised in Western institutions). Bhabha was born into a Parsi community in Bombay, was educated both at Bombay and Oxford, and then taught at the universities both in England and America. Presently, he is a Professor at Harvard. It is not ironic that the postcolonial critics, though accusing the imperial West of having imposed on the East its language, culture, and knowledge, derive all their ideas from the Western masters. It may not be palatable to plenty of the third-world intellectuals, the fact remains that all modern knowledge has come through the coloniser's language. Rather than club the invasion of knowledge with the political invasion, we should welcome it as the Tudor England welcomed the Graceo-Roman knowledge that brought about the Renaissance. The Indian Renaissance owes the same indebtedness to the wealth of knowledge that flowed, and is still flowing, through the English language.

In his important essay "The Commitment of Theory" (1989), Bhabha makes an attempt to address the recent charges that literary and cultural theory (including deconstruction, Lacanism, and the various tendencies of poststructuralism) suffers from atleast two crippling defects: it is inscribed

within, and complicit with, a Eurocentric and imperialist discourse; and, as such, it is insulated from the real concerns, the "historical exigencies and tragedies" of Third-world nations/peoples. In Bhabha's view, this "binarism of theory vs. politics" as reproducing, in mirror image, "a historical nineteenth century polarity of Orient and Occident which, in the name of progress, unleashed in exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other." It is a "mirror image" because, in the modern situation, it is depoliticized Western theory itself (rather than the Orient) which is the "Other." Bhabha questions this binarism: "must we always polarize in order to polemicize?" Must we, he asks, simply invert the relation of the oppressor and the oppressed?

Homi Bhabha, like Said, is keenly aware about the continued aspirations of imperialism, as it presses into a "neo-imperialist" phase. As he puts it, "there is a sharp growth in a new Anglo-American nationalism which increasingly articulates its economic and military power in political acts that express a new-imperialist disregard for the independence and autonomy of peoples and places in the Third World." As recent examples of Anglo-American imperialism, Bhabha cites Britain's war against Argentina over the Falklands in 1982 and the first Gulf War of 1991. Such political and economic domination, he adds, "has a profound hegemonic influence on the information orders of the Western world, its popular media and its specialized institutions and academics." Clearly, an implication of this statement is that the academic institutions in the Western World will fall to some extent under the sway of the Western ideology of political dominance. The question that follows from Bhabha relates to the "new" languages of theoretical critique in the West: "Are the interests of 'Western' theory necessarily collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a power bloc? Is the language of theory merely another power play of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?"

What is of greater interest to us, as well as to Bhabha himself, is Bhabha's raising of these questions within the specific perspective of postcolonial discourse. He asks what the function of "a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world

is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure." While addressing this, Bhabha first of all rejects the opposition between "theory" and "activism." His argument for this rejection is that they are both "forms of discourse" which "produce rather than reflect their objects of reference." In other words, as Bhabha explains using insights from the British cultural critic Stuart Hall, political positions cannot be charted out in advance as true or false, progressive or reactionary, bourgeois or radical, prior to the specific conditions in "the process of emergence itself." This is a way of acknowledging "the force of writing, its metaphoricity and its rhetorical discourse, as a productive matrix which defines the 'social' and makes it available as an objective of, and for, action." Clearly, Bhabha is using the word "writing" here in the sense in which Derrida uses it, to signify the intrinsically metaphorical nature of language and discourse, their inability to make statements which are absolutely clear and unequivocal, since they are constituted by a vast network of signifiers in which any given position is structured by what is outside of it. This externality, in Derrida's, and Bhabha's, view, infests with its diversity and ambivalence any presumed internal coherence of the position itself. Here, Bhabha also takes recourse to J.S. Mill's essay "On Liberty", which described knowledge and a given political stance as arising only through continual self-questioning and confronting at each stage of its articulation other stances that are opposed to it. As Bhabha perceives it, Mill sees "the political as a form of debate and dialogue"; the political is dialogic not by abstractly acknowledging other perspectives and then circumventing them but by recognizing that its own perspective, recognizing its own limitations in other light, is at every point risen by ambivalence. It is this discursive ambivalence in the subject of enunciation itself that marks the truly public and political. This type of political "negotiation," says Bhabha, "goes beyond the unsettling of the essentialism or logocentrism of a received political tradition, in the name of an abstract free play of the signifier."

Hence, the language of political critique, according to Bhabha, is effective not because it maintains rigid oppositions between terms such as master and slave, but because it "overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity," which engages in the construction

of a *new* (rather than preconceived) political object and endeavour. Such a language will be dialectical without recourse to "a teleological or transcendent History...the event of theory becomes the *negotiation* of contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle, and destroy those negative polarities between knowledge and its objects, and between theory and practical political reason." Bhabha notes that there can be "no simplistic, essentialist opposition between ideological miscognition and revolutionary truth." Between these is a "historical and discursive difference." Hence our political priorities and referents - such as the people, class struggle, gender difference - "are not there in some primordeal, naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogenous political object." All of this makes us recognize, claims Bhabha, that the "question of commitment" is "complex and difficult." This should not lead, however, to quiet sour inertia, but to a demand that "questions of organization are theorized and socialist theory is organized."

Reading Bhabha and his likes, fiercely engaged in the business of theorizing all that comes in their way, one gets the feeling that their linguistic games are quite like the ball-game in the basement; the beauty of such a game is that it gives you perspiration, and exercise of lungs, and yet leaving the world overhead completely undisturbed. The present-day theory gives one a similar exercise in linguistic gymnastics without creating even the slightest stir in the world overhead. The "basement" placement of the critical activity called Theory is being carried out in the underground structures of language and life, having no consequence in what language and life do in over-the-ground world. Another uneasiness it causes in the reader's mind is that it addresses everything under the sun except the works of literature. Its favourite subjects are politics and sociology, culture and ideology. One begins to wonder at the utility of the entire intellectual effort that has gone, and is going, into this business of theorizing. Maybe, it is an acknowledgment of the intellectual's incapacity to participate in the affairs of mankind; hence his choice to join the class of super-specialists who prefer to remain engaged in "below-the-surface" things of life, which can be shared only with the fellow creatures of the laboratory.

Resuming our summary of Bhabha's ideas, we find him citing, as an example of the refusal of outright opposition, the miners' strike in Thatcher's Britain of 1984-85. Originally, this conflict might have been seen in the received terminology of a class struggle. But when miners' wives were interviewed, they began to question their roles within the community and the family, and challenged elements of the very culture they were ostensibly defending. This circumstance, Bhabha concludes, displays the "importance of the hybrid moment of political change," whereby there was a re-articulation of the terms of the struggle that was "neither the One (unitary working class) nor the Other (the politics of gender) but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both. There is a negotiation between gender and class." Bhabha seems to find in Stuart Hall's suggestion that "the British Labour Party should seek to produce a socialist alliance among progressive forces that are widely dispersed and distributed across a range of class, culture and occupational forces" as an acknowledgement of the "Historical necessity" of his own notion of "hybridity."

Bhabha's example of British miners' strike can be branded as "betrayal" of the workers' cause, a sort of "sabotage"; at a time when there is a struggle against exploitation of the working class, to bring in the question of gender exploitation by the workers is only to kill the struggle, and thereby help the exploiter. If "hybridity" means to oppose one wrong by another, as in the present case, then it can only be branded as a clever construction to kill the resistance of one group by that of another. Both 'exploitations' are there, and one would care as much for women's rights as for the workers', but to pit one group of the exploited or oppressed against another is only to clearly help the real exploiter and oppressor, who is the capitalist and the imperialist. The moment chosen for the women's rights is inappropriate.

Coming back to Bhabha's original question, whether critical theory is "Western," he seems to view it as "a designation of institutional power and ideological Eurocentricity." He acknowledges that much European theory, having "opened up the chasm of cultural difference," uses the metaphor of Otherness to "contain the effects of difference...the Other text is forever the exegetical

horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation." Being analysed and showcased, "the Other loses its power to signify, to negate. To establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse." In these ways, critical theory has reproduced "a relation of domination." Here, Bhabha chooses to make a distinction between the institutional history of critical theory and "its conceptual potential for change and innovation." In this context, Bhabha cites Althusser, Lacan, and Foucault as opening up other possibilities of understanding history, the relations of production, and the ambivalent structure of subjectivity. Many poststructuralist ideas, he observes, are "themselves opposed to Enlightenment, humanism and aesthetics. They constitute no less than a deconstruction of the moment of the modern."

In the perception of Bhabha, such a revision of the history of critical theory is informed by a notion of "cultural difference" (rather than cultural "diversity," which embodies a received and static recognition), which foregrounds the ambivalence of even Western cultural authority in its own moment of enunciation or articulation. This notion of difference, in his view, "problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity." It harbours the recognition that cultures "are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other. It embodies an acknowledgement that the "act of cultural enunciation...is crossed by the *difference* of writing." The pact of interpretation, argues Bhabha, is never just an act of communication between two interlocutors: these two "places" must pass through a "Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance." This Third Space, "though unrepresentable in itself," makes meaning and reference to "an ambivalent process," which challenges "our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People." We must, therefore, acknowledge the "hybridity" of all cultural statements. As Bhabha reminds us, Fanon recognized that those who initiate revolutionary change "are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity." By way of example, Bhabha cites the Algerian struggle for independence, which "in the moment of

liberatory struggle" destroyed many elements of the very nationalist tradition that had opposed colonial cultural imposition. So what? One can't help saying. If certain things get sacrificed for a greater cause or good, there is no reason for questioning the greater good itself. Most examples we are fed on in the Bhabha's argument are meant to underline the struggles of the oppressed, and thereby undercut the spirit that demands justice or offers resistance. Is it postcolonialism or postcollaborationism? One feels like asking.

In conclusion, Bhabha makes claims that theoretical recognition of "the split-space of enunciation" may open the way to thinking of "international culture, based... on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity."* It is the *"in-between* space... that carries the burden of the meaning of culture and emerge as the others of our selves." Bhabha's own understanding of the notion of difference is as the embodiment of ambivalence rather than of endless relationality. In asserting the need to recognize the ambivalence of enunciation, he effectively perpetuates the very binarism he seeks to avoid. As M.A.R. Habib has pointed out, "one of the problems with Bhabha's argument is that it is uncritically founded on Derrida's notion of difference, which is itself abstract. Bhabha even admits that his own 'Third Space' is 'unrepresentable in itself,' denying any possibility of its articulation, and allowing to wallow in transcendence." The central insight in Bhabha's essay is that political efforts cannot be completely theorized in advance because they have to be adapted to local conditions and possibilities. But even this insight is somewhat spoiled by its conversion into more generalized and rather vague assertions about the manner in which language functions. It is within Bhabha's notion of *hybridity* itself that we can find the origins of whatever polarization it was intended to transcend. As such, the notion of *hybridity* seems rather inadequate for understanding the diverse constitution of political commitment, which is seldom marked by a mere blending of two factors such as class and gender. Bhabha also seems to fault in setting up several straw targets: who claim that "culture" or "subjectivity" or "truth" is somehow an unproblematic unity? The so-called opposition between

ideological error and truth that Bhabha's notion of ambivalence and hybridity are intended to overcome has already been abrogated - in a dilative deriving from Hegel - in the long tradition of Marxist thought, which has seen truth as institutionally grounded and as itself the formalized projection of various ideologies.

Bhabha's main document contributing to postcolonial theory is *The Location of Culture* (1994), which brings together some of his best-known essays like "Signs Taken for Wonders," "The Other Question," and "Sly Civility." His argument can be summed up as under: That Edward Said's reading of the colonial encounter is directionless; it only treats colonial authority as proceeding from the colonizer to the colonised. In Bhabha's view, Said's notion of the identities of colonizer and colonised are fixed and static. In his own reading of the history, colonial discourse is rather conflictual, ambivalent, and plagued with contradictions. In his view, the contradictory psychic relations between the colonizer and the colonised - moving between fear and desire for the Other - prevents any stable, unchanging identities for the colonizer and the colonised. In other words, the relationship between the two is one of negotiation and transaction, not uni-directional will to power. Using insights of poststructuralism and Lacan's post-Freudian psychology, Bhabha argues that identities are possible only in differential relations and displacement. For him, identity is a liminal reality constantly moving between positions, displacing others and being displaced in turn.

In Bhabha's theory of postcolonialism, the colonial regime creates a gaze of discipline, of power and control. It achieves power through the creation of set stereotypes, such as those of the sly treacherous native, the noble savage, or the lustful native. In his view, what the stereotyping indicates is not the stable and supreme power of the colonizer, but rather its fractured nature. Since colonial discourse depends on the representation of the unchanging nature of the native (as one of the above mentioned stereotypes). Thus what is already "known/established" has to be endlessly confirmed through repetitions. For Bhabha, this need for repetition only betrays a lack of certainty about the stereotypes, which clearly proves the essentially unstable and constructed

nature of the stereotypes. Bhabha also views it as a lack in the colonial identity itself: that the colonizer can construct his identity only through the stereotype of the Other.

Another aspect of Bhabha as a postcolonial theorist is that he expresses suspicion about both multiculturalism and cultural relativism which postmodernism celebrates. For him, multiculturalism constructs cultures as implicitly equivalent and therefore interchangeable. Cultural relativism manages cultural difference in relation to a standard centre, which only serves to reinforce the authority of the dominant culture. Both ultimately minimize the challenge of cultural difference. Bhabha's plea is that there can be no real equivalence between cultures. He suggests that the basic existential experiences of different groups are different and cannot be equated. Here, one feels a little uneasy about Bhabha's inference about the implication of multiculturalism. He takes it to be a belief in equality of cultures, whereas it may only be meant a co-existence of different cultures, without raising the question of who is, or is not, superior to the rest. In fact, co-existence is always based on the premise of tolerance of the Other, not on the equality of all cultures. The idea of difference between various cultures sharing a common life, is what constitutes the basis of their mutual respect and tolerance. No one would like to raise the question of equality, for that would only destroy the very idea of co-existence of cultures, or multiculturalism.

The severest criticism of Postcolonialism has come from Aijaz Ahmad, whose *In Theory* (1992), committed to Marxist ideology, calls into question several of the assumptions that inform postcolonial theory - especially the latter's complicity with neo-imperialism, appropriation by Western academics, and the notion of the subject. He argues that "Third World" literature arrives as a category when they are appropriated, marketed, reviewed, and accepted as "counter-canonical" by the Western metropolitan academies.

9.3 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed Homi Bhabha's role in the movement of Post colonialism. We have also learnt that political efforts cannot be completely theorized in advance because they have to be adapted to local conditions and possibilities.

9.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What does Homi Bhabha mean by "hybridity"? Discuss its implications.
2. Critically examine Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space."
3. What is Bhabha's contribution to Postcolonial theory? Discuss.
4. Write a note on Bhabha's critique of multiculturalism.
5. Write a note on Bhabha's critique of cultural relativism.
6. What is common between Said, Spivak, and Bhabha? Discuss.

9.5 SUGGESTED READING

1. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism.* (London: Routledge, 1998).
2. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).
3. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
4. Harish Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India.* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993).
5. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures.* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

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GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK : "CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK?"

STRUCTURE

10.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic. She is University Professor at Columbia University, where she is a founding member of Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. She is considered one of the most influential postcolonial intellectuals. She is best known for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?," and for her translation

of Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie*. In 2012, Spivak was awarded the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy for being "a critical theorist and educator speaking for the humanities against intellectual colonialism in relation to the globalized world." In 2013, she received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Republic of India. Spivak has become an authoritative voice of the postcolonial period since the publication of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She has extended her discourse to a large variety of topics such as Marxism, Feminism and Deconstruction. The lesson analyzes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The lesson also acquaints the learner with the format of the examination oriented questions.

10.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITER

Spivak was born in Calcutta on 24 February 1942. She graduated from Presidency College of the University of Calcutta in 1959 with first-class degree in English. She left India in the same year to take a Master's degree at Cornell University in the U. S. A. and it was followed by a year's fellowship at Girton College, Cambridge, England. Spivak returned to the U. S. A. after the completion of the fellowship in England for taking up the position of an Instructor at the University of Iowa. Meanwhile she completed her doctoral dissertation on the Irish poet W. B. Yeats and the research work was guided by the literary critic Paul de Man at Cornell University, New York. At present she is Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University, New York. Her translation of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* brought international recognition for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak, through her cultural and critical theories, tried to challenge the legacy of colonialism. She refused to admit the notion that the Western World is having an upper hand over the Third World as it is more purified from the grossness of acute barbarism. Her critical discourse raises the issues of marginal subjects such as the place of the subaltern women in the society and their empowerment. Though the people could surpass the colonial rule, they are not actually free from its influences and power structures.

Works

- *Myself, I Must Remake: The Life and Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (1974).

- *Of Grammatology* (translation, with a critical introduction, of Derrida's text) (1976).
- *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987).
- *Selected Subaltern Studies* (edited with Ranajit Guha) (1988).
- *The Post-Colonial Critic – Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990).
- *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993).
- *The Spivak Reader* (1995).
- *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999).
- *Death of a Discipline* (2003).
- *Other Asias* (2008).
- *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012).
- *Readings* (2014).

Literary

- *Imaginary Maps* (translation with critical introduction of three stories by Mahasweta Devi) (1994)
- *Breast Stories* (translation with critical introduction of three stories by Mahasweta Devi) (1997)
- *Old Women* (translation with critical introduction of two stories by Mahasweta Devi) (1999)
- *Song for Kali: A Cycle* (translation with introduction of story by Ramproshad Sen) (2000)
- *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* (translation with critical introduction of the novel by Mahasweta Devi) (2002)

10.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

Spivak borrows the term subaltern from Antonio Gramsci, to refer to the unrepresented group of people in the society. In the Indian cultural context, the term subaltern acquires more significance as the people have struggled hard for

Indian independence. She prefers the term subaltern as it encompasses the exact picture of the lower class people. India is a land of varieties and vitalities. It is divided into different states in the name of class, religion, language, ethnicity, gender and citizenship. In this scattered outlook, the condition of the subaltern is all the more pathetic. Spivak came to the forefront of literary circle with her celebrated essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The essay vindicates the apprehensions of women in India who practise the widow-sacrifice known as sati. The practice of sati in the pre-independent India was considered as part of a barbaric culture by the Western World. Spivak proposes a theory of subalternity in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In this essay, she vindicated the limitations of the subalterns, asking "Can the Subaltern Speak?" By subaltern, Spivak means the oppressed subjects or more generally those "of inferior rank." She goes on to add that "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow." Spivak concludes the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by repeating her standpoint that "the subaltern cannot speak." Her statement "subaltern cannot speak" has litigated flames of controversy in the postcolonial context. Spivak's statement is actually a one stop answer for all the questions. It is an outcome of her lifelong search for truth and it is being formulated on the basis of socio-cultural backgrounds. The theory formulates that the subaltern can speak but others do not have the patience to listen to them. The message conveyed by the sender does not reach to the receiver as it is hindered by the element of noise. Articulation is an involuntary act by the human beings but to interpret things in the real sense takes conscious effort on the part of the listeners. Such conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak is often taken out of context to mean that subaltern women have no political agency because they cannot be represented. Such a reading is actually contrary to the very situated theoretical framework that Spivak establishes in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak would certainly not want to deny the social agency and lived existence of disempowered subaltern women. The crucial point, however, is that these disempowered women receive their political and discursive identities within historically determinate systems of political and economic representation. Spivak revitalized the feminist discourse in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

In this essay, she focuses upon some of the problems of the Third World Women that have never been mentioned in the international framework. Spivak's writings reflected the background of women's struggle and oppression in the Third World Countries. Feminism as a theory could not take into consideration the views and aspirations of all the women in the world. There are regional differences everywhere and the history that has played a key role in their formation should be analyzed more vividly.

Spivak's writings on feminism had an iconoclastic effect as she challenged some of the basic assumptions of feminism in general. All women are not the same and there are a lot of variations existing even among women with regard to class, colour and creed. The will and aspirations of the European women are totally different from the women of the Asian Continent. The European women are more or less liberated from their patriarchal dominance whereas women from the Third World Countries are struggling to cope with the European women. It would be very difficult to create a universally agreeable female gender and the time has now come for the people to respect the differences within the gender. Spivak is not against feminism but her very arguments strengthen the fundamental principles of feminism. She reiterates the fact that there are differences in case of race, class, religion, citizenship and culture among women. Feminism needs to concentrate on this variation that exists among women and help them to achieve their personal goals.

10.4 SUMMARY OF "CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK"

The concept of the other is a universal phenomenon in which the self claims to be the subject and all the rest comes under the category of the other. The term other is highly relative and it goes on changing its significance according to the context. There is supremacy of male domination over women in the society. The dominance of patriarchy has been achieved through historical forces. From times immemorial, the male-folk went for work and they were the bread-earners of the family. Women were confined to the four walls of their houses, looking after their children and household duties. They never went out for anything and as a result they lacked vigour, vitality, exuberance and mobility. Physiologically a lot of changes do take place in the body of a woman especially when she bears a

child in her womb. The bodily changes along with the strict restriction on movement resulted in the complete subjugation of women. This historical factor has paved the way for the treatment of women as the other. Women are being treated as the other since they are subordinated to their men. The condition of the Third World Women is even more pathetic. They are doubly segregated; first of all from their men and also from the white upper class. The third world women are discriminated on the basis of gender, colour and caste. The concept of the "other" comprises not only of the women of the third world but all the unwanted people like mentally retarded, mentally derailed and people with homosexual activities. The other always occupies a position outside the mainstream of life and they are treated as marginals who do not contribute anything to the welfare of the society. The psychological reason behind the treatment of women as the other is to subjugate them under the patriarchal dominance and utilize their servile existence whenever needed.

Gender Subalternity and the Role of Women in the Society

The society has identified the woman as a person who belongs to the fairer sex. It is equal to say that a female is perceived by the society from the point of view of sex. Males and females co-exist in this society for the harmonious growth and development of the nation. They share equal responsibilities in supporting the family but at the same time gender difference occurs even in the family. Females play a vital role in the reproduction process and still they are labeled as the second sex or the weaker sex. The concept of the Subject and the Other points to the proposition that only the males have the right to live in this society. Males themselves cannot live in the society, so they consider women as their supporters and treat them as secondary. It is only at this juncture that the practice of sati becomes a topic of hot discussion. Once the husband dies, the wife has no more role to play except to join with her husband in the funeral pyre. It was an accepted system that prevailed in the country and it was abolished by the Britishers as part of their White Man's Burden.

In India, the practice of sati was very common and many women who became part of the rituals did it out of their love for their husbands. The society has played a major role in making sati a common phenomenon in the country so

as to deny separate existence from men. Once the Subject is gone, the Other cannot remain as a single entity and the widow has to join with the dead husband in the funeral pyre for the completion of the cyclical process. In "Can the Subaltern speak?" Spivak says: "As object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."

In the outset of gender subalternity, it is relevant to delve deep into the roles of women in the society. In the Indian cultural scenario, the historiography failed to represent the contribution of women towards the materialization of Indian independence. It would now be difficult to retrieve the voice of the subaltern or trace the tyrannical process behind the subaltern classes. The issue is further complicated when they do not have a proper history to reclaim their own past. Women had a very limited role to play in the society as they were not allowed to think independently. They are pleased to live with their men and they carry out a lot of household duties that come under the category of unpaid labour. Though women are proficient in doing many jobs, they are not allowed to make any kind of initiatives in their lives. The gendered subalterns are playing the role of mere shadows to please their men. The role of the shadow comes to an end when the light goes out of her husband. Then the woman has no more existence except to trace the shadow of the dead.

The original title of the essay "Can the subaltern Speak?" was "Power, Desire, and Interest." The essay became a controversial subject of thought with Spivak's statement "the subaltern cannot speak." The essay challenges the basic tenets of colonialism. Spivak substantiates her argument that subaltern cannot speak by taking the example of widow self-immolation in India. The practice of sati continued to flourish in the colonial India as it was seconded by the patriarchal culture which in fact made it extremely difficult for the subaltern women to utter their thought.

Voice of Dissent in "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

In the highly controversial essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak highlights various issues related to sati, the practice of widow self-immolation. It

was the finest example to support the argument that the subaltern women didn't get the opportunity to transact their ideas and convince the society about their dissenting voice. The Britishers were the rulers of the colonial India and they tried to abolish the age old custom of widow sacrifice in 1829. Sati is a Sanskrit word for widow and she becomes a good and loyal wife to her husband when she ascends the pyre of her dead husband and unites with her husband in the act of self-immolation. The Britishers preferred the term suttee instead of sati and the abolition of this evil practice was taken up by the colonial rulers as part of their civilizing mission. The message from the colonial rulers was that "white men saving brown women from brown men." But to their greatest disappointment, the Britishers never knew that some of the women in India really wanted to join with their dead husbands in the funeral pyre as a noble act of self immolation. Both *Dharmasastra* and *Rig-Veda*, ancient Hindu religious texts, treat the practice of widow self-immolation as a sacred ritual for the dead husband rather than an act of suicide: "The two moments in the *Dharmasastra* that I am interested in are the discourse on sanctioned suicides and the nature of the rites for the dead." Framed in these two discourses, the self-immolation of widows seems an exception to the rule. The general scriptural doctrine is that suicide is reprehensible. Room is made, however, for certain forms of suicide which, as formulaic performance, lose the phenomenal identity of being suicide.

People carried out the practice of widow self-immolation as it was permitted in the *Dharmasastra*. Spivak challenges the validity of this horrible human sacrifice by stating that "this is not the proper place for the woman to annul the proper name of suicide through the destruction of the proper self." Self-immolation has attained a spiritual significance and the rite is highly male oriented where the domination of patriarchy is made visible through the accomplishment of this widow sacrifice. The practice of sati helped the males to demand respect from women. Women in the pre-independent India played the role of a parasite. A parasite is a separate living organism like a woman and it does not have an independent existence. Once the main tree falls down, the existence of the parasite is under threat. The tree and the parasite cease to exist at the same time. The woman is not different from the parasite. The moment her

husband dies, the woman loses her identity as an individual and regains her individuality with her husband on the funeral pyre.

Spivak is of the view that due to the religious halo behind the self-immolation, the act of widow sacrifice cannot be considered as an act of suicide but "a simulacrum of both truth-knowledge and piety of place." The denial of self-sacrifice on the funeral pyre of her dead husband is treated with contempt and the society will consider her as a living example of nuptial ingratitude: "It is in terms of this profound ideology of the displaced place of the female subject that the paradox of free choice comes into play … By the inexorable ideological production of the sexed subject such a death can be understood by the female subject as an exceptional signifier of her own desire, exceeding the general rule for a widow's conduct."

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak comes up with the contention that "Sati should have been read with martyrdom." A martyr does not die for himself/herself. His/her blood is spilled for the cause of others in which s/he has no personal advantage. The women who burnt themselves as satis were martyrs. This martyrdom was in fact a kind of protest against the society, since it failed to recognize their role in the society along with the kith and kin of their family. British colonial administrator Edward Thompson published his *Suttee: A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry in the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* in 1928.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak argues that Thompson has made the entire situation worse and more complicated by stating that "white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men, impose upon those women a greater ideological constriction by absolutely identifying, within discursive practice, good-wifehood with self-immolation on the husband's pyre." The British rulers in India tried to put an end to the practice of sati so as to justify imperialism as a part of their civilizing mission: "Such a claim repeats the silencing of the Hindu woman's voice, which is already displaced on to her dead husband's funeral pyre in the traditional Hindu religious codes … Rather than defending the woman's agency, however, the British colonial administration used the body of the widow as an ideological battle-ground for colonial power. In doing so

the British were able to justify colonialism, or the systematic exploitation and appropriation of territory, as a civilizing mission. In both the Hindu and British discussions of widow sacrifice, the voice and political agency of the woman is thoroughly repressed from official historical discourse and political representation."

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak lashes out her stringent criticism against Edward Thompson's *Suttee* for two obvious reasons: first of all "Thompson's finessing of the word sati as "faithful" in the very first sentence of the book" and the second one is for Thompson's praise for General Charles Hervey's stand on this subject matter that "brings out the pity of a system which looked only for prettiness and constancy in woman."

"Can the subaltern speak?" is a rhetorical question asked by Spivak and her intention was not to invite any kind of reply but to state the impediments of the subalterns. The essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" discusses the problem of widow sacrifice in great detail and Spivak reiterates her standpoint that subaltern cannot speak and the condition of the woman is even more complicated. Though women obeyed the whims and fancies of their men, they had a voice within themselves, a voice of dissent and disapproval. All women who became victims of patriarchal violence and atrocities had something to say or they wanted to make their position clear whether they were for or against a proposition. The historian failed to record the voice of dissent and especially that of the subaltern women. It would be now very difficult to recover the dissenting voice of the subaltern and the case is further complicated as they lost between colonial power structure and the Hindu religious codes: "The British government put a ban on the custom of sati, but as a result of that several women who could have died a cruel but quick death when husbands died now have to face an agonizing slow death."

Subaltern cannot Speak: A Discourse upon the Theory of Communication

Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" provoked a flood-gate of controversies from every nook and corner of the world. The essay became controversial because Spivak reiterated her opinion that the subaltern could not speak and that the condition of women was more pathetic. One of the reasons for

this controversy was the comparison of the words “speak” along with “talk.” Spivak regrets for the way in which the entire concept of the essay is misconstrued by replacing the word “talk” instead of “speak.” Many critics use the sentence “subaltern cannot talk” as against the sentence “subaltern cannot speak.” The act of speaking and talking are completely different from each other. The act of speaking is more active and it involves the participation of at least one listener whereas the act of talking is passive and it can either be a soliloquy or somnambulism. Speaking comes under interpersonal communication and it involves a situation in which two people try to communicate things face to face. In this type of communication, the person can use gestures and facial expressions so as to make the communication more effective. The element of feedback is instant and it is the most effective way of knowing that the communication has achieved its specific objective.

The act of talking comes under intra-personal communication. It is an act of talking to oneself and such kinds of expressions are not supposed to be heard by others. Meditation, prayer and soliloquy come under intra-personal communication. The elements of communication include: sender, receiver, message, channel, effect, feedback and noise. Sender is the one who sends the message and the person who receives the message is the receiver. Message is the information that is being passed over to the receiver by the sender and the medium that is used in communicating the message becomes the channel. Effect is the attitudinal change that is found in the receiver as a result of getting the new information. Feedback is the response of the receiver that is to be returned to the sender for more clarification. Context is the setting in which the process of communication takes place which can be classified into three: Physical, Psychological and Temporal. Physical context is the geographical setting in which the communication does take place. Psychological context is the relationship that exists between the sender and the receiver. If there is a good rapport with the sender and the receiver, the communication can be more effective and there will be a genuine interest from the part of the listener towards the communication process. Temporal context refers to the time at which the communication takes place. The last but the most important element of communication is noise. It is

said of anything that distorts / hinders / hampers / prevents the proper reception and understanding of the message.

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak states that "the subaltern cannot speak" by attaching a special emphasis on the element of noise. The communication that takes place between a subaltern and a non-subaltern is actually lost due to the element of noise. The element of noise is influenced by the racial, cultural and socio-economic factors. The goal of communication is achieved only when the desired message is conveyed to the receiver. Though the sender tries his/her level best, the communication is interrupted by the element of noise. Spivak substantiates her argument in *The Spivak Reader*: "By speaking I was obviously talking about a transaction between the speaker and the listener. That is what did not happen in the case of a woman who took her own body at the moment of death to inscribe certain kind of understanding – too weak a word – a certain kind of annulment of all the presuppositions that underlie the regulative psychobiography that writes sati. When we act we don't act out of thinking through details; we act in something that Derrida calls, following Kierkegaard, the "night of non knowledge… We act out of certain kinds of reflexes that come through learning habits of mind, rather than by merely knowing something. That is the way in which her action was inscribed in her body. And even that incredible effort to speak did not fulfill itself in a speech act. And therefore, in a certain kind of theoretical anguish after the accounting of this, I said, "the subaltern cannot speak."

In an interview with the editors of *The Spivak Reader*, Spivak substantiates her argument that subaltern cannot speak with an example taken from the colonial period. In the Eighteenth Century, the Britishers came into the region of Bengal, the present Bangladesh. They were surprised to see the fully developed "ancient water works." The complicated water canals were equipped to check the ravishing flood. The Britishers could not tolerate the existence of feudal system in Bengal where the feudal chiefs made the lower class people work hard for them. With the advent of the Britishers, the feudal system was turned up-side down and the feudal chiefs became tax collectors. As a result of constant negligence on the part of the Britishers, the irrigation canals soon became "stagnant, infested with

mosquitoes, and so they started to destroy the canals." The Barbaric act of the Britishers was questioned by the subaltern insurgency as they became the constant victims of the flood. The subalterns were shattered into pieces and the Britishers never had the patience to listen to the subalterns. The imperial government appointed a waterworks inspector to study the entire situation in detail. He came up with a fact finding report that "these waterways had in fact been an irrigation and flood management system." It is only by restoring the "ancient waterways" the people can have a calm and serene life. Spivak is speculative about the restoration of the ancient waterworks as she says: "They cannot be built because the way that they had been built was slowly, respecting the rhythm of those very young rivers, whereas the way things would be built today would be capital-intensive, cost-efficient, and fast." Spivak's controversial statement "the subaltern cannot speak" implies a lot of inner meanings. The subalterns have the capacity to articulate things well and they can go to any extent so as to make their stand clear before the authorities. The real problem lies in the receiver as s/he is not ready to listen to the sender of the message. The receiver is neither interested in listening to the message nor in a position to decode the message of the sender. The element of noise distorts the proper reception of the message and when a subaltern tries to speak, the dormant element of communication becomes a prominent one. It is due to the social and economic factors that exist within a region. The psychological context hardly exists when a subaltern tries to speak; as a result, the communicative system fails to achieve its target. As women were tied down to the four walls of their bedrooms, they hardly had an opportunity to speak and even when they spoke something, they could not transact the proper message and convince others of their stand. The place of the funeral pyre of her dead husband turns out to be the first and the last platform for a woman to speak. In the roaring outburst of loss, the woman may try to speak but others won't have the patience to listen to her. The communication system fails when the speaker is not able to convince the receiver. The society does not give room for the person to speak and in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak makes the point clearer when she says, "There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak."

10.5 LET US SUM UP

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak propounds her theory of subalternity. The crux of her theory is that "the subalterns cannot speak." The tenets of the theory became controversial as they were interpreted with false conviction. Spivak's theory of subalternity does not admit the concept that subaltern cannot talk. Spivak has attached a special significance to the term "speak" in her essay. By speaking, Spivak means transaction between speaker and receiver. When the subalterns try to speak, the message that they try to communicate becomes totally distorted. It happens in a continuous process because others are not ready to listen to them. As people turn a deaf ear to the pleas of the subalterns, communication system fails and no transaction takes place. The subalterns are not able to have transactions with others because of the disparity that exists in the society. The subalterns were subjected to the colonial rule and only the colonizer had the voice. The entire concept of "voice" is determined by the "subject" and the category of the "other" does not have a voice of his/her own. After the colonial rule, the subalterns were again subordinated to the elite upper class. The subaltern women continue to suffer and there is little scope for further improvement.

Spivak's theory of subalternity is still relevant as people suffer in the name of gender, class and creed. As change is the only permanent thing in the world, the subalterns should continue to make their position clear before the authorities. It is only when the authorities heed to the pleas of the subalterns that the new dawn of life may be enjoyed by the subalterns in its fullness. This chapter has examined Spivak's theory of subalternity. The theory proposes that "the subalterns cannot speak" by giving special emphasis on the element of noise.

10.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was born in

    a. 1939

    b. 1942

    c. 1945

    d. 1947

2. Spivak completed her doctoral thesis on

   a. William Wordsworth

   b. Shakespeare

   c. G.B.Shaw

   d. W.B.Yeats

3. At present, Spivak is Professor in Humanities in

   a. Oxford University

   b. Columbia University

   c. Cambridge University

   d. None of the above

4. Spivak received the Padma Bhushan award in

   a. 2010

   b. 2012

   c. 2013

   d. 2014

5. Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" was published in

   a. 1985

   b. 1986

   c. 1987

   d. 1988

6. Spivak borrows the term "subaltern" from

   a. Lacan

   b. Freud

   c. Antonio Gramsci

   d. Edward Said

7. The term “subaltern” means

   a. higher in rank

   b. lower in rank

   c. rich people

   d. None of the above

8. The original title of the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was

   a. “Marginal voices”

   b. “Power, Desire and Interest”

   c. “Power and Interest”

   d. None of the above

9. In the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak highlights various issues related with

   a. Western women

   b. Australian women

   c. Third world women

   d. None of the above

10. Spivak concludes the essay by stating that

   a. subaltern can speak

   b. subaltern cannot speak

   c. Sometimes subaltern can speak

   d. None of the above

10.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Critically examine the summary of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

Q2. Discuss Spivak’s views about the subaltern women in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

Q3. Describe briefly Spivak’s views in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

10.8 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1.	b	6.	c
2.	d	7.	b
3.	b	8.	b
4.	c	9.	c
5.	d	10.	b

10.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 271-313. Print.

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SIGMUND FREUD : "ON NEUROSIS"

STRUCTURE

11.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with Sigmund Freud as a psychoanalyst. The lesson analyzes Sigmund Freud's essay "On Neurosis." It explains the theme and substance of the essay. It also acquaints the learner with the format of the examination oriented questions.

11.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYIST

Sigmund Freud was born on 6 May 1856 in Freiberg, a small town in Moravia, which was at that time a part of Austria. His parents were Jakob and Amalie Freud. He came of a middle-class Jewish family and was the eldest child of his

father's second wife. Over the next six years, Amalie gave birth to six more children. Sigmund was always the favorite child. His father was a wool-merchant and soon after Freud's birth found himself in increasing commercial difficulties. He therefore decided when Freud was just three years old, to leave Freiberg, and a year later the whole family settled in Vienna, with the exception of the two elder half-brothers and their children, who established themselves instead in Manchester. In Vienna, Freud was a studious and serious child. He was schooled at home, first by his mother and then by his father, and then he joined the Sperl Gymnasium, where he was at the top of his class.

In 1873, Freud graduated from the Sperl Gymnasium at the early age of seventeen and started medical training at the University of Vienna. It took him eight years to receive his medical degree, in part because he was distracted by scientific research. This was especially true in the later years of his medical studies (1877–1881), when he was working in the laboratory of his mentor, Ernst Brücke, on the anatomy of the brain.

The year 1881 was a momentous year for Freud for two reasons: first he met Martha Bernays and became engaged to her secretly and second he finally received his medical degree. In 1882, he left Brücke's lab and took a position at the Vienna General Hospital, motivated in part by his desire to make enough money to be able to marry Martha. Over the next five years he moved from department to department at the hospital, passing through surgery and dermatology before coming to rest at Theodor Meynert's department of psychiatry. In the winter of 1885–1886, Freud went to Paris to study under Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière. He was finally married to Martha Bernays in the summer of 1886. They first married in a civil ceremony, but when they discovered that Austria (unlike Germany) would not officially recognize a non-religious marriage, they married in a Jewish one.

Over the next ten years, from 1886–1896, Freud continued to develop his private practice. By the beginning of the 1890s, his relationship with Josef Breuer, another Jewish neurologist, had flourished. The two men had collaborated on the publication of a series of case studies on their patients called *Studies on Hysteria.* This contained one case study by Breuer and four by Freud. The case

study by Breuer, on the patient "Anna O.", is known as the first psychoanalytic case study. In it, Breuer discusses the "cathartic method" he used to cure Anna O.'s symptoms by discovering, with her help, the earlier, unconscious traumas that were associated with her symptoms. Although Freud was enthusiastic about the new method, his emphasis on the exclusively sexual causes of hysteria made his theories unpopular, not only with his superiors at the University, but also with Breuer.

From 1896–1901, in a period of isolation from his colleagues, Freud developed the basics of psychoanalytic theory out of the raw material of his patients, his conversations with Breuer, and his correspondence with a new friend, the Berlin nose and throat doctor Wilhelm Fliess. In 1899, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams,* the first fully fleshed-out psychoanalytic work, was published. Freud was deeply disappointed by its dull reception, but he continued writing. His *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* was published in 1901, and his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* was published in 1905.

In the 1900s, Freud finally emerged from the isolation that had characterized his professional life in the 1890s. He began to have weekly meetings at his house to discuss psychoanalytic theory. The group that met at his house was called the "Wednesday Psychological Society," and eventually it grew into the Vienna Psycho-Analytic Society. By 1904, Freud had begun to hear of other neurologists and psychiatrists using his techniques. He was particularly excited to hear that the well-respected Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler and one of Bleuler's staff members, Carl G. Jung, had taken an interest. Toward the end of the decade, psychoanalysis became a truly international affair: the International Psychoanalytic Association was founded with the help of supporters from Germany, Austria (Alfred Adler and Wilhelm Stekel), Switzerland, Hungary (Sandor Ferenczi), and England (Ernest Jones). In the years before the First World War, psychoanalysis experienced its first growing pains: first Jung, then Adler and Stekel, left the organization after bitter disagreements with Freud. In response to these defections, Jones and Freud created a secret "Committee" to protect psychoanalysis. The committee consisted of Jones, Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Otto Rank, and Hanns Sachs.

During World War I, Freud continued to write and lecture, but patients were few and international communications were impossible. When the war ended, however, the International Psychoanalytic Association resumed its meetings in an atmosphere much more conducive to psychoanalysis than that before the war. Unfortunately, the post-war years were extremely difficult in Vienna: inflation was rampant, supplies were few, and patients were rare. Freud's reputation, however, was growing, and in 1919 he became a professor at the University of Vienna.

Freud's work from 1919 to the end of his life in 1938 became increasingly speculative. He became concerned with applying psychoanalysis to questions of civilization and society, an approach that he had first tried in his 1913 *Totem and Taboo.* In 1920, he published *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* which suggested that human existence is a struggle between Eros, or the sex drive, and an instinct toward death.

In 1923, Freud was diagnosed with mouth cancer, a consequence of his life-long habit of cigar smoking. His illness would trouble him until his death in 1938, demanding in the meantime thirty-three separate operations that caused him pain and made it difficult for him to speak and eat. The 1920s were a complicated decade for Freud. He was undeniably successful, even famous, but his own health, several deaths in his family, and the disintegration of the Committee made his success bittersweet.

In the 1930s, Freud continued to treat patients and to write. He published one of his most frequently read books, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* in 1930. The rise of Nazism in Germany, however, and its echoes in Austria, made life in Vienna increasingly untenable. Freud stayed as long as he could, but when the Nazis invaded Austria in 1938 and raided his house, he fled to England with his family. He died there on September 23, 1939.

Sigmund Freud's extraordinary work on dreams, hysteria, sexuality and civilization form the basis of psychoanalytic criticism. For many decades after Freud, his followers like Ernest Jones and Marie Bonaparte followed Freudian theory to read texts. In the 1960s, the advent of the French thinker Jacques Lacan

changed psychoanalysis irrevocably. Lacan, while advocating a "return to Freud," recast Freudian theory in a linguistic framework influenced by Saussure and Emile Benveniste. Lacan's work, which moves from structuralism to a definite post-structural phase, was followed by the philosophical orientation of psychoanalysis in the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Other critics such as Harold Bloom, Lionel Trilling and Norman Holland have also adopted Freud at various stages in their work.

Freud placed much emphasis on infantile sexuality and emphasized that many of our problems in later life come from our relationships with our parents, the so-called Oedipus complex. The symptoms of neurosis, according to Freud, "are essentially substitute gratifications for unfulfilled sexual wishes." Some disagreed with Freud and his central emphasis on sexuality, but basically most practitioners of psychiatry today would agree with fundamental Freudian principles.

He was right in his proposition that a substantial part of man, his mind, exists in a state of unconsciousness: "To use a familiar but helpful analogy, the mind is like an iceberg, with only a small proportion of it visible above the surface, but a vast hidden bulk exerting its influence on the rest. For the unconscious is dynamic in nature, that is, it actively exerts pressures and influences on what a person is and does. For instance, there are unconscious desires, which can cause someone to do things that he cannot explain rationally, to others or even to himself."

Neurosis, according to Freud, comes about from the frustration of basic instincts, either because of external obstacles or because of internal mental imbalance. Another mental misadaption which Freud describes is repression with the most decisive repressions occurring in earlier childhood, usually of a sexual nature: "In a situation of extreme mental conflict, where a person experiences an instinctual impulse which is sharply incompatible with the standards he feels, he must adhere to, it is possible for him to put it out of consciousness, to flee from it, to pretend that it does not exist. So repression is one of the so-called "defence mechanisms," by which a person attempts to avoid inner conflicts. But it is essentially an escape, a pretence, a withdrawal from

reality, and as such is doomed to failure. For what is repressed does not really disappear, but continues to exist in the unconscious portion of the mind. It retains all its instinctual energy, and exerts its influence by sending into consciousness a disguised substitute for itself - a neurotic symptom. Thus the person can find himself behaving in ways which he will admit are irrational, yet which he feels compelled to continue without knowing why. For by repressing something out of his consciousness he has given up effective control over it; he can neither get rid of the symptoms it is causing, nor voluntarily lift the repression and recall it to consciousness."

Freud classified mental activity to exist at three levels: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The Id is the centre of our primitive instincts; it is blind and ruthless and caters to the business of gratifying our desires and pleasures; the new born infant is the personification of the Id. The Ego develops out of the Id as the child grows. The Ego is not so inward seeking and recognizes that there does exist a world beyond; the Ego acts as censor to the Id, checking the primitive desires for immediate gratification, recognizing the larger picture, so to speak. Conflict between the Id and the Ego can result in a person having neurosis. The third state is the Superego. The Superego is the highest state at which we have arrived in our evolutionary "progress." The Superego is an overseer, our conscience; and, like the Id, is something of which we are not conscious. Though we are not aware of the struggle, according to Freudian theory, there exists a continuing battle between the Id and the Superego with the Ego in the center trying to keep them apart.

Freud came out with his first influential work, in 1900, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In this work, there is contained nearly all his fundamental observations and ideas. "Dreams," Freud said, "are invariably the product of a conflict ... [they help sleep] releasing tensions that come from unattainable wishes." It is, according to Freud, the Id which unleash our dreams; and their meanings are expressed in symbols that require "expert" interpretation. But it is not just from dreams that a trained psychoanalyst might take his or her clue: just everyday behaviour of the subject will be telling (to those who know). For instance: to forget a name means that you unconsciously dislike the person; if a man misses

his ride to work or school, it's because he or she unconsciously dislikes going to school or work; or if a man forgets his house keys it is because he has an unhappy marriage (whether he thinks it or not). Such is the psycho-babble which has invaded our ranks.

11.3 SUMMARY OF "ON NEUROSIS"

The term neurosis was coined by the Scottish doctor William Cullen in 1769, and derives from the Greek word *neuron* (nerve) with the suffix -*osis* (diseased or abnormal condition). Cullen used the term to refer to "disorders of sense and motion" caused by a "general affection of the nervous system." For him, it described various nervous disorders and symptoms that could not be explained physiologically. The term was however most influentially defined by Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts over a century later.

Neurosis was a popular term with Freud and other psychoanalysts. Freud defined neurosis as being manifestations of anxiety producing unconscious material that is too difficult to think about consciously, but must still find a means of expression. Hence, repressed events, disappointments, or traumas manifest later in life as neurosis. The use of the term "neurosis" has declined in the scientific community. The American DSM-III has eliminated the category of Neurosis altogether, replacing it with specific types of disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). This largely reflects a decline in the popularity of psychoanalysis, and the progressive expurgation of psychoanalytical terminology from the DSM. Those who retain a psychoanalytical perspective continue to use the term neurosis as well as practitioners of other therapies, such as Arthur Janov's "Primal Therapy."

Symptoms of Neurosis

While neurosis are not rooted in physical causes, they can most certainly have physical effects. As a mental illness, the term "neurosis" represents a variety of psychiatric conditions in which emotional distress or unconscious conflict is expressed through various physical, physiological, and mental disturbances, and which may include physical symptoms. One of the most common and definitive symptoms of neurosis is anxiety.

Additional symptoms of neurosis can include anxiety, sadness or depression, anger, irritability, mental confusion, low sense of self-worth, etc., behavioural symptoms such as phobic avoidance, vigilance, impulsive and compulsive acts, lethargy, etc., cognitive problems such as unpleasant or disturbing thoughts, repetition of thoughts and obsession, habitual fantasizing, negativity and cynicism, etc. Interpersonally, neurosis involves dependency, aggressiveness, perfectionism, schizoid isolation, socio-culturally inappropriate behaviours, etc. Neurosis has perhaps been most simply defined as a "poor ability to adapt to one's environment, an inability to change one's life patterns, and the inability to develop a richer, more complex, more satisfying personality."

Types of Neurosis

Neurosis manifest in a variety of specific forms:

- Anxiety disorders (both acute and chronic) are a common type of neurosis. With these disorders, patients suffer irrational or illogical worry or fear that is not based on fact. Anxiety disorders can include panic disorder, where the patient suffers from severe bouts of anxiety, as well as generalized anxiety disorder, phobias, and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), a disorder that often affects veterans and victims of traumatic situations.
- Related to anxiety disorders is hysteria, where a person experiences unmanageable fear or emotional excess, often in response to an imagined problem with a specific part of the body.
- Clinical depression is another common type of neurosis. When clinically depressed, a person experiences a state of intense sadness or despair that is disruptive to their social functioning and daily life.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of anxiety disorder primarily characterized by obsessions and/or compulsions. With this type of disorder, a person will often develop rituals and thought patterns that are similar to superstitions. For example, walking in a certain pattern or turning a light on and off a specific number of times may be employed to alleviate the obsession that something bad will happen.

- Personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder are also possible manifestations of neurosis. Those who suffer from borderline personality disorder experience impulsivity such as reckless driving or substance abuse, feelings of worthlessness, inappropriate anger, an unstable self-image and series of relationships, suicidal behaviour, and dissociative symptoms.
- Neurosis can also manifest as pyromania, where a person has an intense obsession with fire, explosives, and their related effects.

It is important to note that neurosis should not be mistaken for psychosis, which refers to loss of touch with reality, and should also not be confused with symptoms that are caused by a physical abnormality. Anxiety, for example, is a common symptom of neurosis, but can also have physical causes. When diagnosing neurosis, it is important to first rule out any possible physical causes of the symptoms.

Neurosis in Psychoanalysis

Historically, two of the most influential figures in psychoanalysis, Freud and Jung, disagreed on what created neurosis. Freud believed that neurosis was rooted in early disappointments or traumas, particularly in childhood. To Freud, neurosis was individual representations of frustrations encountered during a psychosexual phase of development, and were therefore sexual in nature. Jung, on the other hand, believed that neurosis were simply exaggerations of what would otherwise be a normal expression of the self. Because of these differences in belief, the two approached treatment of neurosis very differently. Freud focused intently on a patient's past, while Jung believed that the focus is better put on that which the patient was avoiding in the present. Jung felt that focusing on past wrongs and problems only fueled a sense of self pity, and not a desire to effect change.

In clinical diagnosis, neurosis is an actual disorder or disease, but by general definition, neurosis is a normal human experience and a part of the human condition. Most people are affected by neurosis in some form. A psychological problem develops when neurosis begin to interfere with normal functioning and

cause the individual anxiety. Frequently, the coping mechanisms enlisted to help "ward off" this anxiety only exacerbate the situation, causing more distress. Neurosis has even been defined in terms of this coping strategy, as a "symbolic behavior in defense against excessive psychobiologic pain [which] is self-perpetuating because symbolic satisfactions cannot fulfill real needs."

According to psychoanalytic theories, neurosis may be rooted in ego defense mechanisms, but the two concepts are not synonymous. Defense mechanisms are a normal way of developing and maintaining a consistent sense of self (i.e., an ego), while only those thought and behaviour patterns that produce difficulties in living should be termed neuroses.

Treatment

Although neurosis are targeted by psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, counseling, or other psychiatric techniques, there is still controversy over whether some professionals can perform accurate and reliable diagnoses, and whether many of the resulting treatments are also appropriate, effective, and reliable. Methods of treatment such as talk therapies may or may not alleviate a patient's symptoms, but a certain amount of benefit can certainly be gained through personal companionship and discussion. In psychoanalysis, neurosis are thought to be symptomatic of a pain or trauma that does not register consciously, and many treatments have the aim of bringing this trauma or pain into the conscious mind, where it can be fully experienced and dealt with. Some types of neurosis, such as dissociative disorders (earlier referred to as "hysteria") are sometimes treated using hypnosis or drugs to help the patient return to the original traumatic event that caused the neurosis.

Behaviour therapy is often used to treat many types of neurosis. Phobias and anxieties, for example, are often viewed as inappropriate learned responses. As such, these responses can often be unlearned through behavioural therapy. Obsessive compulsive disorder is often treated with drugs, as well as behaviour therapy that include exposure and response prevention. For example, a patient who obsessively washes their hands from fear of contamination may be helped to purposefully get their hands dirty and refrain from washing

them for a period of time. Phobias may be treated by gradual exposure to the feared object. Anxiety disorders are often treated with a combination of drugs and therapy.

11.4 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed in detail Freud's concept of Neurosis. We have also discussed the symptoms of neurosis followed by types of neurosis. Also, we have also discussed neurosis in Psychoanalysis. The lesson concludes with the discussions of treatments like psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, counselling or other psychiatric techniques.

11.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:

1. Freud was born in the small town of Freiberg, Moravia, in which year?
   a. 1856
   b. 1865
   c. 1885
   d. 1866
2. Which best describes Freud's stance on religion?
   a. Ardent atheism
   b. Strict Orthodox Judaism
   c. Reform Judaism
   d. Agnosticism
3. What is the "illusion" to which Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* refers?
   a. Religion
   b. Psychoanalytic therapy
   c. Victorian era restrictions on sex
   d. Humanity's confidence in the power of the conscious mind
4. Why has Freud's case study of "Dora" been criticized?
   a. For its sexism
   b. For its lack of compassion for the patient

c. For its lack of objectivity

d. All of the above.

5. Before inventing psychoanalysis, Freud made a name for himself in which field?

a. Neurology

b. Marine biology

c. Peripheral nervous disorders

d. Literary criticism

6. In 1895, Freud and Josef Breuer had a book of case studies which contained the seeds of psychoanalysis. What was it called?

a. *Introduction to Psycho-Analysis*

b. *The Interpretation of Dreams*

c. *Studies in Hysteria*

d. *Three Essays on Sexuality*

7. In 1923, Freud was diagnosed with which disease?

a. Lung cancer

b. Mouth cancer

c. Tuberculosis

d. Cholera

8. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud introduced which new and controversial theoretical concept?

a. The death instinct

b. Repression

c. The Oedipus complex

d. The seduction theory

9. On March 12, 1938, an event occurred that was to drastically affect the last year of Freud's life?

a. The death of Freud's wife, Martha Bernays

b. Freud's receipt of the Goethe Prize

c. The Nazi invasion of Austria

d. The publishing of Freud's ground breaking *Civilization and Its Discontents*

10. Why was Freud derided when he gave a presentation in front of a group of Viennese doctors in 1895?

a. Because of his advocacy of the "seduction hypothesis"

b. Because of his discussion of 'infantile sexuality"

c. Because of his belief in the possibility of male hysteria

d. Because of his weak command of the German language

11.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. What is the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis?

Ans. Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory were created by Sigmund Freud out of his own perceptions of the psychodynamic dimension of human life. As a result of his work, and the work of Margaret Mahler and others, since, we now have a clearer view of how neurosis and other forms of psychopathology keep each person from becoming genuinely whole and free. As Freud revealed, and as contemporary psychoanalysis now sees with ever-greater clarity, neurosis is the result of a fantasized battle that takes place in each person, outside of consciousness. It occurs in a realm of mind that is something like a virtual reality in which illusory versions of ourselves seek to win over, escape and overpower an illusory version of the primary caretakers of childhood. Unfortunately, as part of neurosis, we mistake the unconscious fantasies that rage in this virtual realm for something real and we project those fantasies onto the world, unconsciously setting up our lives so they resemble the drama inside us. More specifically, we set up our lives so they will be full of limitations, thus keeping ourselves contained within a narrow realm.

What Freud and psychoanalysis never fully appreciated is that we do this, to a significant degree, because the state of being healthy and whole

is itself experienced as a mortal danger. People flee from wholeness and health into neurosis and they monitor themselves, once again largely outside of awareness, to make sure they won't stray too far beyond the bounds of neurosis into the dangerous world of psychological health. This may well be the most essential insight of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory. It may also be the essential dilemma of human existence, since how far we can allow ourselves to go into wholeness and health will determine the kind of life we live and the kind of people we become.

A neurosis is a psychic condition where patients earlier in life have encountered an unbearable psychic pain, which they were not able to process consciously. They have then unconsciously chosen to suppress the unbearable feelings and may not have any conscious memory of what happened earlier in life. This can be incest or other sexual abuse of a frightening nature, or other traumatic incidents. The patients do not remember the original incident; instead they get a nervous symptom which is experienced as the real disorder. The nervous symptom can be different kinds of abuse such as drug abuse, eating disorders, self-harm, anxiety, depression, sexual problems, etc.

In psychotherapy, the neurosis can be cured by letting the patient relive the suppressed painful and forbidden memories, and the feelings which were associated with them. People who have a neurosis are aware that something is wrong. This is different from psychotic people, who live in a sick world and really believe that they are Jesus or really hear voices which no one else can hear. Instead of using the term "neurosis", psychiatrists today prefer to use a more specific term for a specific disorder, such as "snake phobia." Younger psychiatrist might have some problems to explain this term because it is no longer used in upto date psychiatric classifications. However, some doctors or psychologists still refer to neurotic concepts (psychoanalytic theory) opposed to "psychotic" syndromes or disorders (e.g. schizophrenia, or schizo-affective disorders, mania). Some therapists refer to neurotic anxiety disorder and refer to

problems that are influenced by the personality and coping ability of the individuals. The word "neurosis" describes "nerve disorder." William Cullen, physician of the late eighteenth century tried to summarize a group of mental disorders without (obvious) organic cause. Sigmund Freud adapted the concept of neurosis to mental disorders or distress with the major aspect of extreme anxiety. This concept investigates internal processes of personality and self-concepts (unconscious conflicts), related to the neurotic anxiety.

Examples of "neurotic" disorders are:

- Anxiety neurosis
- Depressive neurosis
- Somatization (formerly called "hysterical neurosis")
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Psychic disorders often combine a neurotic factor with a non-neurotic factor. There may be genetic dispositions, which are stimulated by neurotic factors. For example, a person with OCD may check that the door is locked five times when stressed, but the stress may have neurotic causes.

Q2. Discuss different types of Neurosis.

Ans. Psychoanalytic treatment sought to resolve conflicts that were typically centered on maladaptive sexual functioning. The reader should recall that libido, which refers to both the sexual energy within a person and the person's general life force, can lose its direction. It can become detached from appropriate targets, attached to inappropriate objects, and thereby cause emotional and personality malfunctions. Neurosis is the term, Freud used to describe the state of libidinal dysfunction.

Actual neurosis. Actual neurosis was a term first used by Freud in 1898. He used it to describe an inversion of libido resulting in acute impairments of sexual functioning and physiological consequences of present disturbances in sexual functioning. He distinguished actual neuroses from

psychoneuroses, which he regarded as due to psychological conflicts and past events. He further distinguished two types of actual neurosis—neurasthenia, which he attributed to sexual excess, and anxiety neurosis, which he saw as the result of unrelieved sexual stimulation. Freud later also included hypochondria, or excessive concern with one's health, among the actual neuroses.

Psychoneurosis. This term appears in Freud's early writings and is used to define a series of transference neuroses, including hysteria, phobias, and obsessional neurosis. The symptoms of the psychoneuroses are symbolic expressions of infantile conflicts in which the ego defends itself from disagreeable representations from the sexual sphere.

Transference neurosis. Transference neuroses, according to Freud, are childhood neurotic patterns played out by patients during psychoanalytic sessions. He defined transference itself as the process in which the analyst and transfers to the analyst emotions experienced in childhood toward parents or other important figures. The transference neuroses include: (a) conversion hysteria, in which the symptoms are physical complaints; (b) anxiety hysteria, in which the patient experiences excessive anxiety in the presence of an external object (phobia); and (c) obsessional neurosis, in which the predominant symptoms are obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviour. According to Freud's student and translator Abraham Brill (1938), all transference neuroses are rooted in disturbances of the patient's libido: The transference neuroses, hysteria and compulsion neuroses, are determined by some disturbance in the give-and-take of object libido, and hence are curable by psychoanalytic therapy, whereas the narcissistic neuroses, or the psychoses which are mainly controlled by narcissistic libido, can be studied and helped, but cannot as yet be cured by analysis. The psychotic is, as a rule, inaccessible to this treatment because he is unable to transfer sufficient libido to the analyst. The psychotic is either too suspicious or too interested in his own inner world to pay any attention to the physician.

Narcissistic neurosis. Freud used this term to distinguish conditions

inaccessible to psychoanalytic treatment from the transference neuroses, which were more amenable to psychoanalysis. The narcissistic neurosis represents a conflict between the ego and the superego, as opposed to the transference neurosis, which involves a conflict between the ego and id. Freud believed narcissistic neuroses are refractory to psychoanalytic treatment: In the transference neuroses we also encountered such barriers of resistance, but we were able to break them down piece by piece. In narcissistic neurosis the resistance is insuperable; at best we are permitted to cast a curious glance over the wall to spy out what is taking place on the other side. Our technical methods must be replaced by others; we do not yet know whether or not we shall be able to find such a substitute. To be sure, even these patients furnish us with ample material. They do say many things, though not in answer to our questions, and for the time being we are forced to interpret these utterances through the understanding we have gained from the symptoms of transference neurosis.

Traumatic neurosis. Some psychoanalysts after Freud conjectured that a neurosis can arise as a direct result of a trauma, thus the designated traumatic neurosis. Such a neurosis would not have unconscious causes and therefore could be addressed directly. Freud, however, rejected this notion: If anxiety is the reaction of the ego to danger, then it would be the obvious thing to regard the traumatic neuroses, which are so often the sequel to exposure to danger to life, as the direct result of life- or death-anxiety, with the exclusion of any dependence, in its etiology, upon the ego and castration. This is what was done by the majority of observers in the case of the traumatic neuroses of the last war, and it has been triumphantly claimed that proof is now at hand that jeopardy to the instinct of self-preservation is capable of giving rise to a neurosis without the participation of sexuality at all, and without regard to the complicated hypotheses of psychoanalysis. It is, as a matter of fact, extremely to be regretted that not a single reliable analysis of a case of traumatic neurosis exists.

Psychosis. Freud saw psychosis as a condition characterized by

hallucinations, paranoia, and hysterical psychosis (which he distinguished from hysterical neurosis). Freud explained the essential difference between neurosis and psychosis as follows: "Neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id, whereas psychosis is the analogous outcome of a similar disturbance in the relation between the ego and its environment (outer world)." Psychoanalytic theory would therefore view a psychotic individual as one whose ego is too weak to handle the vicissitudes of life. Or the psychotic might be a person with an adequate ego who faces such severe adversity as to cause a complete collapse of ego functioning.

Q3. Freud claimed that his work led to a striking change in the way people in Western culture conceived of themselves. What was this change? What was Freud's most important "discovery"?

Ans. Freud had a variety of influences on psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, history, and literary studies, but his most important contribution was probably the simple claim that many of our behaviours are motivated by unconscious, often unpleasant desires. Previous writers and thinkers had acknowledged that much of what we do is automatic and unconscious (such as the complex set of muscle movements needed to ride a bike). And the idea that people acted for reasons other than those they professed–even when they were telling the truth as they knew it–was hardly novel either. But there were three things that were strikingly novel about Freud's approach. The first was that he claimed, at least in his writings before the First World War, that there was only one basic drive worth mentioning: the drive for sex. Previous writers had always suggested that humans were motivated by a number of drives, including survival-oriented drives like sex, food, and safety, as well as "higher" drives like morality and the desire for positive social interactions. Freud, in contrast, linked every pathological behaviour–and most non-pathological ones–to sex. The second innovation was that Freud pointed to forgotten childhood experiences as the crucial source of individual differences in character. Most previous writers had argued that genetic or inherited characteristics, or, at the opposite extreme, conscious attempts at self-control were most

important. The third novelty was that Freud hypothesized a complicated, systematic unconscious that was governed by the interaction between "beliefs" and "desires" in much the same way that the conscious mind was–except much more childishly. Together, these three precepts led to the theory that behaviour is governed by the interaction between self, situation, and society, on the one hand, and powerful, unconscious, and usually sexual urges derived from childhood experience, on the other. This led to a conception of humans as egos struggling for control over their primitive ids and fooling themselves into thinking they had won the fight.

Q4. How did Freud's early training in physiology contribute to his psychoanalytic theories?

Q5. What are some of the criticisms that have been brought against Freud and psychoanalysis?

11.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1.	a	6.	c
2.	a	7.	b
3.	a	8.	a
4.	a	9.	c
5.	a	10.	

11.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Trans. James Strachey. 24 vols. London: Hogarth.
2. Horney, Karen. *The Collected Works.* (2 Vols.) Norton, 1937.
3. Jung, C.G., et al. 1964. *Man and his Symbols*. New York, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday.

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JACQUES LACAN : "ON MIRROR STAGE"

STRUCTURE

12.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with Jacques Lacan as a psychoanalyst. The lesson analyzes Jacques Lacan's essay "On Mirror Stage." It explains the theme and substance of the essay. It also acquaints the learner with the format of the examination oriented questions.

12.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYIST

Jacques Marie Emile Lacan (13 April 1901 – 9 September 1981) commonly known as Jacques Lacan, was a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist who has been called the most controversial psychoanalyst since Freud. Lacan influenced many leading French intellectuals in the 1960s and the 1970s,

especially those associated with post-structuralism by giving yearly seminars in Paris from 1953 to 1981. His ideas had a significant impact on post-structuralism, critical theory, linguistics, 20th-century French philosophy, film theory and clinical psychoanalysis.

Lacan was born in Paris, the eldest son of Emilie and Alfred Lacan. His father was a successful soap and oils salesman and mother was a devoted Catholic. Lacan attended the Jesuit College Stanislas during the period 1907-1918. During the early 1920s, Lacan attended right-wing Action Françoise political meetings which critically influenced his thinking. By the mid-1920s, Lacan had become dissatisfied with religion and became an atheist. He quarreled with his family on the issue of religion. In 1920, he was rejected from military service because he was too thin. After that he entered medical school and, in 1927-1931, after completing his studies at the faculty of medicine of the University of Paris, he specialized in psychiatry at the Sainte-Anne Hospital in Paris under the direction of Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault. During that period, he was especially interested in the philosophies of Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger and attended the seminars about Hegel given by Alexandre Kojève.

In 1932, after a second year at Sainte-Anne's Hospital, Lacan became a licensed forensic psychiatrist. In 1932, he was awarded the *Diplôme d'État de docteur en médecine* for his thesis entitled *On Paranoiac Psychosis in its Relations to the Personality.* This thesis is thought to mark Lacan's entry into psychoanalysis. It shows Lacan's dissatisfaction with traditional psychiatry and the growing influence of Sigmund Freud on his works. *Paranoid Psychosis and its Relation to the Personality* was based on observations of several patients with a primary focus on one female patient whom Lacan called Aimee. Also in 1932, Lacan translated Freud's text, *Über einige neurotische Mechanismen bei Eifersucht, Paranoia und Homosexualität* (*Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality*) as *De quelques mécanismes névrotiques dans la jalousie, la paranoïa et l'homosexualité* (*On some neurotic mechanisms in jealousy, paranoia and homosexuality*). In the same year, Lacan began his training analysis with Rudolph Lowenstein, which lasted until 1938. In 1934, he married Marie-Louise Blondin, and in 1937, they had their first child, a daughter named Caroline.

Their second child, a son named Thibaut, was born in 1939. In 1936, Lacan presented his first analytic report at the Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) in Marienbad on the "Mirror Phase." The congress chairman, Ernest Jones, terminated the lecture before its conclusion, since he was unwilling to extend Lacan's stated presentation time. Lacan left the congress because he felt insulted.

The Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP) was disbanded due to Nazi Germany's occupation of France in 1940. Lacan was called up to serve in the French army at the Val-de-Grâce military hospital in Paris, where he spent the duration of the war. His third child, Sibylle, was born in 1940. There are contradictory accounts of his romantic life with Sylvia Bataille, the estranged wife of his friend Georges Bataille in southern France during the war. In 1941, Lacan and Sylvia Bataille gave birth to their illicit child Judith. After Judith's birth, Marie-Louise demanded divorce that Lacan accepted and then he married Sylvia in 1953.

After the war, Lacan visited England for a five-week study trip, where he met the English analysts Wilfred Bion and John Rickman. Bion's analytic work on study groups influenced Lacan. In 1949, Lacan presented a new paper on "Mirror Stage" to the sixteenth International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) congress in Zurich. In 1951, Lacan started to hold a private weekly seminar in Paris, in which he urged what he described as "a return to Freud" that would concentrate on the linguistic nature of psychological symptomatology. In 1953, Lacan and many of his colleagues left the Société Parisienne de Psychanalyse (SPP) after a disagreement and they formed a new group, the Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP).

Encouraged by the reception of "the return to Freud" and of his report "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," Lacan began to re-read Freud's works in relation to contemporary philosophy, linguistics, ethnology, biology, and topology. From 1953 to 1964 at the Sainte-Anne Hospital, he held his seminars and presented case histories of patients. During this period, he wrote the texts that are found in the collection *Écrits*, which was first published in 1966. In his seventh seminar "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis" (1959–60), Lacan

defined the ethical foundations of psychoanalysis and presented his "ethics for our time"—one that would, in the words of Freud, prove to be equal to the tragedy of modern man and to the "discontent of civilization."

In 1962, a complex negotiation took place to determine the status of the Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP) within the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). Lacan's practice (with its controversial indeterminate-length sessions) and his critical stance towards psychoanalytic orthodoxy led, in August 1963, to the IPA setting the condition that registration of the SFP was dependent upon the removal of Lacan from the list of SFP analysts. With the SFP's decision to honour this request in November 1963, Lacan had been stripped of the right to conduct training analyses and thus was constrained to form his own institution in order to accommodate many candidates who desired to continue their analyses with him. This he did, on 21 June 1964, and his institution was known as the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP). He took many representatives with him: among them were Maud and Octave Mannoni, Serge Leclaire and Jean Clavreul.

With the support of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser, Lacan was appointed lecturer at the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes. He started with a seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* in January 1964 in the Dussane room at the École Normale Supérieure. Lacan began to set forth his own approach to psychoanalysis to an audience of colleagues that had joined him from the SFP. His lectures also attracted many of the École Normale's students. He divided the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP) into three sections: the section of pure psychoanalysis; the section for applied psychoanalysis; and the section for taking inventory of the Freudian field. In 1966, Lacan's collected writings, the *Écrits*, compiled with an index of concepts by Jacques-Alain Miller were published. The success of the publication led to a subsequent two-volume edition in 1969.

In May 1968, Lacan voiced his sympathy for the student protests and as a result his followers set up a Department of Psychology at the University of Vincennes (Paris VIII). However, Lacan's unequivocal comments in 1971 on revolutionary ideals in politics draw a sharp line between the actions of

some of his followers and his own style of revolt. In 1969, Lacan moved his public seminars to the Faculté de Droit (Panthéon), where he continued to deliver his expositions of analytic theory and practice until the dissolution of his School in 1980.

Throughout the final decade of his life, Lacan continued his widely followed seminars. During this period, he developed his concepts of masculine and feminine joiussance and placed an increased emphasis on the concept of "the Real" as a point of impossible contradiction in the "Symbolic Order." Lacan continued to draw widely on various disciplines, working closely on classical Chinese literature with François Cheng and on the life and work of James Joyce with Jacques Aubert. The growing success of the *Écrits*, which was translated in abridged form into German and English, led to invitations to lecture in Italy, Japan and the United States.

Lacan's falling health made it difficult for him to meet the demands of the year-long Seminars he had been delivering since the fifties, but his teaching continued into the first year of the eighties. After dissolving his School, the EFP, in January 1980, Lacan travelled to Caracas to find the Freudian Field Institute on 12 July 1980. The Overture to the Caracas Encounter was to be Lacan's final public address. His last texts from the spring of 1981 are brief institutional documents pertaining to the newly formed Freudian Field Institute. Lacan died on 9 September 1981.

Lacan is certainly the most influential psychoanalytic thinker since Freud. Lacan's works available in *Ecrits, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* and *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan*, suggested a "return to Freud" in a new form-with insight from linguists. Lacan's theories require extensive elaboration, partly because of his highly dense writing and partly due to his contribution to and influence on later psychoanalytic and poststructuralist thought.

12.3 SUMMARY OF "ON MIRROR STAGE"

Jacques Lacan in his paper "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," published in his book *Écrits*, attempts to understand the experience of an infant looking in the mirror and how

it relates to the child's concepts of "self" moving. Lacan believes that the experience is helpful in understanding more specifically the construction of self, which Lacan refers to "I." Lacan was fascinated by how children between the ages of six and eighteen months engage in a kind of self-discovery play by looking in a mirror. He gives an archetypal example of a child in a walker to help him learn to walk, which also restrains the child's movements and holds him upright, giving him the best possible view of the mirror. The child notices his movements in the mirror, and in this process, realizes that he is seeing a reflection of himself. As a result, he forms his first impressions of himself, both in terms of his appearance and his physically mastery over the world around him. Lacan calls this stage of child development the "Mirror Stage." The "mirror stage" is the origin of a fundamental alienation in the child's sense of the self. The child, who is uncoordinated, sees in its mirror image a self which it would like to be, an ideal self, well-coordinated and unified. This is a misperception, an illusion, according to Lacan. The child now identifies itself, imaginatively, with images and objects. The illusion of a unified self-hood is thus built up.

Lacan believes that this stage is a part of a machine-like process of our psychological growth that reinforces his belief in "paranoiac knowledge", which is to say that he believes the formation of self that we experience while looking in a mirror is part of our drive to make sense of our world, creating a rational view of the world which isn't so easily ordered.

For Lacan, when we look in the mirror, we "assume an image", that is a way of picturing ourselves. Yet, because we have not yet learned language or learned to take on the images that the rest of society has for us, it is the very first such image that we take on and is a unique experience. All other self-images occur after we have learned language and started interacting with others, and so all other self-images are constructs of the *other*. In terms of language, the child is unaffected by difference in the Imaginary, it is the pre-linguistic and the pre-oedipal stage. What he sees in the mirror is himself: the signifier (child) and the signified (the mirror image) are not separated. In the Imaginary, the self and the objects-in-the-world are interchangeable: they are the self itself. This is the metaphoric stage: where one object can be easily replaced by other.

The *I* that we are experiencing because it is untainted, Lacan believes, what Freud would call the "Ideal-I" (or "Ideal-Ego"). But because this *I* is formed in a mirror, it is a fantasy, an unreal image that only seems real. As Dr. Allen Thiher, Professor of French Literature at the University of Wisconsin, explains, "the ego exists for us only in the illusory identifications the imaginary offers, while our 'authentic being' is found in the absent world of signifiers, constituted by the Other, over which we have no control. In a sense we live in fictions […]." The result is that, as we strive for paranoiac knowledge, for completion of our self-image, we have partially constructed it with a fantasy and thus it will always remain a fantasy. The irony of human development, then, is that we will forever remain broken, unable to fulfill our desire for rational order.

The case is further compounded by the fact that our self-image is one of incompletion, thanks to the fact that we see ourselves in the mirror and attempt to move, but our movements are awkward, jerky, and untrained. This, Lacan believes, is a result of "*specific prematurity of birth*." While other animals are born and can walk and run within hours, humans must be carefully tended by their parents for years, thus showing that when we come from the womb we are not fully developed as other animals are and, thus, are premature. Since we are already forming ideas of self while in this premature stage, we must also adopt our awkwardness into our *I*. Lacan believes this is the source of dreams involving such things as "disjointed limbs" and "growing wings," the idea that our own body is in some way broken or "fragmented." The *I*, however, is represented in dreams by images of strength and security and, at the same time, images of waste. This, he believes, shows that while our *I* always seeks paranoiac knowledge, it also knows that this perfect self is a future possibility, and not the present reality, which is imperfect.

Zuern says that this understanding of the mirror stage gives us a way to diagnose patients, as the moment of moving out of the mirror stage, which involves the taking on of external images (the "social *I*") onto what had previously been an entirely self-formed *I* (the "specular *I*"). After this point, Lacan says, the human desire is no longer for things of the self, but for input from other people. We further begin to take on the social norms that make requirements against our

desires, thus creating danger for ourselves. Zuern says that the classic example of this, and the one Lacan uses, is the Oedipal Complex, for the general social norm that creates "[t]he prohibition of incest […]." Lacan says that understanding this problem for the *I* helps us to understand the power struggle between the "libido and the sexual libido" which means, basically, our attempts to grow and improve versus our desires toward self-gratification. Further, the child has to repress his desire for the mother, and the desire is now consigned to the unconscious. This new order is the Symbolic. In its entry into the symbolic, the child is made aware of sexual difference, the recognition of the phallus and gender roles. This awareness accomplishes the child's socialization. The child has thus discovered that it cannot have a direct access to the body, the mother.

With the mirror stage, the child enters the language system. The figure of the father, prohibitions and laws also enter the child's world. The father is, in Lacanian terms, the Law. Social taboos are instilled in the child in the prohibition of incest. The child discovers that it is separate from the mother, and is a part of a whole network of family and society in which it is expected and pre-ordained to play a specific part. It discovers that identity is based on difference-its difference from others.

Language in the Symbolic order which suggests the identity of *I* and mother is thus based on the separation and absence of the mother. She is mother in language, but is not part of *I*. Instead of the signifier *I* being interchangeable with the signifier mother, the child recognizes that the signifier *I* merely refers/ relates to and is different from other signifiers in a language relation. The signifier *I* is related to other signifiers: mother, father and so on, in an endless chain. Thus the imaginary's metaphoric condensation where one could replace any signifier by another now gives way to the Symbolic metonymic displacement from one signifier to another. Language thus assigns gender roles and gender-oriented desire.

The Real is the field of experience (life) over which the imaginary and the Symbolic seek control. The real is the site where all significations and actions finally orient. In literature, the realist text represents the Symbolic with its patriarchal order and insistence on unity, laws and organization. The anti-realist,

modernist text represents Imaginary because here language moves beyond itself, and is transgressive of order, sequentiality and logic.

Unconscious desire mistakes one appearance for another similar to it, and therefore substitutes one with the other. Or desire may shift from one thing, say A, to another-B which is found/associated with A. B is now discovered as being more appropriate for desire. This movement from one signifier A to another B represents a lack.

For Lacan the lack is desire, and desire seeks to fill the lack, but can never do so. This is so because desire is the desire for a final meaning, a filling up of the lack of a true signified. If all signifiers refer to other signifiers endlessly, it follows that the desire for an end-signified is impossible to fill. Language will always be a "sliding of the signified beneath the signifier." Signified that fill desire are always inaccessible (like the mother), perpetually distanced from the signifier (*I*), are therefore repressed. Meaning, then, always escapes us. It is merely temporary and symbolizes the slipperiness of repressed desire, signified, and identities.

The repressed desire is the unconscious, which, in seeking an end to the chain of signification, only effects metonymic shifts from signifier to signified. The self and human subjectivity are linguistic constructs for Lacan.

12.4 LET US SUM UP

The three important facets of his argument may be summed up thus:

i) In the mirror stage the child creates the "*I*." However, Lacan points out the pronoun "I" is an unstable and empty entity: it takes meaning only from the context of its utterance. Thus the "I" can shift from one place to another, from one time to another.

ii) Language always refers to something not present in the sign. This is to say that language always operates by absence. Symbolization is for Lacan, predicated upon the object-as-absence. Desire is always, like language, concerned with absence.

iii) The human subject lives under the illusion that desire/meaning will finally

reach the end-signified, that desire will be fulfilled. However, language and desire perpetually postpone this end-signified. All signifiers merely refer to other signifiers.

Lacan's notion of the unconscious derives from Freud, especially the suggestion that this unconscious has a structure, it is a self. Lacan does not accept the idea that the unconsciousness is merely instinct. For him, the subject does not own the unconscious: the unconscious is the other of and within the subject. Arguing that negation is merely the taking into account of the repressed, Lacan suggests that whatever is negated in a sentence (for example, "I may appear to be insulting, but I really do not wish to insult you" actually implies "I want to insult you") is the unconscious material. Simply put, the unconscious is experienced as the "discourse of the Other."

12.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Lacan was born in
   a. 1901
   b. 1905
   c. 1907
   d. 1909
2. Lacan quarreled with his family on the issue of
   a. religion
   b. marriage
   c. education
   d. politics
3. Lacan was rejected from military services because
   a. he did not clear the exam
   b. he was too thin
   c. he was fat
   d. None of the above

4. Lacan's second marriage to Sylvia took place in

   a. 1953

   b. 1957

   c. 1958

   d. 1959

5. Lacan presented his first analytic report at the Congress of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) on "On Mirror Phase" in

   a. London

   b. Paris

   c. Marienbad

   d. None of the above

6. The IPA chairman, Earnest Jones, terminated Lacan's lecture before its conclusion because

   a. he did not like it

   b. he did not want to extend Lacan's stated presentation time

   c. Chairman and Lacan had a quarrel

   d. None of the above

7. Lacan held a private weekly seminar in Paris in which he concentrated on the linguistic nature of psychological symptomatology in

   a. 1951

   b. 1953

   c. 1955

   d. 1957

8. Which one of the following is not written by Lacan?

   a. *Ecrits*

   b. *The Four Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

c. "On Neuorsis"

d. All of the above

9. The essay "On Mirror Stage" is published in

a. *The Four Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

b. *Ecrits*

c. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan*

d. None of the above

10. Lacan died in

a. 1980

b. 1985

c. 1987

d. 1981

12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. What is Lacan's "Mirror Stage" theory?

Ans. The Mirror Stage (French: *stade du miroir*) is a concept in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. The mirror stage is based on the belief that infants recognize themselves in a mirror (literal) or other symbolic contraption which induces apperception (the turning of oneself into an object that can be viewed by the child from outside themselves) from the age of about six months. Initially, Lacan proposed that the mirror stage was part of an infant's development from six to eight months as outlined at the Fourteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress at Marienbad in 1936. By the early 1950s, Lacan's concept of the mirror stage had evolved: he no longer considered the mirror stage as a moment in the life of the infant, but as representing a permanent structure of subjectivity, or as the paradigm of "Imaginary order." This evolution in Lacan's thinking becomes clear in his later essay titled "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire."

Lacan's concept of the mirror stage was strongly inspired by earlier work by psychologist Henri Wallon, who speculated based on observations of animals and humans responding to their reflections in mirrors. Wallon noted that by the age of about six months, human infants and chimpanzees both seem to recognize their reflection in a mirror. While chimpanzees rapidly lose interest in the discovery, human infants typically become very interested and devote much time and effort to exploring the connections between their bodies and their images. Wallon argued that mirrors helped children develop a sense of self-identity. However, later mirror test research indicates that while toddlers are usually fascinated by mirrors, they do not actually recognize themselves in mirrors until the age of fifteen months at the earliest, leading psychoanalytically trained critic Norman N. Holland to declare that "there is no evidence whatsoever for Lacan's notion of a mirror stage." Similarly, physician Raymond Tallis notes that a literal interpretation of the Lacanian mirror stage contradicts empirical observations about human identity and personality: "If epistemological maturation and the formation of a world picture were dependent upon catching sight of oneself in a mirror, then the [mirror stage] theory would predict that congenitally blind individuals would lack selfhood and be unable to enter language, society or the world at large. There is no evidence whatsoever that this implausible consequence of the theory is borne out in practice."

Wallon's ideas about mirrors in infant development were distinctly non-Freudian and little-known until revived in modified form a few years later by Lacan. Lacan used this observation as a springboard to develop an account of the development of human subjectivity that was inherently, though often implicitly, comparative in nature. Lacan attempted to link Wallon's ideas to Freudian psychoanalysis, but was met with indifference from the larger community of Freudian psychoanalysts. Richard Webster explains how the "complex, and at times impenetrable paper [...] appears to have made little or no lasting impression on the psychoanalysts who first heard it. It was not mentioned in Ernest Jones's brief account of

the congress and received no public discussion."

In the 1930s, Lacan attended seminars by Alexandre Kojève, whose philosophy was heavily influenced by Hegel. The diachronic structure of the mirror stage theory is influenced by Kojève's interpretation of the Master-Slave dialectic. Lacan continued to refine and modify the mirror stage concept through the remainder of his career. Dylan Evans argues that Lacan's earliest versions of the mirror stage, while flawed, can be regarded as a bold pioneering in the field of etiology and a precursor of both cognitive psychology and evolutionary psychology. In the 1930s, zoologists were increasingly interested in the then-new field of etiology, but not until the 1960s would the larger scientific community believes that animal behaviour offered any insights into human behaviour. However, Evans also notes that by the 1950s Lacan's mirror stage concept had become abstracted to the point that it no longer required a literal mirror, but could simply be the child's observation of observed behaviour in the imitative gestures of another child or elder.

The mirror stage is a phenomenon to which *I* assign a twofold value. In the first place, it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child. In the second place, it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image.

As Lacan further develops the mirror stage concept, the stress falls less on its historical value and ever more on its structural value. "Historical value" refers to the mental development of the child and "structural value" to the libidinal relationship with the body image. In Lacan's fourth Seminar, *La relation d'objet*, he states that "the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the development of the child. It illustrates the conflict nature of the dual relationship." The dual relationship (*relation duelle*) refers not only to the relation between the Ego and the body, which is always characterized by illusions of similarity and reciprocity, but also to the relation between the Imaginary and the Real. The mirror stage describes the formation of the Ego via the process of identification, the Ego being the result of identifying with one's own "specular" image.

At six months, the baby still lacks coordination however, Lacan hypothesized that the baby can recognize itself in the mirror before attaining control over its bodily movements. The child sees its image as a whole, but this contrasts with the lack of coordination of the body, leading the child to perceive a fragmented body. This contrast, Lacan hypothesized, is first felt by the infant as a rivalry with its own image, because the wholeness of the image threatens it with fragmentation; thus the mirror stage gives rise to an aggressive tension between the subject and the image. To resolve this aggressive tension, the subject identifies with the image: this primary identification with the counterpart is what forms the Ego. The moment of identification is to Lacan a moment of jubilation since it leads to an imaginary sense of mastery. Yet, the jubilation may also be accompanied by a depressive reaction, when the infant compares his own precarious sense of mastery with the omnipotence of the mother. This identification also involves the ideal ego which functions as a promise of future wholeness sustaining the Ego in anticipation.

Q2. In what ways did Lacan build on Freudian theory?

Ans. Lacan took a number of Freud's theories and developed them further to explore their meaning as relating to human behaviour and identity. For example, Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage" built on Freud's notion of the id and the ego. In this "mirror stage," a child discovers the separate "I" and "other"; in other words, the child can finally recognize a sense of boundary lines between the self and the other. At this stage the child recognizes, for the first time, that he or she is actually an individual and not just a body reliant on others for everything. Lacan also built on Freud's ideas about sexuality and unconscious desire. Freud made the claim that dreams are like riddles that, when solved, disclose the truth about the individual's unconscious desires that are always a reflection of the desires of others; Lacan went on to argue that desire is always dependent on others. More specifically, when it comes to sexual desires, Freud highlighted the importance of sexuality and sexual behaviour as an indicator of unconscious desires; Lacan further theorized sexuality

to suggest that people must be taught and are always learning what to desire. We might think, for instance, of advertisements and how they tap into this idea that desire is actually constructed outside of individuals, rather than just emerging organically from inside of them. Advertisers can convince viewers to desire a particular kind of car, brand of clothes, or type of food. Another major theory that Lacan revised is Freud's Oedipal complex. Freud's Oedipus complex theory describes one of the psychosexual stages of a child called the "phallic stage," usually between ages 3 and 5. According to Freud, the child develops anger for the father and a desire to replace his father because of a desire for his mother. Lacan imagines that the child acquires an obsession with trying to discover what the mother wants and tries to be the fulfillment of that desire. Ultimately, however, the child comes to recognize that the external force of the "Law"—embodied by the father figure—actually influences that maternal desire and the child identifies himself or herself with a larger "cultural collective," rather than the limited world of the mother's desire.

Q3. Critically analyze the main points in the essay "On Mirror Stage."

Q4. Discuss the main argument given by Lacan in the essay "On Mirror Stage."

12.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1.	a	6.	b
2.	a	7.	b
3.	b	8.	c
4.	a	9.	b
5.	d	10.	d

12.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis.* 1996. Print.

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CHERYLL GLOTFELTY : "INTRODUCTION" OF THE ECOCORITICSM READER : LANDMARKS IN LITERARY ECOLOGY

STRUCTURE

13.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learners with introduction of the book *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* by Cheryll Glotfelty. In introduction we will discuss the plan of the book which is broadly divided into three sections namely: Ecotheory: Reflections on Nature and culture, Ecocritical Considerations of Fiction and Drama and Critical Studies of Environmental literature. We will also trace the history and origin of Ecocriticism.

13.2 INTRODUCTION TO CHERYLL GLOTFELTY

Cheryll Burgess Glotfelty is Associate Professor of Literature and Environment in the University of Nevada at Reno, United States of America. She has written several essays on ecocriticism. She co-edited with Harold Fromm *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology,* that helped green the field of literary studies. Her most intense interest is the connection between literature and the environment. She made the concept of 'ecocriticism' known to public. She produced an anthology of ecocriticial essays. She has become the first American professor of literature and the environment. Cheryll Glotfelty is an avid reader, nature lover and concerned planetary citizen. University of Nevada, Reno, hired her as the Nation's first Professor of Literature and Environment in 1990. Cheryll Glotfelty is the co-founder and past president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). Her commitment to teaching has been recognized with many teaching awards including the CASE-Carnegie Professor of the Year Award for Nevada. Her most recent book co-edited with Tom Lynch and Karla Armbruster, is *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology and Place* in 2012. It inspires to think about place and planet from an ecological perspective.

Cheryll Glotfelty is currently working on an ecocritical biography of documentary landscape photographer Peter Goin. Ecocriticism is the literary response to the most pressing contemporary issue of all, the global environmental crisis. Ecological approach to literary studies is an environmental perspective in contemporary literary studies. We have been living in an age of environmental crisis. Literature responds to the contemporary issues and events. Until very recently literary studies has become aware of the environmental crisis. Related humanities

disciplines, like history, philosophy, law, sociology and religion have been greening since 1970s. Social movements, like the civil rights movement and women's liberation movement of the sixties and seventies, have transformed literary studies. Ecological criticism has been developing since the 1970s.

The New Literatures in English among other manifest and symbolic representations also deal with nature as a significant issue. The environmental devastation consequent upon the colonization involving social and cultural transformations has altered representations of nature in Postcolonial cultures and literatures. The shift of emphasis towards the ecological study, a rapidly growing field, Ecocriticism covers a wide range of theories and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and environment. The interpretations presented involve eco-critical perspectives that can be applied to literary and non-literary texts. Nature itself is a new interpretative category in line with other paradigms such as race, class, gender and identity. In eco-critical texts, nature features as the main topic or protagonist. Other concerns are nature as a cultural constructs, gendered natures and the city/country dichototmy.

13.3 ANALYSIS OF "INTRODUCTION"

In "Introduction" to the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm talked about the origin and history of Ecocriticism. In "Introduction" they have discussed the whole plan of the book which is broadly divided into three main sections. Introduction is divided into various sub-topics which are as follows:

13.3.1 Literary Studies In An Age Of Environmental Crisis

There is constant change in the field of literary studies. It is becoming more and more inter-disciplinary and expanding its boundaries as ever. However, the issue of global environmental crisis is the burning one and is required to be included in the field of recent literary studies. "The absence of any sign of an environmental perspective in contemporary literary studies would seem to suggest that despite its 'revisionist energies', scholarship remains academic in the sense of scholarly to the point of being unaware of the outside world" (Introduction, xv). It is the need of the hour to study literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view

where all sciences should come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental problems. Continuous threat to ecology is more relevant and burning topic in the field of literary studies as compared to issues like race, class and gender. We are becoming more and more insensitive to the mother earth. It is very necessary to sensitize people about the ever-growing threats to the ecology through literary studies. Newspaper headlines are full of the environmental issues like "oil spills, lead and asbestos poisoning, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species at an unprecedented rate battles over public land use, protests over nuclear waste dumps, a growing hole in Ozone layer, predictions of global warming, acid rain, loss of top soil, destruction of tropical rain forest…" (Introduction, xvi) etc. Also, there is increase in the number of conferences on environment and development.

In the light of above environmental hazards, Glotfelty feels that is dearth of literary scholarship in the field of ecology. She observes that there are no journals, jobs, jargons, professional societies, discussion groups or conferences on literature and environment. Other fields like history, philosophy, law, sociology, and religion have been considering the environmental issues since 1970s. There are other movements like civil rights and Women's liberation movements which have affected the literary studies a lot whereas the environmental movements and issues fail to reach the conscious psyche of the writers. Though Cheryll Glotfelty makes it clear that, "as the publication dates for some essays in this anthology substantiate, individual literary and cultural scholars have been developing ecologically informed criticism and theory since the seventies; however, unlike their disciplinary cousins mentioned previously, they did not organize themselves into an identifiable group; hence, their various efforts were not recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement" (Introduction, xvii). There are certain individual literary studies which are published under the categories like American Studies, regionalism, pastoralism, the frontier, human ecology, science and literature, nature in literature, landscape in literature etc. There was an approach towards environment but at the individual level. "Graduate students interested in environmental approaches to literature felt like misfits, having no community of scholars to join and finding no job announcements in their area of expertise.

13.3.2. Birth of Environmental Literary Studies

The field of environmental literary criticism was planted in 1980s. Frederick O. Waage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources* which fosters environmental concern and awareness in literary studies. Alicia Nitecki founded *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* in 1989, who published brief essays, book reviews, classroom notes, and information related to the writing on nature and the environment. University of Nevada, Reno, created the first academic position in Literature and the Environment. Several special sessions on nature writing or environmental literature appeared on the programmes of annual literary conferences. Harold Fromm organized the 1991 special session entitled 'Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies'. The 1992 American Literature Association symposium was chaired by Glen Love entitled 'American Nature Writing: New Contexts, New Approaches'. In 1992, at the annual meeting of the Western Literature Association, a new Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was formed, with Scott Slovic elected first president. ASLE's mission is to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Ecological literary study emerged as a recognizable critical school by 1993. The fundamental premise of the ecological criticism is that human culture is intimately connected to the physical world. Human culture affects the physical world and is affected by it. Ecocritics examine human perception of wilderness. They also explore the transformation of human perception of nature in the course of the history. They find out whether current environmental issues are accurately represented or even mentioned in popular culture and modern literature.

William Rueckert is the first person to use the term 'ecocriticism'. In 1978, Rueckert published an essay titled *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. He argues the use of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Ecocriticism is an organized movement to study literature from the environmental perspective. Ecocriticism is distinct from other critical approaches. Literary theory generally examines the relations between writers, texts, and the world. Ecocriticism explores the link between the human life and the environment.

Historian Donald Worster observed the connection between the contemporary global environmental crisis and the function of ethical systems. If people overlook ecological values, the quality of human life in the country suffers. Ecologic crisis is the product of the democratic culture.

Ecocriticism opposes the exploitative development. The ecological analysis of the human life reflected in literature has been called ecological criticism or Ecocriticism. The critical theory deals with the relationship between the human life and the nature. Ecological approach takes into account the contemporary global environmental crisis. Race, class and gender were the crucial topics of the late twentieth century. Earth's life support system has come under stress. Literary study has become preoccupied with the environmental concerns in the twenty-first century. Glotfelty stresses on the establishment of ecocriticism as whole and new school, "By, 1993, then, ecological literary study had emerged as a recognizable critical school. The formerly disconnected scattering of lone scholars had joined forces with young scholars and graduate students to become a strong interest group with aspirations to change the profession. The origin of ecocriticism as a critical approach thus predates its recent consolidation by more than twenty years" (xviii).

13.3.3 Definition Of Ecocriticism

Glotfelty and Harold Fromm defined Ecocriticism as, "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a feminist perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its analysis of texts, ecocriticism is a nature centered approach to literary studies" (xviii). Ecocritics and theorists study the representation of nature in the sonnet. They examine the role of physical setting in the plot of the novel, drama and short story. They examine consistency of the values expressed in the play with ecological wisdom. The fundamental premise of the Ecocriticism is that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Joseph Meeker introduced the term literary ecology in *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* published in 1972. He referred the term of literary ecology to the study of biological

themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species.

William Rueckert used the term Ecocriticism for the examination of literary works by using ecology and ecological concepts. Human actions have been damaging the planet's life support systems. We are responsible in a large extent for contemporary environmental problems. We should change our way of life, otherwise we will lose most of the natural beauty and biodiversity which has enriched our life. Currently other terms like ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies are used to refer to the study of interconnection between nature and human life. Donald Worster, the historian has explained that culture plays a role in the maintenance or destruction of environment. He says "We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them". (Introduction, xxi).

Ecocriticism studies how nature is represented in literature. It raises the consciousness. It has promulgated Nature writing which teaches us to value the natural world. Nature writing has a rich past, a vibrant present, and a promising future. Ecocritics study the environmental conditions of an author's life- the influence of place on the imagination of the author. They demonstrate that the place where an author grew up traveled and wrote is helpful in understanding his or her work. Ecocritics have proposed the theory that human cannot be separated from nature.

13.3.4 The Humanities And The Environmental Crisis

The aim of ecocritical works is to raise the consciousness of the readers towards the environmental crisis. It is about the awareness of the stage where more damage to the environment can be harmful beyond limits. In order to fulfill our selfish interests we are harming the mother earth in countless ways. According to Glotfelty, the people of literature aren't much into the literature and environment. "If we're not part of the solution, we're part of the problem" (Introduction, xxi).

To stay out of environmental concerns makes one the part of environmental problem. Glotfelty questions the capacity in which professors of literature can serve the environment. She answers this question by quoting Donald Worster which says, "We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding" (Introduction, xxi).

Glotfelty observes that many scholars from humanities have started adding environmental dimensions to their works. Historians have started writing environmental histories and the link between human and land. Environment in their studies is not in the background or at the periphery but occupies the center position. "They trace the connections among environmental conditions, economic modes of production, and cultural ideas through time" (Introduction, xxi). Anthropologists are also interested in drawing the relation between culture and geography. They help us to know the importance of value and culture which has helped a particular race to survive sustainably in unfavorable situations too. Also, new psychology scholars have started linking psychology with environment. They draw parallels between mental health and the environmental condition. Many new terms like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology have emerged in the field of philosophy. These subfields make the people understand and critique the root causes of environmental degradation. They also help people in making a right and ethical relation with mother earth. Environmental has also become matter concerns for theologians too. There is a book which has a subtitle "The Environment is a religious issue". Some consider earth as goddess and worship it others believe in the religious teaching which are more moral and full of wisdom. Commenting on literary scholars Cheryll Glotfelty says, "Literary scholars specialize in questions of value, meaning, tradition, point of view, and language and it is in these areas that they are making a substantial contribution to environmental thinking. Believing that the environmental crisis has been exacerbated by our fragmented,

compartmentalized, and overly specialized way of knowing the world, humanities scholars are increasingly making an effort to educate themselves in the sciences and to adopt interdisciplinary approaches" (Introduction, xxii).

13.3.5 Survey of Ecocriticism in America

The preservation of nature has always been a prime concern since early times. As an academic discipline it began in its earnest in the 1990s, although its origin goes back to late 1970s at the meeting of WLA (Western Literature Association). The works of William Bartram, Alexander Wilson, and John James Audbon illustrated the important contributions made by natural history writers during the early Romantic period. All the three writers helped to introduce a pattern of ecological thinking in American culture through emphasis upon a feeling of membership in a natural community. William Bartram's *Travels* (1791) was a contribution of a person who was fully immersed in the experience of American wilderness. He was full of appreciation for the wonderful intricacy of natural systems and believed that everything manifested the divine and inimitable workmanship. His incisive observations celebrated the fabric of interrelationshis that he recognized in the wilderness. Alexander Wilson inspired by the beauty and diversity of American birds, devoted his life to their study. He travelled many thousand miles on foot in search of undiscovered species in his monumental *American Ornithology* (1801-29). He assumed very deliberately that his natural was not a contribution to science only but to the cultural identity of the nation. His romantic narrative poem "The Forests" was about his twelve hundred mile foot journey to the falls of Niagara. Both as an ornithologist and as a romantic poet, he responded to the unnoticed beauty of the American wilderness. In a way, he succeeded in combining his scientific and literary talents in order to record the national treasures of American birds. John James Audbon like Bartram and Wilson travelled thousands of wilderness miles in order to discover, study and document native species. Audbon's writing was characterized by the elements of early romanticism in America that represented affection for the picturesque in natural scenery, a powerful attraction to the American sublime, an inclination for melodramatic sentimentality and a lurking interest in Native Americans. Through

his prose and paintings, he brought forth the vanishing wilderness and lamented over the lost wilderness.

All the three writers celebrated their relationship with non-human nature, thereby introducing the proto-ecological sensibility upon which further developments in the genre of natural history writing depended. Nineteenth century America naturalists and explorers are often credited by ecocritics as having initiated the conversation movement. Their work focused more on scientific descriptions and speculations about nature. However, many critics have shown that their writings were imbued with a poetic spirit. In Britain, in the nineteenth century, the Romantic poets reacted strongly against eighteenth century emphasis on reason and sought new ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. Romanticism, in this regard, is an embodiment of the rudiments of Ecocriticism. The Romantic poets attempted to re-discover the mystery and wonder of the world, and tried to establish a meaningful relationship between literature and nature. To them, nature was the principal source of inspiration and spiritual enlightenment. William Wordsworth is considered to be the spokesman of the movement. He celebrates the beauty and mystery of nature in some of his most famous lyrics, including "Michael" (1800), which portrays a simple shepherd who is deeply attached to the natural world around him. "The Excursion" (1814) is a long philosophical reflection on the relationship of humanity and nature. His autobiographical poem The Prelude (1850) records his evolving understanding of Nature. He viewed nature as a living entity endowed with feeling and purpose. The poetry of Coleridge, John keats, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley also included emotional descriptions of the natural world and features some of the best known nature verse in English. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" is called the most inspired lyrical poem describing nature in English language. The Romantic interest in nature is particularly significant to ecocritics because these poets were revolutionary in their politics, and the preservation of the natural world was one of the most important elements of their radical thinking. A romantic poet who used his understanding of nature to protest against the new capitalist machinery was John Claire, who unlike others was himself a labourer and worked on the land. In the novels of English writers of nineteenth century, like Thomas Hardy, the sense of place took centre stage.

Mathew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (1867) is said to offer one of the finest descriptions of place in English poetry. Victorian essayists, who wrote about nature included, John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle. Both of them lamented the destruction of the environment due to industrialization.

Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* published in 1903, changed the people's vision of deserts. She beautifully recorded her love for the strange and exotic desert of Southern California, and automatically people no longer see deserts as hostile and forbidding places. She strongly emphasized that it is impossible to understand humans without understanding their environment and the forces that have moulded them physically and mentally. She recognized an organic, interactive connection between humans and the rest of the biosphere. Aldo Leopold's *A Sandy County Almanac* published in 1949, asserts that all species have a right to exist as their biotic right. He urged human beings to be careful in their usage of non-human nature. He is considered the first bonafide Western environment ethicist and the founding member of the wilderness society. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in 1962 disclosed the dangers of using pesticides. It provided scientific evidences to show that pesticides such as DDT, aldrin, dieldrin pose a serious threat both to wildlife and to human health. Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* published in 1968 talked about raw and unbridled beauty of the desert landscape. He opted for a political awareness so that wild nature could be defended. Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* published in 1974, turned out to be a breakthrough book through its clear language, farsighted observation and metaphysical perspective in the field of eco-theological studies. Gary Synder's single volume book of poetry *Turtle Island* published in 1974 was an environmental declaration involving various aspects on social, political, aesthetic, personal culture and spiritual level. Barry Lopez through his book *Arctic Dreams* published in 1968 asserted the importance of the place of the Arctic and lamented on the process of exploitation run on it. He advocated the dire need of intimacy with nature over greed of wealth sought by exploiting nature.

The ideas and texts grown out of this period subsequently got consolidated into the field now known as Ecocriticism. As such, it is predicted that the individual

literary and cultural scholars have been developing ecologically informed criticism and theory since very early but they failed to organize themselves into an identifiable group. Their efforts have not been recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement and have been categorized under different headings, "American Studies, regionalism, pastoralism, the frontier, human ecology, science and literature, nature in literature, landscape in literature, or the names of the authors treated" (Glotfelty, xviii).

In the mid 1980s and early 90s, there has been substantial growth in environmental literary studies. In 1985, Frederick O. Waage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Methods, Resources* which included course descriptions from nineteen different scholars and sought to consolidate a greater presence of environmental concern and awareness in literary disciplines. In 1989 Alicia Nitecki founded *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* with a purpose to publish brief essays and book reviews on nature and environment. Cheryll Glotfelty in 1989 at Western Literature Association conference revived the term "Ecocriticsm" and urged its adoption to refer to the diffused critical field that was previously known by different names. It was in 1990s, the study of Literature and Environment grew rapidly. In 1991 MLA (Modern Language Association) special session organized by Harold Fromm, entitled "Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies." In 1992 at the annual meeting of the Western Language Association, a new association for the study of literature and environment, ASLE (Association for the study of Literature and Environment) was formed with Scott Slovic elected as its president. The mission of ASLE was to promote ideas and information pertaining to literature that considered the relationship between human beings and the natural world and to encourage, "new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research" (Glotfelty, xviii).

Many early works of Ecocriticism are characterized by an exclusive interest in Romantic Poetry, Wilderness Narrative and Nature Writing, but in the last few years ASLE has turned towards a more general culture ecocriticism, with studies of popular scientific writing, film, TV, art, architecture and other cultural artifacts such as theme parks, zoos, and shopping malls. In 1993, Patrick Murphy established

a new journal ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) to, "provide a forum for critical studies of the literary and performing arts proceeding from or addressing environmental considerations. These would include ecological theory, environmentalism, conceptions of nature and their depictions, the human/ nature dichotomy and related concerns" (Glotfelty, xviii). By 1993, Ecocriticism emerged as a recognizable critical school. The formerly scattered scholars joined forces with younger scholars to become a strong interesting group with aspirations to change the profession.

While ecocritics study literature written throughout history and analyze its relationship to the environment, most scholarship has focused on American and British literature from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Peter Berry in his essay "Ecocriticism" in *The Beginning Theory* asserts that Ecocriticism began in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s. Ecocriticsm in the United States of America took its literary bearings from nineteenth century American writers whose work celebrated nature and the wilderness as manifested in America. They were Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). All three were the members of the group writers, essayists and philosophers collectively known as the Transcendentalists. A central theme of Transcendentalism is the idea that the complete human experience can only be achieved through the harmony with nature. The literary texts most closely associated with Transcendentalism include Emerson's *Nature*, Thoreau's *Walden* and Fuller's *Summer on Lakes*. Emerson's first short book *Nature* (1836) is a reflective essay on the impact upon him of the natural world. Fuller expresses her relationship with the American Landscape in her book *Summer on the Lakes* (1843) and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) is an account of his two years stay in hut he had built on the shore of Walden pond. Cheryll Glotfelty is the acknowledged founder of Ecocriticism in the United States of America.

13.3.6 The Future of Ecocriticsm

Ecocriticism has the power to change the world. It raises our consciousness regarding nature. It explores the relationship between humans and nature. It has become a multiethnic movement. There is a strong connection between the

environment and issues of social justice. Environmental problems are global. Worldwide collaboration on the reforestation will solve the problem. Ecocriticism has become visible and influential recently. It is an important approach to literary study. It helps the readers to see the world in a new way. It opens the doors of understanding nature. Like feminism, Ecocriticism has developed through three major phases. Ecocritics study the relationship between human culture and the physical world. They examine the representations of nature in fiction and drama. They also analyse the environmental literature in eastern and western countries. Harold Fromm has speculated that industrial revolution has influenced humanity's relationship to nature. He warned that technology has created the fast illusion that we control nature; we should remember that our "unconquerable minds" are vitally dependent upon natural support systems.

Cheryll Glotfelty is optimistic of the ecocritical studies and hopes for the bright future of this field. She noted that ecocritics have aspiration to change the profession. She also hopes to see ecocriticism to become a chapter of the book which draws other environmental dimensions. She would also like to see a position in every literature department for a specialist in literature and the environment. She also sees candidates running on a green platform elected to the highest offices in our professional organizations. Glotfelty commenting on future of Ecocriticism further says, "A strong voice in the profession will enable ecocritics to be influential in mandationg important changes in the canon, the curriculum, and university policy. We will see books like Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* and Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* become standard course for text in American literature. Students taking literature and composition courses will be encouraged to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature, about the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis, and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications" (Introduction, xxv).

Glotfelty suggests college and universities to have interdisciplinary course on environment compulsory. The ecocritical scholarship is wished to be more inter-disciplinary, multicultural and International. There should be conferences, seminars

and guest speakers on the environmental issues. "Ecocriticsm has been predominately a white movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion" (Introduction, xxv). She admits the present volume of the book to be limited to the ecocritical works of America only but hopes to widen the horizon in the next collection.

13.3.7 Essays in This Collection

Glotfelty calls this book as an entry book to the field of Ecocriticism. With the raised consciousness about environmental issues there is increase in curiosity about ecocriticism. It is required to have an introductory text to such an emerging theory. Essays which are included in this collection will try to give answer to the question of Ecocriticism. "…this anthology of seminal and representative essays will facilitate teachings; no longer will professors have to rely on the dog-eared photocopies that have been circulating in the ecocritical underground, nor will they need to worry about violating copyright laws" (Introduction, xxvi). This source book gives credit to all the early unacknowledged ecocritics like Joseph Meeker, William Reuckert and Neil Everden. This book discusses a variety of texts and represents a range of critical approaches. This book is divided in to three parts which reflect the three major phases of ecocritical work:

a. First section entitled "Ecotheory: Reflections on Nature and Cutlture" dicusses the relationship between nature and culture and provides a theoretical foundation upon which to build the subsequent discussion of literary works.

b. Second section entitled "Ecocritical Considerations of Fiction and Drama" discusses presentations of nature in fiction and drama, including reflections on the ecological significance of literary modes and narrative structures, from Paleolithic hunting stories to postmodern mystery novels.

c. Third section entitled "Critical Studies of Environmental Literature" discusses the environmental literature in America, encompassing both Native American stories and the Thoreauvian nature-writing tradition.

13.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who defined ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment"?

    a) Peter Barry

    b) Cheryll Glotfelty

    c) William Reuckert

    d) Bate

2. ISLE is the house journal of _____.

    a) OSLE- India

    b) ASLE

    c) tiNai

    d) SELLTA

3. Michael P. Branch traces the term "Ecocriticism" to _____.

    a. Nirmal Selvamony

    b. Micheal P.Branch

    c. Cheryll Glotfelty

    d. William Reuckert

4. Who are the three major nineteenth-century American poets who celebrate nature?

    a. Maya Angelou, Rupert Brooke and Langston Hughes

    b. Emerson, Fuller and Thoreau

    c. Robert Frost, Rupert Brooke and Langston Hughes

    d. Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney and George Meredith

5. Who is the author of the book *Nature*?

    a. Emerson

b. Fuller

c. Peter Barry

d. Kate Soper

6. With which literary movement, Emerson, Fuller and Thoreau are related?

a. Romanticism

b. Transcendentalism

c. Realism

d. Expressionism

7. *Summer in the Lakes* is the first book of _____.

a. Peter Barry

b. Emerson

c. Kate Soper

d. Fuller

8. What is the UK version of ecocriticism?

a. Green Studies

b. E- Studies

c. Dark Green Studies

d. Light Green Studies

9. Ecocriticism takes its bearing from_____.

a. Romanticism

b. Realism

c. Transcendentalism

d. Expressionism

10. Green Studies takes its bearings from _____.

a. Romanticism

b. Transcendentalism

c. Realism

d. Expressionism

11. Who argues that colonialism and deforestation have frequently gone together?

a. Peter Barry

b. Jonathan Bate

c. Cheryll Glotfelty

d. William Reuckert

12. Ecocritics _____ the notion that everything is socially/ linguistically constructed.

a. Select

b. Choose

c. Reject

d. Elect

13. “It isn’t language which has a whole in its ozone layer”. Whose statement is this?

a. Kate Soper

b. Fuller

c. Peter Barry

d. Alan Liu

14. Who says that nature is nothing more than an anthropocentric construct created by Wordsworth?

a. Kate Soper

b. Fuller

c. Peter Barry

d. Alan Liu

15. An example of Area one: “the Wilderness” is _____.

a. Deserts

b. Forests

c. Hills

d. Parks

16. An example of Area three: “the countryside” is _____.

a. Deserts

b. Forests

c. Hills

d. Parks

17. An example of Area two: “the scenic sublime” is _____.

a. Deserts

b. Forests

c. Hills

d. Parks

18. An example of Area four: “the domestic picturesque” is _____.

a. Deserts

b. Forests

c. Hills

d. Parks

19. _____believe that they can save environment by more responsible form of consumption and production.

a. Greens

b. Light Greens

c. White Greens

d. Dark Greens

20. _____believe in "No Technology"

a. Black Greens

b. Greens

c. Dark Greens

d. Light Greens

21. "Dark Greens" are also called as

a. Deep Ecologists

b. True Ecologists

c. Wildlife Ecologists

d. Natural Ecologists

22. In Ecocriticism, what had seemed mere _____ is brought in from the critical margins to the critical centre.

a. Language

b. Society

c. Human

d. Setting

23. Which ecocritic quotes Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" in his critical essay.

a. Scott Slovic

b. Cheryll Glotfelty

c. Nirmal Selvamony

d. William Rueckert

24. _____ became the first person to hold an academic position as a Professor of Literature and the Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno in 1990.

    a. M.H. Abrams

    b. Harold Fromm

    c. Cheryll Glotfelty

    d. Joseph Meeker

25. The working definition of "Ecocriticism", according to Glotfelty is the study of the relationship between literature and environment.

    a. Physical

    b. Social

    c. Psychological

    d. Moral

13.5 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed the "Introduction" of the book, *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology.* We have started the lesson with the introduction of Cheryll Glotfelty and then discussed in detail the plan of the book. In this lesson we have learnt the definition and future of the newly emerged theory Ecocriticism. This book has included various essays and critics with an ecocritical approach. Also, we have learnt that this book is an attempt to speculate on how the Industrial Revolution affected humanity's conception of its relationship to nature and a warning that technology has created the false illusion that we control nature. The essays included in the book also recommend that revaluing nature-oriented literature can help redirect us from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness. We have also framed some multiple choice questions in order to have a further knowledge of the theory.

13.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b	11. b	21. a
2. b	12. a	22. d
3. d	13. a	23. a
4. b	14. d	24. c
5. a	15. a	25. a
6. b	16. c	
7. d	17. b	
8. a	18. d	
9. c	19. b	
10. a	20. C	

13.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Who is Cheryll Glotfelty and how does she define Ecocriticism?

Q2. What is Ecocriticism? Trace the birth of Environmental literary studies.

Q3. How is Ecocriticism different from other literary criticism?

Q4. How can students taking literature and composition courses be encouraged about the relationship of humans to nature?

Q5. What are the two different variants of Ecocriticism?

Q6. What are the important questions/enquiries taken into consideration by ecocritics and theorists while reading a literary piece of text ecocritically?

Q7. What is the future of Ecocriticism according to the Cheryll Glotfelty?

Q8. Who is the acknowledged father of ecocriticism in USA? Which is the definitive USA collection of essays in ecocriticism and what are its findings?

13.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* by Peter Barry.
2. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* by Jonathan Bate.
3. *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and the Environment* by Michael B. Branch
4. *Surveying the Emergence of Ecocriticism* by Michael B. Branch and Scott Slovic.
5. *The Dream of the Earth* by Thomas Berry.
6. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* by Aschcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin.

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