

Introduction

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Susan Sontag in her essay entitled "Against Interpretation" (1964) maintains, "Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretation of art today poisons our sensibilities. . . . In most modern instances, interpretation amounts to the philistine refusal to leave the work of art alone. Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. But reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting *that*, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable."

This view by Sontag takes an extreme position and leaves no scope to justify its positive contribution to our understanding of literature. Let us try to first understand the scope of criticism and the role of the critic. Various theories down the ages have tried to interpret works of art from different perspectives.

What is Criticism?

In its strict sense the word criticism means judgment. The literary critic is therefore regarded primarily as an expert who examines a piece of literary art, its merits and defects and pronounces a verdict upon it.

Common Objections to Criticism

The prejudice often experienced by criticism is easily explained. Our first business with a great author is with the author himself. It is his work that we want to understand for ourselves. What then is the use of so many intermediaries? Why should we consume time in reading what someone else has said about Dante or Shakespeare? We have so many books about books that our libraries are being choked with books, but also of books about books about books. We are thus tempted to get our knowledge of much of the world's greatest literature at second-hand, or even at third-hand. Scherer examines *Paradise Lost*. Then Matthew Arnold examines Scherer's examination of *Paradise Lost*. We may be interested in what Scherer thinks about Milton, and in what Arnold thinks about Scherer's view of Milton, and in some other person's own leisure being devoted to Scherer and Arnold; Milton's own work may remain unread.

These objections are quite intelligible, and in an age when creative literature is undoubtedly in peril of being overlaid by and practically buried under, a growing pace of exposition and commentary, due weight must certainly be given to them. But we are not for this reason to deny the utility of criticism. It has its legitimate place and function.

The Abuse of Criticism

The reading of criticism becomes a snare whenever we remain satisfied with what someone else has said about a great author instead of going straight to the author, and trying to master the work for ourselves. Short cuts to knowledge are now being rapidly multiplied in literature as well as all other fields of study, and in the rush of life, and the stress of conflicting interests, we are sorely tempted to depend upon them for information about many writers of whom the world talks freely, and of who we should like to be able to talk freely too, but with whom we have not the time or perhaps not the patience, to be acquainted on our own account.

To read the *Odyssey* through is a task from which many of us may recoil on the ground that it is very long, and that there are so many other things that we are equally anxious to read. Such a handy little epitome of the contents of that wonderful old poem as it is provided in the *Ancient Classics for English Readers* seems therefore to suit our needs.

If the question takes the form as it often must, as to whether the *Odyssey* is to remain an entirely sealed book for us, or to whether we are to get some idea of its story and characters at second hand then one should not hesitate to answer that it is far better to know something about the poem from the briefest sketch of it, than to know nothing about it at all.

Voltaire is one of the greatest men of letters of the eighteenth century. His separate publications number upwards of 260: he wrote society verses and epic poems, dramas and dramatic criticism, history and biography, philosophical tales and philosophical treatises. For the ordinary English reader, the mass of this immense and varied output must of necessity remain an unexplored territory. But meanwhile he will find in Lord Morley's admirable volume of under 400 pages a compact and luminous study of the man, his milieu, his work, and the careful perusal of this will give him a far better idea of Voltaire's genius and power, limitations and accomplishment than it would be possible for him to derive from hasty and undirected efforts to acquaint himself directly with Voltaire's own work.

To read many of the writers in their entirety for ourselves is manifestly impossible, and we may thus be grateful to the intermediary who extracts the honey for us, and sets it before us in available form. Modest, such service may be, but it is of inestimable value, and we have every right to take advantage of it.

To say that we must never depend on other people for our knowledge of authors and books is therefore to be guilty of gross exaggeration. But if the primary aim of literary study be the cultivation of intimate personal relations between student and writer, then our too frequent practice of contenting ourselves with books about books can scarcely be too strongly deprecated.

A well-known American professor tells of his student who came to him with the question, what was the best book he could read on *Timon of Athens* on which he was writing an essay. The Professor's reply was "The best book you can read on *Timon of Athens* is *Timon of Athens*. This was the view of the matter which had apparently not occurred to the inquirer, who went away a sadder and wiser man. It is a view that is too often neglected by us. No analysis of a book, let it therefore be repeated, can ever be an adequate substitute for our own personal mastery of the book itself.

This suggests another danger in our continual recourse to the literature of exposition and commentary. We are too apt to accept passively another person's interpretation of a book and his judgment upon it. This danger is more to be emphasized because it increases with the power of the critic himself. If he is really a great critic- that is if he is a man of exceptional learning grasp and vigour of personality-he is likely to impose himself upon us. Painfully aware by contrast of his strength and our own shortcomings, we yield ourselves to him. He dominates our thoughts to such an extent that we take his verdict as final. Henceforth, we look at the book, not with our own eyes, but through his. We find in it what he has found there, and nothing else. What he has missed we miss too. Our reading runs only on the line that he has laid down. Thus in fact, he stands between us and his subject not as an interpreter, but as an obstacle. Instead of leading us he blocks the way. Personal encounter with our author is prevented, and the free play of our mind upon his work is made impossible.

The Use of Criticism

To deny the service of criticism is tantamount to asserting either that no one else can ever be wiser than ourselves or that we can never profit by another person's deeper experience or superior wisdom. The chief function of criticism is to enlighten and stimulate. If a great poet makes us partakers of his large sense of the meaning of life, a great critic may make us partakers of his larger sense of the meaning of literature.

A true critic is one who is equipped for his task by knowledge of his subject which, in breadth and soundness, far exceeds our own and who, moreover, is endowed with special faculties of insight, penetration and comprehension. Surely it would be the height of impertinence to assume that such a man will not see a great deal more than we do in a masterpiece of literature, and the extreme of folly to imagine that with his aid we might not discover qualities of power and beauty, a wealth of interest and a depth of significance, but for the aid, we should in all probability have remained blind.

The critic often gives us an entirely fresh point of view and often renders particular assistance by translating into definite form impressions of our own, dimly recognized indeed, but too vague to be of practical value. He is sometimes a pathfinder, breaking new ground, sometime a friendly companion indicating hitherto unperceived aspects of even the most familiar thing we pass by. Thus he teaches us to read for ourselves with quickened intelligence and

keener appreciation. This is not all. He frequently helps us most when he challenges our own judgments, cuts across our preconceived opinions and gives us Emerson's phrase, not instruction but provocation. If we read him, as we should read the literature of which he discourses, with a mind ever vigilant and alert, it will matter little whether we agree with or dissent from what he has to tell us. In either case we shall gain by contact with him in insight and power. Criticism may be regarded as having two different functions - that of **interpretation** and that of **judgment**.

What is it that the Critic as Interpreter should set out to accomplish?

His task is both large and difficult. His purpose will be to penetrate to the heart of the book before him, to disengage its essential qualities and beauty, to distinguish between what is temporary and what is permanent; to analyse and formulate its meaning; to elucidate by direct examination the artistic and moral principles which, whether the writer himself was conscious of them or not, has actually guided and controlled his labours.

What is merely implicit in his author's work he will make explicit. He will exhibit the interrelation of its parts and the connection of each with the whole, which they compose. He will gather up and epitomize its scattered elements and account for its characteristics by tracing them to their sources. Thus, explaining, unfolding, illuminating, he will show us what the book really is - its contents, its spirit, its art, and this done he will leave it to justify and apprise itself. "To feel the virtue of the poet, of the painter, to disengage it, to set it forth- these", says Walter Pater, "are the three stages of the critics duty."

In the execution of his task such a critic will of course follow his own particular line of exposition. He may confine himself strictly to the book in hand, and fix his attention wholly upon what he finds there. He may elucidate by systematic references to other works of the same author. He may throw light upon it from the outside by adopting the method of comparison and contrast, he may go further afield and seek his clue in the principles of historical interpretation. But whatever his plan, his one aim is to know, and help us to know the book in itself. He will pass no definitive verdict upon it from the point of view of his own taste, or any organized body of critical opinion.

Give an inexperienced reader a list of "the hundred best books" and leave him without any guidance as to what to look for in them; a large proportion of them he will find less attractive than current fiction or poetry. Some of the easier novels, lyrical poetry, perhaps drama may give him greater pleasure though even then he will miss much that a trained sensibility would be aware of. The rest, even though he may conscientiously persevere to the end in his pursuit of "culture" will only leave him puzzled as to what other people have seen in them which has led them to be called "great". And this is possible even if potentially, he has it in him to be a "good reader".

Great literature needs interpretation. We may, unaided, get a glimpse, or even more than a glimpse of the loveliness of a lyric, or the poignancy of a tragic play or story, but a gulf separates us from the intuitions of genius; were it not so it would not be genius. The critic's business is to bridge this gulf, being himself a man with imaginative perceptions akin to those of his subjects, and having by years of concentrated and appreciative reading, sensitized himself and trained himself in awareness, as no ordinary reader has had the time or the opportunity to do. He then tells that reader what he has discovered in his author, or authors in such a way that the reader may see it for himself. The critic's methods of interpretation may vary infinitely, but whether he is elucidating a single work, or making the most general statements of what to look for in any work of a given kind, always his purpose is the same - to quicken our apprehension of and respond to what literature has to say to us, so that we may not only know what we ought to read, but get full value out of it when we read it.

The Critic as Judge: Absolute Standards in Literature

The word "critic" is, in fact derived from the Greek "crites", a judge. Self-evidently the first step towards "easing or widening or deepening" our response to what is best in literature must be that the critic himself should be able to recognize quality when he meets with it. The step only but if he himself has not learnt to recognize the good and to reject what is worthless he will be a blind leader of the blind.

How then, does a critic set about his task of judging? By what standards does he judge? And how are we his readers, to know whether any given critic's judgment is likely to be more reliable than that of another or our own?

These questions raise the whole problem of the existence of absolute standards in literature. And there are people who doubt whether such standards exist. They believe that the most that any critic can do is to express a personal preference for one book rather than for another, but what if whether one book is in itself better than another? There is no method of proof. And this is because of the subjective nature of the evidence upon which the critic must base his judgment. When a judge gives a verdict in a court of law the process is objective. He is guided, not by something personal to himself, but by asset of external laws set down in black and white and familiar to every lawyer, and by sworn statements or facts. His own personal opinion only comes into play in assessing the reliability of any witness, and this can be checked by the evidence of other witnesses.

The law forbids murder. All that concerns a judge is to discover whether the man in the dock did, in fact, commit murder; or his liking for, or dislike of, the accused is totally irrelevant. The critic on the other hand, has no law to administer. The nearest thing to law which he has to guide him in certain statements or principles, such as those found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, but every critic who has treated these as the judge treats the law of the

land, as external rules by which the (aesthetic) guilt or innocence of a writer can be determined has invariably given mistaken judgments. And the only evidence upon which a critic can base his judgments lies in his own personal response to what he reads. He asks not "What are the rules? Does this work observe them?" But "What do I, the critic, feel about this book?"

He may, it is true, if other critics he respects differ from him, reserve judgment, but nevertheless the ultimate test is subjective. Is there in fact, any objective standard by which we can say that some books are in themselves good and others bad, or is it as many people claim, "all a matter of taste?" If there is no objective test of quality, and enjoyment is all, is there any evidence that *Hamlet* is a better play than *The Mouse Trap* or *War and Peace* better than *Mills and Boons*? Is not the critics' preference- and ours for *Hamlet* and *War and Peace* simply a personal idiosyncrasy? Why should he – and we- be right and the majority, for they are a vast majority who prefer *The Mouse Trap* and *Mills and Boons*, be wrong? If we find no answer to these questions, then value judgment becomes a chimera: all that is possible is a statement of personal preferences, one as valid as another. A book is a good book for those who like it, a bad book for those who do not. In fact, "Every man is his own critic."

But there is an answer to these questions. To find it we must break the vicious circle of subjectivity. And the circle can be broken if we can find, despite the subjectivity of the individual judgment, that there is objective evidence that, irrespective of what you or I or the man on the street may feel about it, some books have proved themselves to be better than others. If such evidence exists and we can identify these books, those who prefer them to the rest have shown that they can recognize quality when they meet with it. For those who do not, or cannot, their judgment is worthless.

Such evidence does exist: **the test of time**. In every period there are books, the vast majority of which are enormously popular and which at the time, produce a strong emotional response in the majority of their readers, but which, after a generation or two, are either completely forgotten or, if they survive at all, do so only as literary curiosities, evidence of the queer test of our ancestors. They have pleased not only the contemporaries for whom they have written. But in the meantime, our books throughout the centuries or even millennia have continued to be as moving and satisfying as they were to the people to whom they were first addressed. Such as the works of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil, Shakespeare, Racine, Milton you can add to the list. Their readers have belonged to different races, and in some cases to periods in history far remote from those that gave them birth, living in totally different circumstances, travelled by different problems, with different religions, philosophers and political and social assumptions from those of the generations for whom they were written. Yet all this has made little difference. And this is not by chance.

There are two levels upon which a book can move us. Every period has, inevitably, its own way of life, its own beliefs, preoccupations, hopes and fears, which as long as they last, seem to be, very possibly are, of transcendent importance, and which hence arouse strong, often violent, emotion, but which when circumstances which produced them change, are replaced by others and are forgotten. They are like waves upon the surface of the sea. The books in the first class appeal to this surface and most easily aroused emotions, but are as ephemeral as the mood which gave them birth.

But at the same time, down in the depths, there are the universal and unchanging human passions, problems and aspirations, the same always and everywhere, whatever winds may ruffle the surface. The books in the second class penetrate this depth. The sufferings of an Oedipus or Hamlet, however much the circumstances, or even the belief which caused them belong to the age in which the play was written, have in themselves nothing to do with fashions or historical circumstance. They are fundamental to human nature, irrespective of time and place. The greatest literature is that which goes deepest and appeals to what is most universal to man, and their survival provides objective evidence that the books in the second class have a quality of greatness which is lacking in the first.

When we compare the quality and depth of our response to the two groups of books we find, the "popular" may have moved us violently, "carried us away", seemed "perfectly wonderful, but in the "great" books we find we have found a depth, an assurance, a satisfaction, a calm contentment.

Now to return to the critic. Though it is true that his judgment on any given book must be based on his own subjective response, there is an objective test by which we can assess his qualifications: can he recognize greatness where we know that it exists?

Older Methods of "Judicial" Criticism

Literary criticism, throughout its entire range, was long crushed beneath the dead weight of authority and the tyranny of preconceived notions. Every author has to be judged by cannons applied to his work from the outside, while the quality of any new departure in literature was to be estimated only by references to models, to what has been accomplished by other writers at other times. The superstitious veneration of the classics, which began with the Renaissance and lingers in scholastic circles even today, inspired a general belief in the value of the Greek and Latin writers as permanent standards of excellence, and even when this particular theory broke down, the critic's practice was still to appeal to some author or school of author by whom the true laws of literature were assumed to have been exemplified once and for all.

Thus, criticism, too often degenerated into scholarly examinations on matters of little or real importance, and sterile efforts to keep production within certain prescribed bounds. It became conventional, dogmatic, and arbitrary. It condemned all deviation from the lines it

had chosen to lay down in advance, as in the familiar case of Shakespeare who, for a long time in France, and by a number of critics even in England, was pronounced barbarous and fantastic because his work did not confirm to the laws of "classic" drama which had been postulated as the ideal type. Such criticism denied the principle of development and the right of the new spirit in literature to strike out in fresh paths for itself.

The Critic's Qualifications.

The man who has read or attempted to read Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Tolstoy and the rest and has "seen nothing in any of them" has proved conclusively that he cannot recognize creative genius when he meets with it. If he then sets up for a critic he will be like a colour blind person setting up as a judge of colour. We can dismiss him from our consideration. This man has taken the test and failed.

But what of one who has never been tested- who for some reason, possibly prejudice due to a faulty education, had not read the attested classic and has confined his reading to contemporary books? This man may have a natural taste of a higher order- imaginatin and perceptiveness- all the gifts, in fact, required to make him potentially a great critic. And many of his judgments may be more perceptive than those of a less sensitive though widely read scholar. But he will have no standard by which to judge; never having experienced the authentic impact of supreme greatness he will not be aware of its absence; he will almost certainly fail to distinguish between the surface waves and the deeper currents, the ephemeral and the universal. In true virtue of his sensibility, he may in any given case be perceptive, but he will be capricious- possibly right, but more probably wrong. He, too, may be dismissed as qualified?

But such catholicity is rare; temperaments vary: there are born classics, born romantics; some people respond instinctively to the sensuous and emotional; others to the austere and the intellectual, some to formal perfection, others to creative exuberance. We can all, it is true, extend our range and learn at least to admire even if not to be profoundly moved by what is alien to our temperaments; we may even, by dint of preserving reading, discover in ourselves latent potentialities for enjoyment, until nearly the whole of literature is opened up to us. Nevertheless, in all but the most myriad-minded, blind spots will remain.

But such blind spots do not matter overmuch when what we demand of a critic is not infallibility throughout the whole range of literature; but that within his own range he should be a sure guide and should contribute to the utmost to our appreciation and understanding. If he does this he has fulfilled his function; where he fails we can turn to other critics for help. If he is wise he will, of course, recognize his own limitations and confine his judgment to the field in which his sympathies lie. But even if he lacks this wisdom and goes beyond his range, the errors which he may make outside his own field, in no way invalidate his judgment within it.

Charles Lamb was a born Romantic with no wish to be anything else; not content to say, "I Charles Lamb do not like the Neo-classical literature of the Restoration and the eighteenth century", He assumed that because he failed to respond to it, there could be nothing in it to like. The fault must lie in it and not in himself. But this simply means that when we want a just appraisal of the classical period we go elsewhere, it does not cancel out and the receptiveness with which he assesses and illuminates with his poetic imagination the writers of the Elizabethan age and the early seventeenth century.

Similarly Samuel Johnson's verdict on *Lycidas* shows that where pastoral elegy was concerned he was colour blind, but this is totally irrelevant to the greatness of his assessment of *Paradise Lost*. Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden it is these which put him in the first rank among the critics.

There is, it is true, a blind spot which is more serious, and which may itself be caused by the familiarity with the traditional great which is the critic's essential equipment, the inability to recognize the generosity of an innovator who has broken with tradition and has created a new form in which to express his vision. Such innovators were Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* and Gerard Manley Hopkins. It is here that many-sided reading is the critic's safe guard. He has learnt to respond to only one style (as had Wordsworth's critics to the non-classical), the unorthodoxy of the new form may stand between him and the imaginative content. Has he on the contrary already discovered in how many ways genius can express itself he will be on his guard against judging by surface orthodoxy and should be able to recognize the authentic impact of greatness even though it may take an unfamiliar form. At worst, being aware of the pitfalls, he can reserve judgment and leave the final verdict to a younger generation of critics whose response has not become set.

So to sum up, the wider the critic's range the better; blind spots are always a fault. But what we demand above all is not the negative merit, or absence of error, these are inevitable, even in the greatest. But what positively the critic should contribute something of unique value to our appreciation of literature and our ability to recognize, and enjoy, the greatest when we meet with it.

We have discussed the scope of criticism and the role of the critic. Let us examine a few approaches that critics have used to interpret and evaluate works of literature.

Biographical Criticism. These critics see literary works as the reflection of an author's life and times (or of the characters' life and times). They believe it is necessary to know about the author and the political, economic, and sociological context of his times in order to truly understand his works. This approach works well for some works—like those of Alexander Pope, John Dryden, and Milton—which are obviously political in nature. One must know Milton was blind, for instance, for "On His Blindness" to have any meaning. And one must know something about the Exclusion Bill Crisis to appreciate John Dryden's

“Absalom and Achitophel.” It also is necessary to take a historical approach in order to place allusions in their proper classical, political, or biblical background.

Ernest Hemingway’s *Soldier’s Home* is a story about the difficulties of a World War I veteran named Krebs returning to his small hometown in Oklahoma, where he cannot adjust to the pious assumptions of his family and neighbours. He refuses to accept their innocent blindness to the horrors he has witnessed during the war. They have no sense of the brutality of modern life; instead they insist that he resume his life as if nothing has happened.

There is plenty of biographical evidence to indicate that Krebs’s unwillingness to lie about the war experiences reflects Hemingway’s own responses upon his return to Oak Park, Illinois, in 1919. Krebs, like Hemingway, finds he has to leave the sentimentality, repressiveness, and smug complacency that threaten to render his experiences unreal: “the world they were in was not the world he was in.” An awareness of Hemingway’s own war experiences and subsequent disillusionment with his hometown can be readily developed through available biographies, letters and other works he wrote.

Biographical criticism has two weaknesses that should be avoided. First, one must avoid equating the work’s content with the author’s life, or the character with the author; they are not necessarily the same. Second, one must avoid less-than-credible sources of information, particularly works that tend to be highly speculative or controversial, unless verified by several sources.

Psychological Criticism: Psychological criticism analyses the processes in the mind of the poet while he is composing a poem and the processes in the mind of the reader while he is reading it, in the belief that before we can judge and evaluate a work of art we must know what it is and how it came about.

The nature of literary genius has always attracted speculation, and it was as early as the Greeks, who conceived of it as related to “madness”. The poet is the “possessed”: he is unlike other men, at once less and more; and the unconscious out of which he speaks is felt to be at once sub and super rational.

Another early and persistent conception is that of the poet’s “gift” as compensatory: the Muse took away the sight of Demodocos’ eyes but “gave him the lovely gift of song” in the *Odyssey*, as the blinded Tiresias is given prophetic vision in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. Handicap and endowment are not always, of course, so directly correlative. Alexander Pope was a hunchback and a dwarf; Lord Byron had a club-foot; Proust was an asthmatic neurotic of partly Jewish descent; John Keats was shorter than other men; Thomas Wolfe much taller. The difficulty with the theory is its very ease. After the event, any success can be attributed to compensatory motivation, for everyone has liabilities that may serve him as spurs.

civilization. When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the story *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, he portrayed man's evil nature as a portion of his total makeup, and showed that the evil portion will often express itself more forcefully and powerfully than do the other aspects.

Mr Hyde commits several appalling acts throughout the novel, including mere acts like trampling over a young girl, to gruesome acts like murdering a man. Acquiring no respect by anyone he comes in contact with, Mr Hyde is looked down upon in distaste: "There was something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked."

Jekyll and Hyde have a strange relationship with each other. Jekyll hates Hyde for the ascendancy that Hyde has over him, and Hyde hates Jekyll because he knows that Jekyll can destroy him by committing suicide. As Jekyll dies, Hyde regains dominion so that the lawyer, Utterson and Poole find the body not of Jekyll, but that of Hyde. At this point in the novel, the reader is perplexed about the literal separation of the two components of one man, Dr. Jekyll. The point that the story is trying to make is that people often have to battle between good and evil within their own subconsciousness.

Other symbols of the encounter with the shadow include the conversion motif. In the New Testament, the Greek word that is translated as 'conversion' means literally 'a turning about'. And this is precisely what happens in the first stage of the individuation process: you start looking in the opposite direction - inside instead of outside - and this leads to the discovery and unfolding of a new dimension of yourself; new powers begin to work for you and you begin to experience 'newness of life'. 'You shall have life and shall have it more abundantly', said Jesus; and this, Jung would say, is what individuation is all about.

Both the ritual of baptism and the many Flood myths may be seen as the first stage of the individuation process. Water is a common symbol of the unconscious. In baptism a person is plunged into water and is said to be 'born again' when he or she rises out of the water. This symbolizes the descent of consciousness into the unconscious and the resulting new and fuller life.

The same applies to stories of a great flood which destroys the face of the earth and recedes, leaving one pure human being (e.g. Noah in the Jewish - Christian tradition; Markandeya in the Hindu tradition). If we take this as a symbol of individuation, what is destroyed by the flood-waters (the unconscious) is the persona, that makeshift self-image with which we start our adult life. This partial self must be dissolved to make way for the appearance of the whole self (represented by Noah or Markandeya).

In some cultures there are myths of a diver who plunges to the bottom of the sea and brings up treasure. The water, again, may be seen as a symbol for the unconscious, and the treasure as the new self one finds, when previously unused psychic resources are given appropriate expression in one's conscious life.

The story of the Frog Prince tells of a young woman who is visited on three consecutive nights by a frog. On the first and second nights she is horrified, but on the third night she relents and lets the frog into her bed, and in the moment that she kisses him the frog turns into a handsome prince. For Ernest Jones, a follower and biographer of Freud, the story is an allegorical account of a young woman overcoming her fear of sex. For Joseph Campbell (a disciple of Jung) the frog is just another example of the dragons and other frightening monsters whose role in mythology is to guard treasure. The frog, like them, represents the dark and frightening shadow; the treasure is the true self. The kiss symbolizes a person's acceptance of the shadow. And the result is the manifestation of the true nature of the shadow, as a bearer of one's true selfhood.³

In order to reach the second stage of individuation you must resist two temptations. First, you must avoid projecting your shadow on to other people. Your shadow, because it is your dark side, may be quite frightening, and you may even see it as something evil. You may therefore want to disown it; and one way of doing this is to make believe it is the property of someone else. On a collective level this is what leads to racism and the persecution of 'non-believers' (which in this context means people whose beliefs are different from our own). These are both examples of the 'them-and-us' syndrome, where we unload our 'dark' side on to some other group, which then becomes the scapegoat that carries the blame for everything that is wrong in our lives or our society.

Commenting on Jesus' command to 'Love your enemy', Jung remarks: 'But what if I should discover that that very enemy himself is within me, that I myself am the enemy who must be loved - what then?' The answer is that you must learn to integrate the dark side of yourself, which means accepting it and allowing it proper expression under the control of your conscious mind. It will then cease to be dark and terrifying and hostile; instead, it will enhance the quality of your life, advance your personal development and increase your happiness.

The second temptation to be resisted is that of suppressing the shadow, which means putting it back into the cellars of the unconscious and locking the doors on it. Says Jung: 'Mere suppression of the Shadow is as little a remedy as beheading would be for a headache.' Whatever pain or unease your shadow may cause you, it consists of precisely those parts of your total self that you need to utilize if you are to achieve full personal growth. To suppress the shadow is merely to go back to square one; and sooner or later you will be forced to come to terms with this 'dark' side of yourself.

Usually, the first encounter with the shadow leads only to a partial acceptance of it, a mere acknowledgement of its existence. Certainly it is good to confess (what appear as) the less desirable - the 'dark' - aspects of one's personality: without that, no further progress can be made. But merely acknowledging these aspects does not take us very far. A lot more work is necessary.

Maud Bodkin's book *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934) made a major contribution to the study of archetypal images in literature. As a follower of Jung, her work tries to identify archetypes and trace patterns in diverse literary works across eras and cultures. One of the most often traced archetypal patterns is that of the quest, by the protagonist, who must leave her/his home, travel into unfamiliar territory, meet a guide, endure dangerous situations and adventures, reach the object of her/his quest, gain important new knowledge, and return home with that knowledge to share with others.⁴

One of the best examples of exploring the dark side comes from a classic fantasy movie "The Wizard of Oz." Dorothy is the product of an upright Christian family — people who never speak harshly or think dark thoughts about anyone. Dorothy is bored with her life, she wants more. She's told she must not demonstrate her anger and hate for Miss Gulch, who confiscates her beloved dog, Toto.⁵

In order for Dorothy to come to the conclusion she reaches at the end of the movie, she must journey through the dark. This is represented several times in the movie; the tornado, the dark haunted forest, the dark castle atop the dark mountain, facing and overcoming her many fears to obtain the witch's broom. Both light and dark mythical goddess figures are evident in the movie from the beginning — the Good Witch of the North (which represents the good earth), and the Wicked Witch of the West (representing the setting sun — death). In the end, Dorothy realizes that her power lies within her; she never needed to leave home to find it at all. Through her journey through the dark, she became whole.

Sociological Criticism: It concerns itself with the social function of texts, thus consisting of several categories, and analyses social structure, power, politics, and agency. Social criticism is similar to historical criticism in recognizing literature as a reflection of the environment. There are several social movements, but Marxism, Feminism and Gender Studies, and Green Theory are prevalent.

Sociological criticism starts with the conviction that the relationship of art to society is vitally important, and that the investigation of this relationship may organise and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art. Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which he is important, because he is an articulate part.

The sociological critic is interested in understanding the milieu, and the extent and manner in which an artist responds to it. It means therefore to place a book in its context either sociologically or historically. To see what aspects of society the book reflects. Did the book influence society in any way and does it reflect the author's ideology, that is, his relation with politics and women. It gives an additional dimension regarding the reaction of society to women writers and painters and why there are no great women painters or why

at a certain period women had to write under pseudonyms. Germaine Griere's *The Obstacle Race* is a study of the obstacles that come in the way of women who tried to study painting. Eva Figues' work *Sex and Subterfuge* deals with the impediments in the way of women writers from the eighteenth century onwards.

Sociological criticism also shows the relation between literature and politics, by showing that the concept of literature is itself ideological. It was the French critic Taine who brought it to its fullest statement with his famous pronouncement in his *History of English Literature*, 1803, that literature is the consequence of the moment, milieu and the race. He belonged to a school of historical critics which included Michelet, Renan and Sainte-Beuve. They were interpreting books in terms of their historical origins. Taine compared himself to a chemist examining chemical compounds.

The Italian philosopher Vico in 1725 attempted the Sociological interpretation of Homer's epics that revealed the social conditions in which he lived. The *Iliad* was composed when Greece was all aflame with sublime passions and the *Odyssey* when they were beginning to cool.

Sociological criticism can help us to avoid making mistakes about the nature of the literary work that we have before us by throwing light on the conventions of the time. If we read Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* with knowledge of the courtly love tradition in the light of which so much of its action is developed, we can see the work more clearly, we know better what we are dealing with, and we can evaluate it better.

In the sixteenth century, during Elizabeth's reign, there was pomp and pageantry, ostentations and extravagance, life with conquerors and shepherds. All this was reflected in bucolic literature and passionate experience.

Literature reached its high water mark with the Augustan age. Great progress was made with regard to the idea that human art and institutions were to be studied as products of the geographic and climatic conditions in which the people who created them lived, and of the phase of their social development. Herder continued with the approach in the nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, literature was judged according to whether it conformed to certain standards of 'polite letters'. With the need to incorporate the increasingly powerful middle class with the aristocracy, the spread of manners, habits, correct taste, and literature gained new importance and now concerned itself with guidebooks on social manners, and morals and treatises. The word prosaic at this time begins to acquire the negative sense of being prosy, dull and uninspiring.

With the Industrial Revolution, the age of discoveries and advances in science, literature had to be precise and down to earth. Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory* tries to draw the

link between the rise of the novel and changes in society. Harry Levin states that the relationship between literature and society are reciprocal. It is not only literature that affects society but society also which affects literature.

Sociological insights can greatly help the reader to see why some faults are characteristic of the age. This helps us to explain what has been going on in the work and to see it more clearly. It is important to study the influence of the social background on the author's work and carry on an investigation of individual works with that description.

The Dickens World by Humphrey House is an admirable work of Sociological criticism. It gives an account of the changing historical scene in Dickens' day and the reflection of this changing scene in Dickens' novels. For example, *Great Expectations* is a perfect expression of a phase of English society – it is to be taken as it stands. Here the Sociological critic has illuminated certain features of the literary work by showing how social changes and other social factors are mirrored in them. He is throwing searchlights from new angles and showing how they come to be what they really are.

This approach has also brought deeper understanding into poetry. We see a change of tone in early war poetry that is patriotic and glorifies death for one's country, and poetry produced during the fag end of the war that has the tone of disillusionment, despair and anger. In the post-war period of the twenties the tone changes to a sense of the land being laid waste, hollow and dead. "We are the dead men. / We are the hollow men." The poets were Eliot, Auden, Yeats and Hemingway. Sociology can help us to see why so much of the most modern poetry is obscure – but it does not tell us about the obscurity in poetry.

The tendency to associate art and social values is natural and perhaps intrinsic. In America, Norris, Howells, Jack London and Hamlin Garland have all been concerned with the relation between literature and society. When the critic substituted a social or political theory for the term 'society', he found himself with large masses of integrating literature. Thus John Mary wrote *The Spirit of American Literature* from the viewpoint of socialism.

To understand the growth and development of language, we need to know language / semantic changes. Words change their meaning from age to age. Language is itself a social construct. For example the word 'spinster' was previously seen as one who spins, now it is presently linked with a dowdy old maid.

Before the century ended, Marx and Engels introduced a fourth factor, which is the methods of production, in other words – economics. But non-Marxists were at the same time already taking into account the influence of social classes. For example, Taine shows the difference between literature produce by the Normans and the Saxons, one the ruling class and the other the oppressed class. The introduction of economics led in the thirties to that special branch of criticism known as Marxist criticism.

Marxists believe that it is not the consciousness of man that determines his being, but his social being that determines his consciousness. The Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs has endeavoured to show that a writer's stature depends on his insights into the realities of social and historical forces that he depicts with power and conviction, often in spite of his political beliefs. He has written especially well on Walter Scott and on Balzac precisely because he sees them as rendering profound insights into social and political reality, vividly particularized in individual examples, in spite of being conservative in their conscious political views.

With the economic depression, journals like *New Masses* served as organs for Marxist criticism. With the outbreak of World War II, the movement lost its central force and ceased to be a major force of literary criticism, but it did not destroy the validity of the sociological study of literature.

Marxist Criticism: It is concerned with labour practices, class theories, and economics, especially as concerned with the struggles of the poor and oppressed. A Marxist might ask, "How are classes stratified / defined in this text? Does this text reflect an economic ideology? What is the attitude toward labour furthered by this text?"

Based on the socialist and dialectical theories of Karl Marx, Marxist criticism views literary works as reflections of the social institutions out of which they are born. According to Marxists, even literature itself is a social institution and has a specific ideological function, based on the background and ideology of the author. In essence, Marxists believe that a work of literature is not a result of divine inspiration or pure artistic endeavor, but that it arises out of the economic and ideological circumstances surrounding its creation. For Marxist critics, works of literature often mirror the creator's own place in society, and they interpret most texts in relation to their relevance regarding issues of class struggle as depicted in a work of fiction.

Marxism attempts to draw conclusions about the relations between the literary and the social. Recent Marxist literary theories have been heavily influenced by the works of the French philosopher Louis Althusser and the literary critic Pierre Macherey. Marxist criticism has the longest history. Marx himself made important general statements about culture and society in the 1840s. Even so, it is correct to think of Marxist criticism as a 20th century phenomenon.

Two well-known statements help us to understand the basic tenets of Marxism:

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.



Marx argues that all mental systems are the products of real social and economic existence. The material interests of the dominant social class determine how people see human existence, individual and collective. Legal systems, for example, are not the pure manifestations of human or divine reason, but ultimately reflect the interest of the dominant class in particular historical periods. In one account Marx described this view in terms of an architectural metaphor: the 'superstructure' (ideology, politics) rests upon the 'base' (socio-economic relations).

The special status of literature is recognized by Marx in a celebrated passage in his *Grundrisse*, in which the problem of an apparent discrepancy between economic and artistic development is discussed. Greek tragedy is considered a peak of literary development and yet it coincides with a social system and a form of ideology (Greek myth) which are no longer valid for modern society. The problem for Marx was to explain how art and literature produced in a long-obsolete social organization can still give us aesthetic pleasure and be regarded as 'a standard and unattainable ideal'.

He seems to be accepting reluctantly a certain 'timelessness' and 'universality' in literature and art; reluctantly, because this would be a major concession to one of bourgeois ideology's premises. The Marxist view is that the 'greatness' of Greek tragedy is not a universal and unchanging fact of existence, but a value which must be reproduced from generation to generation.

Georg Lukacs

He is the first major Marxist critic. His work is inseparable from orthodox Socialist Realism. He treated literary works as reflections of an unfolding system. His use of the term 'reflection' is characteristic of his work as a whole. Rejecting the down-to-earth 'naturalism' of the then recent European novel, he returns to the old realist views that the novel reflects reality, not by rendering its mere surface appearance, but by giving us 'a truer, more complex, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality.'

In *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1957) he advances the communist attack on modernism. He refuses to deny Joyce the status of a true artist but asks us to reject his view of history, and especially the way in which Joyce's 'static' view of events is reflected in an epic structure which is itself essentially static. This failure to perceive human existence as part of a dynamic historical environment infects the whole of contemporary modernism, as reflected in the works of writers such as Kafka, Beckett and Faulkner. These writers, argues Lukacs, are preoccupied with formal experiment – with montage, inner monologues, the technique of 'stream of consciousness', the use of reportage and diaries.

All this formalistic virtuosity is a result of a narrow concern for subjective impressions, a concern which itself stems from the advanced individualism of late capitalism. Instead of an objective realism we have an angst-ridden vision of the world. The fullness of history

and its social processes are narrowed down to the bleak inner history of absurd existences. By divorcing the individual from the outer world of objective reality, the modernist writer, in Lukacs' view is compelled to see the inner life of characters as a sinister, inexplicable flux, which ultimately also takes on a timeless static quality.

Lukacs seems unable to accept that in rendering the impoverished and alienated existence of modern subjects some modern writers achieve a kind of realism, or at any rate develop new literary forms and techniques which correspond to modern reality. Insisting on the reactionary nature of modernist ideology, he refused to recognize the literary possibilities of modernist writings. Because he thought the content of modernism was reactionary, he treated modernist form as equally unacceptable. During his brief stay in Berlin during the early 1930s, he found himself attacking the use of modernist techniques of montage and reportage in the work of fellow radicals including the brilliant dramatist Bertolt Brecht.

Bertolt Brecht

His early plays were radical, anarchistic and anti-bourgeois, but not anti-capitalist. After reading Marx in about 1926, his youthful iconoclasm was converted to conscious political commitment, although he was never a Party man. His best known theatrical device, the *alienation effect* was partly derived from the Russian Formalists concept of *defamiliarisation*. Socialist Realism favoured realistic illusion, formal unity and 'positive' heroes. He called his theory of realism 'anti-Aristotelian', a covert way of attacking the theory of his opponents.

Aristotle emphasized the unity and the universality of the tragic action and the identification of audience and hero in empathy which produces a 'catharsis' of emotion. Brecht rejected the entire tradition of 'Aristotelian' theatre. The dramatist should avoid a smoothly interconnected plot and any sense of inevitability or universality. The facts of social injustice needed to be presented as if they were shockingly unnatural and totally surprising. It is all too easy to regard 'the price of bread, the lack of work, the declaration of war as if they were phenomenon of nature: earthquakes or floods'.

To avoid lulling the audience into a state of passive acceptance, the illusion of reality must be shattered by the use of the *alienation effect*. The actors must not lose themselves in their role to the audience, as both recognizable and unfamiliar, so that a process of critical assessment can be set in motion. Brecht rejected the kind formal unity admired by Lukacs. First, Brecht's 'epic' theatre, unlike Aristotle's tragic theatre, is composed of loosely linked episodes of the kind to be found in Shakespeare's history plays and 18th Century picaresque novels. There are no artificial constraints of time and place, and no 'well-made' plots. Contemporary inspiration came from the cinema (Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Eisenstein) and modernist fiction (Joyce and Dos Passos).

sexuality is shaped by *'penis-envy'*. Much feminist criticism wishes to escape the 'fixities and definites' of theory and to develop a female discourse which cannot be tied down conceptually as belonging to a recognised (and therefore probably male-produced) theoretical tradition. However, feminists have been attracted to the Lacanian and Derridean types of 'masculine' authority or truth. The psychoanalytic theories about instinctive drives have been specially helpful to feminist critics who have tried to articulate the subversive and apparently formless resistance of some women writers and critics to male-dominated literary values, although a few feminists have managed to evoke the possible strategies of female resistance without elaborate theorising.

Five main foci are involved in most discussions of sexual difference: biology, experience, discourse, the unconscious, and social and economic conditions.

Biology: Arguments which treat biology as fundamental and which play down socialization have been used mainly by men to keep women 'in their place'. The old Latin saying *'Tota mulier in utero'* ('Woman is nothing but a womb') established this attitude early. If a woman's body is her destiny, then all attempts to question attributed sex-roles will fly in the face of the natural order.

Experience: On the other hand, some radical feminists celebrate women's biological attributes as sources of superiority rather than inferiority, while others appeal to the special *experience* of woman as the source of positive female values in life and in art. Since only women, the argument goes, have undergone those specifically female life-experiences (ovulation, menstruation, parturition), only they can speak of a woman's life. Further, a woman's experience includes a different perceptual and emotional life, women do not see things in the same ways as men, and have different ideas and feelings about what is important or not important. An influential example of this approach is the work of Elaine Showalter which focuses on the literary representation of sexual differences in women's writing.

Discourse: The third focus, discourse, has received a great deal of attention by feminists. Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1980), as the title suggests, considers that women have been fundamentally oppressed by a male-dominated language. If we accept Foucault's argument that what is 'true' depends on who controls discourse, then it is apparent that men's domination of discourse has trapped women inside a male 'truth'. From this point of view it makes sense for women writers to contest men's control of language rather than create a separate, specifically 'feminine' discourse. The opposite view is taken by the female socio-linguist Robin Lakoff, who believes that women's language actually is inferior, since it contains patterns of 'weakness' and 'uncertainty', focuses on the 'trivial', the frivolous, the unserious, and stresses personal emotional responses. Male utterance, she argues, is 'stronger' and should be adopted by women if they wish to achieve social equality with men. Most feminists, however, consider that women have been brainwashed by this type of patriarchal ideology, which produces stereotypes of strong men and feeble women.

Unconscious: The psychoanalytic theories of Lacan and Kristeva have provided a fourth focus — that of the unconscious. Some feminists have broken completely with biologism by associating the ‘female’ with those processes which tend to undermine the authority of ‘male’ discourse. Whatever encourages or initiates a free play of meanings and prevents ‘closure’ is regarded as ‘female’. Female sexuality is revolutionary, subversive, heterogeneous and ‘open’ in that it refuses to define female sexuality: if there is a female principle, it is simply to remain outside the male definition of the female.

Social and economic conditions: As we have seen, Virginia Woolf was the first woman critic to include a sociological dimension in her analysis of women’s writing. Since then, Marxist feminists in particular have related changing social and economic conditions to the changing balance of power between the sexes, thus underwriting feminism’s rejection of the notion of a universal femininity.

Sharon Spencer mentions Sappho of the 6th century BC as “the greatest lyric poet of antiquity” and Christine de Pizan’s work as the “first major work of feminist criticism”. Born in 1364, Pizan attracts our attention because she “criticised the description of woman’s nature drawn by Jean de Meun in *Roman de la Rose*”. Pizan’s *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* (1399) was written against the biased representations of women in de Meun’s work. In her *La cite des Dames* (1405), Pizan also argued that God created man and woman as equal beings. But it is Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) which marks the first modern awareness of women’s struggle for equal rights, and therefore it is the first milestone for the equality of the sexes. Wollstonecraft was influenced by the ideas of the French revolution concerning the equal rights of individuals.

K.K. Ruthven observes that “the analogy with slavery, which is present in Wollstonecraft’s book, “becomes the dominant trope in nineteenth-century feminist writing, doubtless because of feminist involvement in the abolitionist movement”. Seventy seven years later, in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), John Stuart Mill expressed it very powerfully: “All men, except the most brutish, desire to have in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds” (Norton Anthology Vol.2, 991).

Sixty years later Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) developed and enhanced these views with a strong female sensibility and criticism. *A Room of One’s Own* became an important precursor of feminist literary criticism. Here, Virginia Woolf argues that the male dominated ideas of the patriarchal society prevented women from realising their creativity and true potential:

In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth

century... Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not

In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter shows how women's literature has evolved, starting from the Victorian period to modern writing. She breaks down the movement into three stages — the Feminine, a period beginning with the use of the male pseudonym in the 1840s until 1880 with George Eliot's death; the Feminist, from 1880 till the winning of the vote in 1920; and the Female, from 1920 till the present-day, including a "new stage of self-awareness about 1960."

When discussing the characteristics of each of these phases, she looks at how other literary subcultures ("such as black, Jewish... or even American") developed. A female solidarity always seemed to exist as a result of "a shared and increasingly secretive and ritualized physical experience... the entire female sexual life cycle." Female writers always wrote with this commonality and feminine awareness in mind. Therefore, women's writing and women's experiences "implied unities of culture."

Showalter finds in each subculture, and thus in women's literature, first a long period of imitation of the dominant structures of tradition and an "*internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles." This **Feminine phase** includes women writers such as the Brontes, Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, Florence Nightingale, and the later generation of Charlotte Yonge, Dinah Mulock Craik, Margaret Oliphant, and Elizabeth Lynn Linton. These women attempted to integrate themselves into a public sphere, a male tradition, and many of them felt a conflict of "obedience and resistance" which appears in many of their novels. Oddly enough, during the Victorian period, women flooded the novel market and comprised a healthy segment of the reading public — still, women writers were left "metaphorically paralyzed." The language with which they could fully express their experience as women and their sufferings as they still identified themselves within the confines of Victorian bourgeois propriety.

In the second stage, the minority — or rather, the subordinate — lashes out against the traditional standards and values, demanding its rights and sovereignty be recognized. In this **Feminist phase**, women's literature had varying angles of attack. Some women wrote social commentaries, translating their own sufferings to those of the poor, the labouring class, slaves, and prostitutes, thereby venting their sense of injustice in an acceptable manner. They expanded their sphere of influence by making inroads into social work. In a completely different direction, the 1870s sensation novels of Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, and Florence Marryat, "explored genuinely radical female protest against marriage and women's economic oppression, although still in the framework of feminine conventions that demanded the erring heroine's destruction." Their golden-haired doll-like

paradigms of womanhood mock contemporary expectations of Angels in the House by turning out to be mad bigamists and would-be murderesses.

Militant suffragists also wrote prolifically during this protest phase of literature. Women such as Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Mona Caird, Elizabeth Robins, and Olive Schreiner made “fiction the vehicle for a dramatization of wronged womanhood... demand[ing] changes in the social and political systems that would grant women male privileges and require chastity and fidelity from men.” On the whole, Showalter finds these women’s writings not examples of fine literature. Their projects concerned themselves more with a message than the creation of art, though their rejection of male-imposed definitions and self-imposed oppression opened the doors for the exploration of female identity, feminist theory, and the female aesthetic.

The third period, then, is characterized by a self-discovery and some freedom “from some of the dependency of opposition” as a means for self-definition. Some writers end up turning inward during the subsequent search for identity. In the early half of **Female phase** of writing, it “carried... the double legacy of feminine self-hatred and feminist withdrawal... [turning] more and more toward a separatist literature of inner space.” Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf worked towards a female aesthetic, elevating sexuality to a world-polarizing determination. Moreover, the female experience and its *creative processes* held mystic implications — both transcendental and self-destructive vulnerability. These women “applied the cultural analysis of the feminists [before them] to words, sentences, and structures of language in the novel.” However, Showalter criticizes their works for their androgynistic natures. For all its concern with sexual connotations and sexuality, the writing avoids actual contact with the body, disengaging from people into “a room of one’s own.”

This changed when the female novel entered a new stage in the 1960s. With twentieth-century Freudian and Marxist analysis and two centuries of female tradition, writers such as Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble, A.S. Byatt, and Beryl Bainbridge access women’s experiences. Using previously taboo language and situations, “anger and sexuality are accepted... as sources of female creative power.” Showalter’s analysis shows how the progress of women’s writing reached this phase and expresses all the conflicts and struggles still influencing the current of women’s literature.

Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own*, which describes three stages in the history of women’s literature, also proposes a similar multi-part model of the growth of feminist theory. First, according to Showalter, comes an androgynist poetics. Next, a feminist critique and female Aesthetic, accompanied by gynocritics, follows, and these are closely pursued by gynesic poststructuralist feminist criticism and gender theory.

Androgynist poetics, having relations and perhaps roots in mid-Victorian women's writing of imitation, contends that the creative mind is sexless, and the very foundation of describing a female tradition in writing was sexist. Critics of this vein found gender imprisoning, not believing that gender had a bearing in the content of writing, which, according to Joyce Carol Oates is actually culture-determined. Imagination is too broad to be hemmed in by gender.

However, from the 1970s on, most feminist critics reject the genderless mind, finding that the "imagination" cannot evade the conscious or unconscious structures of gender. Gender, it could be said, is part of that culture-determination which Oates says serves as inspiration. Such a position emphasizes "the impossibility of separating the imagination from a socially, sexually, and historically positioned self." This movement of thought allowed for a feminist critique as critics attacked the meaning of sexual difference in a patriarchal society/ideology. Images of male-wrought representations of women (stereotypes and exclusions) came under fire, as was the "'division, oppression, inequality, [and] interiorized inferiority for women.'"

The female experience, then, began to take on positive affirmations. The Female Aesthetic arose — expressing a unique female consciousness and a feminine tradition in literature — as it celebrated an intuitive female approach in the interpretation of women's texts. It "spoke of a vanished nation, a lost motherland; of female vernacular or Mother Tongue; and of a powerful but neglected women's culture." Writers like Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, emerging out of the Victorian period and influenced by its writings were perhaps the first women to recognize this. In "Professions for Women," Woolf discusses how a woman writer seeks within herself "the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber," inevitably colliding against her own sexuality to confront "something about the body, about the passions."

The French feminists of the day discussed this Mother Tongue, calling it *l'écriture féminine*. Accessible to men and women alike, but representing "female sexual morphology," *l'écriture féminine* sought a way of writing which literally embodied the female, thereby fighting the "subordinating, linear style of classification or distinction." Showalter finds that whether this

clitoral, vulval, vaginal, or uterine; whether centered on semiotic pulsions, childbearing, or jouissance, the feminist theorization of female sexuality/textuality, and its funky audacity in violating patriarchal taboos by unveiling the Medusa, is an exhilarating challenge to phallic discourse.

There are problems with the Female Aesthetic, which feminist critics recognized. Even its most fervent fans avoided defining exactly what constituted the style of *l'écriture féminine*, as any definition would then categorize it and safely subsume it as a genre under the linear patriarchal structure. Its very restlessness and ambiguity defied identification as part of its

identity. Needless to say, some feminists and women writers could feel excluded by the surreality of the Female Aesthetic and its stress on the biological forms of female experience, which, as Showalter says, also bears close resemblance to sexist essentialism. Men may try their hand at writing women's bodies, but according to the feminist critique and Aesthetic, only woman whose very biology gave her an edge, could read these texts successfully — risking marginalization and ghettoization of both women's literature and theory. Lastly, the Female Aesthetic was charged with racism, as it rarely referred to racial or class differences between women and largely referred to a white woman's literary tradition.

Gynocritics, which developed shoulder-to-shoulder with the Female Aesthetic, attempted to resolve some of these problems, by agreeing that women's literature lay as the central concern for feminist criticism, but "rejected the concept of an essential female identity and style." One branch of gynocriticism sought to revise Freudian structures and take the edge off an adversarial methodology of criticism. These critics emphasized a Pre-Oedipal phase wherein the daughter's bond to her mother inscribes the key factor in gender identity. Matriarchal values desolve intergenerational conflicts and build upon a female tradition of literature rather than the struggle of Oedipus and Laius at the crossroads.

Poststructuralism eventually influenced the course of feminist theory with the idea of a motherless as well as fatherless text. The female experience, as it relates to texts, only occurs in the feminine subjectivity of the reading process. "Gynesis" or "gynetic disruptions" occur in texts when the reader explores "the textual consequences and representations of 'the feminine.'" These considerations or interruptions in the discourse indicate a consideration or interruption of the patriarchal system.

Lastly and most recently are developments of an over-arching gender theory, which considers gender, both male and female, as a social construction upon biological differences. Gender theory proposes to explore "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system," and as many advantages, opening up the literary theory stage and bringing in questions of masculinity into feminist theory. Also, taking gender as a fundamental analytic category brings feminist criticism from the margin to the centre, though it risks depoliticizing the study of women.

Gender Criticism evolved out of feminism to address issues of masculinity/femininity as binaries, sexual orientation, heterosexism, and differences in sexes. Both are political activities concerned with fair representation and treatment of people. A critic using Feminist Studies or Gender Studies (sometimes also known as Queer Studies) might ask, "How is gender constructed or deconstructed in this text? Is the view of the text gendered or sexist?"

The Formalistic Approach: (New Criticism) It is the most influential critical method of our time. It was Coleridge's view that a literary piece exists in its own way, with its own kind of life. His theory of organic unity, the whole being the harmonious involvement of all the parts calls for a critical approach that would attend to the efficiency of the various elements as they work together to form a unified, total meaning.

T.S.Eliot was a major figure in the development of Formalistic criticism. Under the influence of Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme, he announced the high place of art as art, rather than as an expression of social, religious, ethical or political ideas, and advocated a close study of the texts of the works themselves. He applied his view of poetry as an independent organism. His dictum, pronounced in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, maintained that a poet escapes into the poem from emotion and personality, and encouraged poets to move from biographical study into a scrutiny of the craft of the poem. He was interested in formulating a type of criticism that would be free of the pursuit of extrinsically historical, moral, psychological and sociological interpretations and free to concentrate on the aesthetic quality of the work.

The work of Eliot and Pound with its complicated techniques developed from the seventeenth century English Metaphysical poets and the French Symbolists of the nineteenth century gave an occasion for the sharpening of critical tools.

I.A. Richards' fundamental contribution was in the investigation of meaning which on one hand led to Semantics (the science of signs and sign interpretations) and on the other hand into the scrupulous explications of poems. His *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) gave impetus to the Psychological approach. *The Meaning of Meaning* offered a vocabulary for discussing and analysing certain misinterpretations of thirteen poems that were later invalidated by ontological critics.

Besides the contribution of Eliot and Richards, a factor in the development of Formalistic criticism was a reaction against the Victorian and Neo-humanist emphasis on the moral issues of literature, the academic interest in history and literary tradition and the biography of the author. This was also a reaction against the Marxist stress on social values and the psychological stress on the neurosis of the writers. In any case, the atmosphere of the thirties was ripe for such an approach as the Formalistic critic began to practise.

Formalistic critics primarily regard poetry as a valid source of knowledge that cannot be communicated in terms other than its own. This leads them to shun all material, such as the personal or social conditions behind the composition, the moral implications and so on, and to concentrate on the structure as they relate to the total poetic experience.

The critic then examines these elements in their interconnection assuming that the meaning is made up of matters of form, that is meter, image, diction and matters of content - tone and theme working not separately but together.

William Empson who was a brilliant student of I. A. Richards took up the same line of writing and put down his ideas in a book called *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

First-type ambiguities arise when a detail is effective in several ways at once, for example by comparison with several points of likeness; antithesis, with several points of difference, 'comparative' adjectives, subdued metaphors and extra meanings suggested by rhythm. In **second-type** ambiguities, two or more alternative meanings are fully resolved into one, for example the double grammar in Shakespeare's sonnets. The condition for **third-type** ambiguity is that two apparently unconnected meanings are given simultaneously, for example puns from Milton and Pope.

In the **fourth type** the alternative meanings combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author. In the **fifth type** is a fortunate confusion, as when the author is discovering his ideas in the act of writing. In the **sixth type** what is said is contradictory or irrelevant and the reader is forced to invent interpretations. This can be seen in the works of Pope, Yeats and Shakespeare. The **seventh-type** ambiguity is that of full contradiction, marking a division in the author's mind.

Later came a host of other critics, Cleanth Brooks, R. Blackmur and Robert Penn Warren. Robert Penn Warren maintained that "Poetry does not inhere in any particular element, but depends upon the set of relationships, the structure which we call the poem."

R.S.Crane has protested against the establishment of Brooks' 'paradox', Arthur Ransome's 'texture', Allen Tate's 'tension' and Empson's 'ambiguities' as the sole principle of poetry.

L.C. Knights' accusation was that Richards and Empson have isolated one part of the work of art for examination forgetting the poem as a totality. John Crowe, while commenting on Brooks' *Well Wrought Urn*, states that the use of analysis to such an extreme, results in the sense of the whole being lost in the study of a part. Finally, it has been stated that the value of literature to man as an aesthetic being has been neglected in favour of analysis of form.

Chicago Critics or the Neo-Aristotelians

They went back to the notion of form. Aristotle took the notion of form very seriously. There is some dissidence between the Formalists and the New-Aristotelians. Both are concerned with the work of art, believing that social, moral and personal materials are irrelevant. Both insist on a close textual study.

The Chicago Critics make a strong plea for a basic aesthetic, of an Aristotelian sort, in order to differentiate between species of works of art and to deduce the rules for each particular kind accordingly.

The formalistic critic examines the total poem without proper regard for the species of it. They fail to distinguish between the broad genres – drama, novel, lyric, and epic or still less between sub-species - one kind of tragedy perhaps mimetic, as opposed to another perhaps didactic.

Russian Formalism: It originated in Moscow and Petrograd in the second decade of this century. Among the leading representatives of the movement were Boris Eichenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukarovsky. When the critical mode was suppressed by the Soviets in the early 1930's, the centre of the formalist study of literature moved to Czechoslovakia, where members of the **Prague Linguistic Circle** continued it.

Formalism views literature primarily as a specialised mode of language and proposes a fundamental opposition between the literary use of language and the ordinary "practical" use of language. They believed that the central function of ordinary language was to convey information, by reference to the world existing outside of language. Literary language on the other hand is 'self-focused' and draws attention to its own formal features – that is to interrelationships among the linguistic signs themselves. The Formalists call this distinctive feature *literariness*.

As Roman Jakobson wrote in 1921: "The object of study in literary science is not literature but 'literariness', that is, what makes a given work a literary work.

The literariness of a work, as Jan Mukaarovsky described it in the 1920's consists "in the maximum of *foregrounding* of the utterances", that is the foregrounding of "the act of expression, the act of speech itself." To foreground is to bring something into the highest prominence, to make it dominant in perception.

The primary aim of literature is thus foregrounding its linguistic medium, as Viktor Shklovsky put it in an influential formulation, to *estrangle* or *de-familiarize*; that is, by disrupting the modes of ordinary literary discourse, literature "makes strange" the world of everyday perceptions and renews the reader's lost capacity for fresh sensation.

Strong opposition to formalism has been voiced by some Marxist critics and more recently by proponents of Reader-response criticism, Speech-act theory and New Historicism. These critics reject the view that there is a sharp and definable division between ordinary language and literary language.

Structuralism: It is a modern intellectual movement that analyses cultural phenomena according to principles derived from linguistics, emphasizing the systematic interrelationships among the elements of any human activity, and thus the abstract codes and conventions governing the social production of meanings. Building on the linguistic concept of the phoneme—a unit of meaningful sound defined purely by its differences from other phonemes

rather than by any inherent features—structuralism argues that the elements composing any cultural phenomenon (from cooking to drama) are similarly ‘relational’: that is, they have meaning only by virtue of their contrasts with other elements of the system, especially in binary oppositions of paired opposites.

Their meanings can be established not by referring each element to any supposed equivalent in natural reality, but only by analysing its function within a self-contained cultural code. Accordingly, structuralist analysis seeks the underlying system or *langue* that governs individual utterances or instances. In formulating the laws by which elements of such a system are combined, it distinguishes between sets of interchangeable units (paradigms) and sequences of such units in combination (syntagms), thereby outlining a basic ‘syntax’ of human culture.

Structuralism and its ‘science of signs’ are derived chiefly from the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), and partly from Russian Formalism and the related narratology of Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). It flourished in France in the 1960s, following the widely discussed applications of structural analysis to mythology by the anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss. In the study of literary works, structuralism is distinguished by its rejection of those traditional notions according to which literature ‘expresses’ an author’s meaning or ‘reflects’ reality. Instead, the ‘text’ is seen as an objective structure activating various codes and conventions which are independent of author, reader, and external reality.

Structuralist criticism is less interested in interpreting what literary works mean than in explaining *how* they can mean what they mean; that is, in showing what implicit rules and conventions are operating in a given work. The structuralist tradition has been particularly strong in narratology, from Propp’s analysis of narrative functions to Greimas’ theory of actants. The French critic Roland Barthes was an outstanding practitioner of structuralist literary analysis notably in his book *S/Z* (1970)—and is famed for his witty analyses of wrestling, striptease, and other phenomena in *Mythologies* (1957); some of his later writings, however, show a shift to post-structuralism, in which the overconfident ‘scientific’ pretensions of structuralism are abandoned. For more extended accounts of this enterprise, consult Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (1977), Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), and Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974).

Post-Structuralism: While accepting Structuralism and Saussure’s analysis of language, post-structuralism considers the relationship between language and meaning, ultimately rejecting any certainty of meaning. Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential post-structuralists, called his critical method “*deconstruction*.” Using deconstruction, the reader analyses the text and especially its language to expose its ambiguity and upset the connection between the text and the “real world.” You might initially ask, “How does the language / meaning in this text contradict itself? How can a work be interpreted in multiple ways?”

New Historicism: It is a term applied to a trend in American academic literary studies in the 1980s that emphasized the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time the 'textual' nature of history. As part of a wider reaction against purely formal or linguistic critical approaches such as the *New Criticism* and *deconstruction*, the new historicists, led by Stephen Greenblatt, drew new connections between literary and non literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinctions between a text and its historical 'background' as conceived in established historical forms of criticism. Inspired by Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, they attempted to show how literary works are implicated in the power relations of their time, not as secondary 'reflections' of any coherent world view but as active participants in the continual remaking of meanings. New historicism is less a system of interpretation than a set of shared assumptions about the relationship between literature and history, and an essayistic style that often develops general reflections from a startling historical or anthropological anecdote. Greenblatt's books *Renaissance Self Fashioning* (1980) and *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988) are the exemplary models.

In its historicism and in its political interpretations, New Historicism is indebted to Marxism. But whereas Marxism (at least in its cruder forms) tends to see literature as part of a 'superstructure' in which the economic 'base' (that is, material relations of production) manifests itself, New Historicist thinkers tend to take a more nuanced view of power, seeing it not exclusively as class-related but extending throughout society. This view derives primarily from Michel Foucault and his work in critical theory.

In its tendency to see society as consisting of texts relating to other texts, with no 'fixed' literary value above and beyond the way specific societies read them in specific situations, New Historicism also owes something to postmodernism. However, New Historicists tend to exhibit less scepticism than postmodernists and to show more willingness to perform the 'traditional' tasks of literary criticism: i.e. explaining the text in its context, and asking how the text enforces the cultural practices that it depends on for its own production and dissemination.

New Historicism shares many of the same theories as with what is often called *cultural materialism*, but cultural materialist critics are even more likely to put emphasis on the present implications of their study and to position themselves in disagreement to current power structures, working to give power to traditionally disadvantaged groups. Cultural critics also downplay the distinction between "high" and "low" culture and often focus predominantly on the productions of "popular culture." (Newton 1988). [7] New Historicists analyse text with an eye to history. With this in mind, New Historicism is not "new". Many of the critiques that existed between the 1920s and the 1950s also focused on literature's historical content. These critics based their assumptions of literature on the connection between texts and their historical contexts (Muffin & Supriya 1998).

New historicism also has something in common with the historical criticism of Hippolyte Taine, who argued that a literary work is less the product of its author's imaginations than the social circumstances of its creation, the three main aspects of which Taine called race, milieu and moment. It is also a response to an earlier historicism, practiced by early 20th century critics such as John Livingston Lowes, which sought to de-mythologize the creative process by re-examining the lives and times of canonical writers. But New Historicism differs from both of these trends in its emphasis on ideology: the political disposition, unknown to an author himself that governs his work.

Foucauldian basis of New Historicism

New Historicism frequently addresses the critical theory based idea that the lowest common denominator for all human actions is power, so the New Historicist seeks to find examples of power and how it is dispersed within the text. Power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized (or, other) seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because literature is written by those who have the most power, there must be details in it that show the views of the common people. New Historicists seek to find "sites of struggle" to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power.

Foucault's conception of power is neither reductive nor synonymous with domination. Rather he understands power (in modern times at least) as continually articulated on knowledge and knowledge on power. Nevertheless, his work in the 1970s on prisons may have been influential on the New Historicists. In these studies Foucault examined shifts in the mechanisms of power in these institutional settings. His discussions of techniques included the *panopticon*, a theoretical prison system developed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and particularly useful for New Historicism.

Bentham stated that the perfect prison/surveillance system would be a cylindrical shaped room that held prison cells on the outside walls. In the middle of this spherical room would be a large guard tower with a light that would shine in all the cells. The prisoners thus would never know for certain whether they were being watched, so they would effectively police themselves, and be as actors on a stage, giving the appearance of submission, even when they are probably not being watched.

Foucault included the panopticon in his discussions on the technologies of power in part to illustrate the idea of lateral surveillance, or self-policing that occurs when those who are subject to these techniques of power believe they are being watched. His purpose was to show that these techniques of power go beyond mere force and could prompt different regimes of self-discipline among those subject to the exercise of these visibility techniques. This often meant that, in effect, prisoners would often fall into line whether or not there was an actual need to do so.

Although the influence of such philosophers as French Structuralist Marxist Louis Althusser and Marxists Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton were essential in shaping the theory of New Historicism, the work of Foucault also appears influential. Although some critics believe that these former philosophers have made more of an impact on New Historicism as a whole, there is a popularly held recognition that Foucault's ideas have passed through the New Historicist formation in history as a succession of *épistèmes* or structures of thought that shape everyone and everything within a culture (Myers 1989). It is indeed evident that the categories of history used by New Historicists have been standardised academically. Although the movement is publicly disapproving of the periodization of academic history, the uses to which New Historicists put the Foucauldian notion of the *épistème* amount to very little more than the same practice under a new and improved label (Myers 1989).

Insofar as Greenblatt has been explicit in expressing a theoretical orientation, he has identified the ethnography and theoretical anthropology of Clifford Geertz as highly influential.

Reader-Response Criticism: Studies the interaction of reader with text, *holding the text as incomplete* until it is read. This critical approach can be, and often is, combined with other approaches (such as Psychoanalytical and Historical) but challenges the self-contained focus of New Criticism or the claim of meaninglessness embraced by Post-Structuralism.

The articles in this journal deal with different aspects of theory each unique in its own way.

'Asserting the Right to be': Postcolonial African Writing and the Discourse of Human Rights by Mala Pandurang offers an overview of an original body of theoretical responses that have emerged from within the African continent. It traces the growth of African critical sensibilities from a "nationalist" to a "revolutionary status" by means of a chronological review of critical production over a span of five decades, i.e. 1960s to early 20th century. In the process of doing so, the paper will attempt to demonstrate how African theorists share a common directive purpose with their Indian counterparts, in their opposition to power structures that emanate from experiences of colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism.

Unless there is a serious engagement with the specific social and cultural dynamics that have gone into the production of the text, criticism remains superficial. It is hoped therefore that an exposure to a political grounding of the debates under review will serve to encourage Indian postcolonial scholars to consider an application of the critical frameworks of their African counterparts to their own investigation of postcolonial narratives in India, and elsewhere in the world. In the latter part of the paper, a concentrated effort will be made to discuss how African intellectuals have been particularly successful in their attempts to theorize the discourse of human rights.

In *Writing the Body of Resistance: Body of Colour and Beyond in Canadian Women's Writing* Kamala Gopalan seeks to explore the questions raised by this critique of the white mainstream monopoly of "writing the body".

Women of colour is a misnomer, since we come from different races and nations with varied historical experiences. In the Canadian context, the term is used to refer mostly to immigrant writers from Asia and Africa as also native women writers, who of course are different from the former, in their ethos and experiences. The idea of "third world women" is often used by first world feminists as a means of homogenizing vastly differing experiences for convenience than out of ignorance.

As Chandra Talpade Mohanty writes in her influential essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse", "It is in this process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of the recent feminist discourse, and this power needs to be defined and named". (174) In this way it is suggested that theory itself is suspect and cannot be accepted unexamined and uncritically. These words of caution are important for any researcher working on writers of colour to prevent him/her from falling into the trap of trying to dismantle the master's house with his own tools. These views are especially useful when one is working within a theoretical paradigm such as "Writing the Body", which rose partly as a response to white mainstream liberal feminism. Facile applications of this paradigm to the works of coloured women writers, one needs to refrain from. One also needs to guard against the stereotyping and homogenizing of the experiences of women of colour coming from vastly different geographical locations and ethos.

In 'Time in the Piazza: A Reading of *Il Sabato del Villaggio* (The Village Saturday) by Giacomo Leopardi, a paper by Roberto Bertilaccio, after some very brief notes about Leopardi's life and works, traces back the importance of the image of the *piazza* (square) to the long-established literary tradition of the Menippean satire as outlined by the Russian literary theoretician and critic Mikhail Bakhtin.

Then the key role of the *piazza* will be underlined in Leopardi's prose masterpiece *Operette Morali* (Minor Moral Essays), a collection of short philosophical essays and dialogues directly inspired by the Menippean Satire.

The third part will trace *Il Sabato del Villaggio* (The Village Saturday) and discuss how the *topos* of the *piazza* comes across in this poem, where a profound meditation on the different perceptions of the festival time is actually staged on the little square of a metaphorical village.

In *Challenges of Translating Drama* Hemangi Bhagwat explores the disconnect between drama as text which becomes the object of criticism and theatre as performance which

carries on merrily un-theorised upon and seriously impairs even the former enterprise, that of critical reflection. The difficulty resides in the nature of the dramatic text, for drama is at once literary art and representational art. Her discussion on Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* reminds us that it is not merely a translation from Marathi to English but also a translation from text to performance where the music and dance performance play a crucial role.

"The Private and the Public Mourner in Mahashweta Devi's *Rudali*" by Lakshmi Muthukumar draws a distinction between the private and the public. She shows how the protagonist, in Mahashweta Devi's *Rudali*, Sanichari cuts across the boundaries of caste and class and effectively straddles the private and the public spheres. In the process she radically empowers herself and also, other underprivileged women.

The cultural theorist Jürgen Habermas conceives the public "as a meeting place of 'equal' members of an informed bourgeoisie who engaged in critical, rational and enlightened discussions ultimately aimed at formulating the 'common good'". The 'common good' is a communitarian enterprise in Devi's *Rudali*. The oppressed subaltern are united by their suffering. She sees in Devi's work a unique feminist and subaltern representation of the Habermasian public sphere. Using the feminist critique of the Habermasian conception of the public sphere as a theoretical model, she shows that Devi's *Rudali* is a work that reveals how an underprivileged, lower caste, uneducated woman and widow, Sanichari empowers herself using grief as a commodity and professional mourning as a tool. Devi's *Rudali* is an interesting work that demonstrates how the popularly accepted dichotomous relationship between the private and the public spheres can be exploded and how the two spheres collapse into each other in complex and fascinating ways.

The Mound of the Dead in Origins, Memory and Monument by Soni Wadhwa Kar is on New Historicism and traces the origin of the Sindhi community to the Indus Valley Civilization. India, according to these accounts, was originally called *Sindhustan*. The origin can be traced to the largest sub-continental river - Sindh which is now in Pakistan. A further support comes from the reference to the Sindhis and the role they played in the battle of Hastinapur in the *Mahabharata*. The study is based on the premise advocated by Thakuta that all history writing is premised on the present. Pasts become meaningful and usable when they are activated by contemporary desires of individuals and communities.

Finally, Vidya Premkumar examines the place of Ecocriticism in literary studies. Although a fairly new branch of criticism, it has its roots in the nineteenth century, where she maintains a severed division began to be drawn between 'natural' and 'human' sciences. She proceeds to argue that the relationship between culture and nature is not simple.

This is not the end. Each new age has new concerns, and literature and literary history will address and bring to the fore those concerns.

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