



STUDY ON CRITICISM OF LITERATURE AND MODERN CRITICAL THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

There is a brief introduction to literary theory and literary criticism at the outset. The definition of the term "Literary Criticism" and (literary theory), as well as its development, must next be examined. A number of genres, including the article, review, survey, essay, literary profile, and bibliographical explanation, are used to write modern literary criticism. Any genre requires a critic who is, in addition to being a literary historian and aesthetician, in a sense, a political thinker, sociologist, and psychologist. This essay also explores many literary and critical ideas, and it comes to a conclusion by using the suggested literature review.

***Key words:** Literary theory, criticism, traditional critical theories structuralism, formalism, feminism, deconstruction, modernism*

INTRODUCTION

The rise and evolution of literary theory and criticism, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries, will be briefly discussed in this research paper. The location of the locus of meaning in a text has undergone some of the most dramatic transformations in literary theory and criticism.

It was once believed that the author possesses the meaning in the field of literary criticism. Therefore, the goal of interpretation was to ascertain the author's aim in order to decipher the work's textual meaning. Meaning, however, grew to be understood as belonging to the reader when critics turned their attention more deliberately to the text itself throughout time. You can learn more about a piece of art and appreciate its richness by putting it under the scrutiny of a specific theoretical framework.

Through the use of examples from ordinary life, this research paper will help you understand the foundations of literary theory and criticism. Additionally, you should be able to apply theoretical viewpoints to literary works by the time this report is finished. Literature studies must include literary theory and criticism. Their purpose is to

instruct, amuse, simulate, and test the literary student. In many ways, they make literature enlivening, instructive, and engaging, which aids in our quest for a deeper comprehension of literature. Literary criticism is the analysis, study, and appraisal of specific works of art or literature as well as the development of overarching methodological or aesthetic principles for the analysis of such works.

Criticism has played a significant role in literary theory and practise since the beginning of literary history. Since the seventeenth century, the term "criticism" has been used to refer to the description, defence, evaluation, and assessment of artistic creations. Literary analysis has long been seen as a skill in poetry writing; it was intended more as guidance for the poet than for the reader. Since the seventeenth century, it has been used to describe, defend, examine, or evaluate works of art. Modern criticism is categorised in a variety of ways.

In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, M.H. Abrams discusses four alternative critical theories: The mimetic theory is applied by the critic when he analyses art in terms of the cosmos or what is imitated. The critic is employing a pragmatic approach that predominated up until the end of the eighteenth century when he shifts the focus to the reader and considers art in terms of its impact on the audience. However, in the nineteenth century, the focus switched to the poet, and poetry came to be seen as the poet's "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling." In this instance, an artistic creation is essentially the internal rendered visible. As a result, a critic applies the expressive theory when he analyses a piece of art in terms of the artist.

In the 20th century, the focus switched to the artistic creation, particularly in light of the advent of new criticism. The objective theory is applied by the critic when he sees art essentially in its own terms, viewing the piece as a self-contained unit. A few critics have discussed theoretical and applied critique. Practical criticism applies these rules to the works of art whereas theoretical criticism seeks to determine the overarching principles of art.

Other forms of criticism have also been discussed by literary critics, such as historical criticism, which highlights how a piece of art impacts the critic, and impressionistic criticism, which analyses a piece of art in relation to its historical context and the author's life. Analytical criticism seeks to understand the nature of a piece of art as an object by a thorough examination of its components and their arrangement, whereas textual criticism uses scholarly methods to reconstruct a work of art's original edition. While moral criticism assesses a work of art in connection to human existence and mythic criticism investigates the nature and importance of the archetypes and archetypal patterns in a work of art, judicial criticism evaluates a work of art according to a defined set of rules.

Above all, we will briefly discuss some of the most important contemporary critical theories in this research paper that are quite important for those who are interested in literature. These include structuralism, post structuralism,

Russian formalism, Reader response criticism, psychoanalytical criticism, deconstruction, feminism, new historicism, post colonialism, modernism, and postmodernism, and they will be illustrated in turn.

Literary Criticism

The term "criticism" comes from the Greek word "kritike," and refers to the practise of interpreting, classifying, and finally judging literary works. The analysis, assessment, and interpretation of literature are all parts of literary criticism. It builds on the history of literature and follows the general methodology for studying literature. Even while it frequently takes the form of a critical essay, in-depth book reviews can occasionally be regarded as literary masterpieces. An author's entire body of work or a specific literary piece may be the subject of criticism.

Literary criticism, as opposed to literary history, focuses mostly on modern literary movements and reinterprets the classical legacy in light of current social and artistic issues. The lives and social struggles of a period are as closely tied to literary criticism as its philosophical and aesthetic ideals. Literature criticism emerged virtually simultaneously with the genre itself, initially as the favoured viewpoint of the most esteemed and knowledgeable readers. It is necessary to approach literary criticism's theoretical concept historically. For instance, neoclassical aesthetics of the 17th and 18th centuries simply required critique to be an objective assessment of a work, based on common sense, with some indication of specific "faults" and "beauties."

A writer's position in relation to his times and society was taken into consideration in the 19th century when criticism developed into a distinct literary genre. The development of literary scholarship and the history of literary schools and movements are closely related. Literary criticism in the West has a long history that, in one way or another, expresses the social tensions and contradictions of its era. In the first half of the 19th century, criticism in Europe established itself as a literary profession.

By persistently promoting progressive tendencies and rejecting foreign ones, persuasive literary criticism can have an impact on the trajectory of literary evolution as well as the overall creative process. Marxist critique is in opposition to impressionistic, subjectivist criticism, which thinks itself free from coherent notions, a holistic vision, and a conscious point of view. Marxist criticism is based on scientific procedures of objective investigation and on the essential interests of society.

The writer can widen his or her intellectual horizons and increase their technical competence by being made aware of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing through criticism. When a critic addresses the reader, he not

only clarifies the work for him but also actively involves him in a shared knowledge of the work on a new level of comprehension. A critic must be able to analyse a piece from the standpoint of literary growth and as an artistic whole.

A range of genres, including the article, review, survey, essay, literary profile, and bibliographical annotation, are used to write modern literary criticism. Any genre requires a critic who is, in addition to being a literary historian and aesthete, in a sense, a political thinker, sociologist, and psychologist. The critic must also have a skill that is comparable to, but distinct from, that of both artists and scholars.

The role of criticism in the literary process and how it affects the fate of the book and the author raises the issue of its moral responsibilities. The profession places significant moral demands on the critic and calls for fundamental honesty in his reasoning as well as compassion and tact in his treatment of the author. The basic nature of literary criticism is incompatible with distortions, arbitrary citations, "labelling," and unsupported deductions.

To establish an opinion, one must analyse, categorise, explain, and evaluate a piece of art through literary criticism. The 'answers' you get from a text depend entirely upon the kind of 'questions' you submit to it, according to a core principle of contemporary literary criticism. This suggests that various persons can validly interpret the same text in different ways.

As a result, for instance, a Marxist critic would unavoidably arrive at a different interpretation of the same text as a Psychoanalytic critic, both of which are equally valid (if the interpretation in question is supported by textual evidence).

Literary Theory

Within the discipline of literary studies, the terms "literary theory" and "critical theory" refer to essentially the same fields of study and are currently undergoing a transformation into "cultural theory." These terms can be understood as the collection of ideas and presumptions on which the task of analysing or interpreting literary texts is based. A theory is a set of guidelines or standards used to evaluate literary works, whereas literary theory seeks to clarify the values and presumptions that underlie different types of literary criticism.

Any concepts that can be used in many interpretive contexts that are generated from internal literary text analysis or from outside information are referred to be literary theory. The reality that literature uses literary theory as a crucial tool to accomplish its objective of sensitising and educating the reader. It states in its conclusion that

exposing a literary text to a certain theoretical analysis frequently resolves the difficulty that is frequently present in the text.

However, for most of Western history, theories of literary representation have received epistemological (that is, having to do with conceptions of knowledge) backing due to a constant belief in "reference," the idea that words and images point to an objective world. Shakespeare once said that art, up until the eighteenth century, held "a mirror up to nature" and faithfully captured an independently genuine reality that was objectively existing.

One of the earliest breakthroughs of literary theory occurs in Europe during the nineteenth century, where modern literary theory gradually arises. The status of theory now is such that there are many overlapping areas of influence, and older schools of theory continue to have an impact despite no longer enjoying their former prominence. The Leavis School in Britain championed the view that literature is a repository of all that is meaningful and elevating in human experience. Although this belief is no longer widely held, it remains a crucial justification for the way American universities are currently set up and their liberal arts curricula.

We are all aware that different people will interpret the same incident in various ways. Therefore, various readers will approach the same literary work in different ways. A character's conduct could insult one individual while amusing another. One reader may be inspired by the political undertones of a story, while another may be in awe of its philosophical undertones. Literary theories have developed as a means of explaining the various opinions and reactions to literature that individuals have. Rather than claiming that one viewpoint is the best or most accurate viewpoint, literary theory seeks to recognise the merit in all viewpoints that are founded on a careful analysis of the literature.

Structuralism

Structuralism first appeared in France in 1950 and is thought to have its roots in the early 20th-century writings of Swiss linguist Ferdinand Desassure. However, it quickly spread to many other disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, sociology, literary theory, and even mathematics.

Structuralism is a literary theory that emphasises the significance of a subject's fundamental structure and relationships. It is founded on "a set of ideas employed in the study of language, literature, art, anthropology, and sociology. Sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, and others utilise this technique to demonstrate how all facets of culture are founded on a common framework. It is a system that alludes to elements of human civilization that are comprehensible through broader systems or structures.

An intellectual movement founded on universal truth was structuralism. They highlight the conclusions' logical and scientific quality and call them descriptive of the current. Understanding how language operates as a system of meaning production is at the heart of structuralism. How does language work as a sort of meaning generator? The creator of structuralism was Ferdinand Desassure.

Every language has its own signs, which are made up of signifiers (the sound image of the word) and signifieds (the idea behind the word), according to De Saussure. The text's meaning is provided by these indicators, therefore we cannot analyse the text in isolation. He introduced the terms langue and parole. Language is the system, structure, and grammar of a language, while parole is the act of speaking.

Post structuralism

In the 1960s, a movement called post structuralism that criticised structuralism formed in France. Its foundation is the idea of overdeterminism. After structuralists questioned the existence of concrete reality, it was said that "theory is not separate from reality nor reality is separate from theory." Post structuralism opposes the idea of a singular truth and criticises graduate theories like social science, realism, and religion that make such claims.

Post structuralists agree with structuralists that there are universals in human mind that are expressed on cultural phenomena through binary opposition and then used to generate power and connections in the presence of pluralizing forces. PS highlight the importance of knowledge in gaining and maintaining power. Knowledge is never neuronal; it is always contextual, incomplete, and fragmentary. Understanding the body of knowledge that created an object is required for PS to comprehend it. PS emphasises the use of history (diachronic) to examine concepts of description (synchronic).

It is a philosophy and literary criticism method from the last half of the 20th century. It stands against structuralism. Post structuralism was founded by Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida. It contests the presence of underlying laws that give things their significance and coherence. It disproves Ferdinand Desassure's signifier-signified theory. It looks at the reader, cultural conventions, and other writers, among other sources of meaning. Here, readers stand in for the author. Structuralism is simultaneously rejected. No consistent meaning or symbol exists here. Nothing exists outside of the text.

Reader Response Criticism

The analysis of reader response criticism looks at the reader's contribution to the creation of meaning. The significance of the text cannot be understood unless it is read by a reader. Here, the reader is a maker of meanings rather than a consumer. It is a school of criticism that first appeared in 1970 and is centred on investigating how different readers or communities of readers interpret texts and finding significance in the act of reading itself.

In contrast to other schools and theories that place a greater emphasis on the author or the substance and form of the work, reader-response criticism places a greater emphasis on the reader and their experience of a literary work. It contends that a text has no significance until it is experienced and read by a reader. I-A Richards, Louise Rosenblatt, Walter Gibson, and Norman Holland are practitioners.

Psychoanalytical Criticism

The psychoanalytic theory of personality development, which was created by Sigmund Freud, claimed that conflicts between the id, ego, and superego—three essential mental structures of the human mind—are what give rise to personality.

The psychology is how this theory operates. It applies the reading techniques used by Freud and later theorists to understand writings as expressing, like dreams, the author's hidden desires and fears, and that a literary work is an outward representation of the author's inner neuroses. Psychoanalysis makes an effort to comprehend the inner workings and origins of writers', readers', and certain cultural phenomena' unconscious needs, desires, fears, and behaviour. They seek to comprehend both cultural and human behavioural tendencies.

People are described as having sexual and violent urges from the perspective of a psychoanalytic perspective. Theorists of psychoanalysis hold that human behaviour is predetermined. It is controlled by unconscious and irrational impulses, as well as biological and innate urges. Psychoanalytic theorists do not believe in free will because of this theory's deterministic nature. Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones were practitioners.

Deconstruction

The philosophical critical method of textual analysis known as deconstruction is most closely associated with the writings of Jacques Derrida. The idea of binary opposition is presented by him. The deconstructive method is used to demonstrate how a literary text's meaning is fluid and subject to change. All communication, according to Jacques Derrida, is marked by uncertainty since a signifier's (word) and signified's (concept's) relationships are

indefinite. Once written, a text is meaningless unless it is read by a reader. The text lacks a clear meaning. There is no way to know the whole truth.

I'll Say Deconstruction is a method for figuring out how text and meaning are related. Derrida's method entailed readings of texts while keeping an eye out for anything that contradicts the text's intended meaning or structural coherence.

Feminism

Feminism as a concept has often been concerned with an analysis of the trend towards male dominance in society; the general attitude of male towards female; and the means of enhancing the situation of women. The idea that western culture is fundamentally patriarchal—that is, that it was developed by men, was under their control, was seen and judged through the lenses of males—forms the foundation of feminist movements in literature and politics.

A new, feminist approach to literary criticism emerged in the 1960s. The works of female writers (or works about females) were analysed using the same criteria as those of male writers (and about men), prior to the development of feminist theory. As feminist theory advances, older texts are reexamined, women's representations in literature are reassessed, and new authors produce works that more faithfully reflect the evolving idea of the "modern woman." Finding and exposing examples of misogyny (hostile attitudes towards women) in literature is simply one component of the feminist approach.

Feminists are interested in highlighting the ways that female authors and characters are neglected in literature. Even individual words in western languages have been broken down by some feminist experts, who claim that this proves the languages' inherent patriarchal nature. Feminist critics contend that Western literature exhibits a masculine bias since men have traditionally held positions of power and written history in the west.

In women's history there are three waves of feminism

First wave: The word often used to describe the European and North American mobilisation to open up professions to women and win voting rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first wave of feminists were primarily concerned with issues related to education, work, marriage laws, and the predicament of educated middle-class unmarried women. Kate Millet focused much of her worries on how males treated women. Elman's: marrying with women in mind. The sexual politics of Kate Millet. feminine (1840–80), written by

women in an effort to match the intellectual prowess of the male society and internalise its presumptions about what it means to be a woman. The use of a masculine pseudonym marks this time period. Women turned to male pseudonyms as a strategy to deal with the double standard in literature.

Second wave: The name given to the new "social movement" that emerged in Europe and North America in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the goal of raising awareness of patriarchy and sexism, securing sexual liberation, legalising birth control, achieving equality in the political and economic spheres, and legalising abortion. The phrase "the personal is political" sums up how second wave feminism sought to improve not only the social opportunities available to women but also their domestic and private lives through interventions in the areas of reproduction, sexuality, and cultural representation. The struggle for women's rights has persisted throughout the world and not just in western cultures as a result of the second wave of feminism. The Kennedy administration's creation of a commission on the condition of women, with Eleanor Roosevelt as chair, and the commission's 1963 report documenting discrimination against women in practically every aspect of American society were the primary events in the second wave.

Women in the second wave of feminism (1880–1920) oppose patriarchal norms and support separatist "sisterhoods." They dramatised the struggles of oppressed womanhood via literature. It demonstrates how women in literature are directly analysed. The significance of female writers (gynocriticism) was investigated. A literature of their own (1920) by Elaine Showalter.

Third wave or post-feminist: Please be aware that third wave feminists and postfeminists hold completely opposing views. The third wave of feminism does not make the same claim as post-feminists that feminism should be "done with" at this point. In fact, third wave feminism is an expansion of second wave activity with a concentration in new directions rather than a retraction. Women engage in 'female writing' during the third wave of feminism as a form of self-discovery.

New historicism

Literature should be researched and interpreted in the context of both the author's and the critic's histories, according to the New Historicism literary theory. In addition to acknowledging that a work of literature is influenced by the times and circumstances of its author, new historicism also recognises that the critic's assessment of that work is influenced by his surroundings, beliefs, and prejudice. It is based on the literary

criticism of Stephan Greenblatt and is influenced by Michael Foucault's philosophy. It looks at how the author's times both influenced and are reflected in their work.

The goal of new historicists is to better understand history via literature, not only to appreciate literature through history. Following the 1950s field of history of ideas, New Historicism is a literary theory that identifies as a type of "Cultural Poetics" and seeks to comprehend intellectual history via literature and literature through its cultural environment.

Post colonialism

The term "post colonialism" refers to the critical analysis of the past, present, and future of the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other colonial powers of Europe. It concentrates on developing nations in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa. The interaction between imperial culture and the variety of indigenous cultural practises led to post-colonial literatures. Additionally, it is employed in the analysis of writings and other post-colonial cultural discourses.

It disavows the dominant Western imperialist narrative. It is concerned with how colonial and post-colonial subjects are formed. Literature that is set in colonised nations or addresses post-colonial concerns can be studied via the lens of post-colonialism.

Among post-colonial writers, Edward Said, Homi k Bhabbha, Chinua Achebe, and Joseph Conrad stand out.

Modernism

Beginning in the early 1900s and lasting through the first few years of the 1940s, modernism is a period in literary history. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson are regarded as the movement's founders. The term modernism is frequently used to denote novel and distinctive elements in the themes, forms, ideas, and styles of literature and other forms of art in the early years of the current century, according to M.H. Abrams.

One of the most significant modernist poets is T.S. Eliot. The love song of Alfred Prufrock and The Waste Land are two of Eliot's most well-known poems that demonstrate his modernist leanings. Modernism, which is characterised by a tendency towards fragmentation, free poetry, allusions, and Victorian and romantic writing, is the rejection of old 19th century conventions and preceding contentions.

Postmodernism

A break from modernism in the arts, architecture, and criticism that is characterised by the self-aware usage of earlier styles and traditions, the blending of many artistic styles and media, and a general mistrust of theories. Postmodern literature is sometimes described as a style or a trend that evolved in the years following World War II. It is distinguished by its reliance on narrative devices including fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator. The few well-known post-modernists include Jean Boudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Fredrick Jameson.

CONCLUSION

I came to the conclusion in my research paper that literary criticism and theory are essential components of literature. The goal of this research paper is to familiarise students with some of the most notable schools of literary theory and criticism from the 20th century that have had a big influence on literary analysis. Their purpose is to instruct, amuse, and challenge literary students. Since the seventeenth century, the term "criticism" has been used to refer to the description, defence, evaluation, and assessment of artistic creations. They make literature stimulating, practical, and engaging from a variety of points of view, enabling us to achieve a higher level of literary comprehension.

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