Welcome to the Purdue OWL

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins.
Summary:

This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy.

Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism

Introduction

A very basic way of thinking about literary theory is that these ideas act as different lenses critics use to view and talk about art, literature, and even culture. These different lenses allow critics to consider works of art based on certain assumptions within that school of theory. The different lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important.

For example, if a critic is working with certain Marxist theories, s/he might focus on how the characters in a story interact based on their economic situation. If a critic is working with post-colonial theories, s/he might consider the same story but look at how characters from colonial powers (Britain, France, and even America) treat characters from, say, Africa or the Caribbean. Hopefully, after reading through and working with the resources in this area of the OWL, literary theory will become a little easier to understand and use.

Disclaimer

Please note that the schools of literary criticism and their explanations included here are by no means the only ways of distinguishing these separate areas of theory. Indeed, many critics use tools from two or more schools in their work. Some would define differently or greatly expand the (very) general statements given here. Our explanations are meant only as starting places for your own investigation into literary theory. We encourage you to use the list of scholars and works provided for each school to further your understanding of these theories.

We also recommend the following secondary sources for study of literary theory:

- *The Critical Tradition: Classical Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 1998, edited by

David H. Richter
- *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 1999, by Lois Tyson
- *Beginning Theory*, 2002, by Peter Barry

Although philosophers, critics, educators and authors have been writing about writing since ancient times, contemporary schools of literary theory have cohered from these discussions and now influence how scholars look at and write about literature. The following sections overview these movements in critical theory. Though the timeline below roughly follows a chronological order, we have placed some schools closer together because they are so closely aligned.

Timeline (most of these overlap)

- Moral Criticism, Dramatic Construction (~360 BC-present)
- Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelian Criticism (1930s-present)
- Psychoanalytic Criticism, Jungian Criticism(1930s-present)
- Marxist Criticism (1930s-present)
- Reader-Response Criticism (1960s-present)
- Structuralism/Semiotics (1920s-present)
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction (1966-present)
- New Historicism/Cultural Studies (1980s-present)
- Post-Colonial Criticism (1990s-present)
- Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)
- Gender/Queer Studies (1970s-present)

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Moral Criticism and Dramatic Construction (~360 BC-present)

Plato

In Book X of his *Republic*, Plato may have given us the first volley of detailed and lengthy literary criticism. The dialog between Socrates and two of his associates shows the participants of this discussion concluding that art must play a limited and very strict role in the perfect Greek Republic. Richter provides a nice summary of this point: "...poets may stay as servants of the state if they teach piety and virtue, but the pleasures of art are condemned as inherently corrupting to citizens..." (19).

One reason Plato included these ideas in his Socratic dialog because he believed that art was a mediocre reproduction of nature: "...what artists do...is hold the mirror up to nature: They

copy the appearances of men, animals, and objects in the physical world...and the intelligence that went into its creation need involve nothing more than conjecture" (Richter 19). So in short, if art does not teach morality and ethics, then it is damaging to its audience, and for Plato this damaged his Republic.

Given this controversial approach to art, it's easy to see why Plato's position has an impact on literature and literary criticism even today (though scholars who critique work based on whether or not the story teaches a moral are few - virtue may have an impact on children's literature, however).

Aristotle

In *Poetics*, Aristotle breaks with his teacher (Plato) in the consideration of art. Aristotle considers poetry (and rhetoric), a productive science, whereas he thought logic and physics to be theoretical sciences, and ethics and politics practical sciences (Richter 38). Because Aristotle saw poetry and drama as means to an end (for example, an audience's enjoyment) he established some basic guidelines for authors to follow to achieve certain objectives.

To help authors achieve their objectives, Aristotle developed elements of organization and methods for writing effective poetry and drama known as the principles of dramatic construction (Richter 39). Aristotle believed that elements like "...language, rhythm, and harmony..." as well as "...plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle..." influence the audience's katharsis (pity and fear) or satisfaction with the work (Richter 39). And so here we see one of the earliest attempts to explain what makes an effective or ineffective work of literature.

Like Plato, Aristotle's views on art heavily influence Western thought. The debate between Platonists and Aristotelians continued "...in the Neoplatonists of the second century AD, the Cambridge Platonists of the latter seventeenth century, and the idealists of the romantic movement" (Richter 17). Even today, the debate continues, and this debate is no more evident than in some of the discussions between adherents to the schools of criticism contained in this resource.

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Formalism (1930s-present)

Form Follows Function: Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelianism

Formalists disagreed about what specific elements make a literary work "good" or "bad"; but generally, Formalism maintains that a literary work contains certain intrinsic features, and the theory "...defined and addressed the specifically literary qualities in the text" (Richter 699).

Therefore, it's easy to see Formalism's relation to Aristotle's theories of dramatic construction.

Formalism attempts to treat each work as its own distinct piece, free from its environment, era, and even author. This point of view developed in reaction to "...forms of 'extrinsic' criticism that viewed the text as either the product of social and historical forces or a document making an ethical statement" (699). Formalists assume that the keys to understanding a text exist within "the text itself," (..."the battle cry of the New Critical effort..." and thus focus a great deal on, you guessed it, form (Tyson 118).

For the most part, Formalism is no longer used in the academy. However, New Critical theories are still used in secondary and college level instruction in literature and even writing (Tyson 115).

Typical questions:

- How does the work use imagery to develop its own symbols? (i.e. making a certain road stand for death by constant association)
- What is the quality of the work's organic unity "...the working together of all the parts to make an inseparable whole..." (Tyson 121)? In other words, does how the work is put together reflect what it is?
- How are the various parts of the work interconnected?
- How do paradox, irony, ambiguity, and tension work in the text?
- How do these parts and their collective whole contribute to or not contribute to the aesthetic quality of the work?
- How does the author resolve apparent contradictions within the work?
- What does the form of the work say about its content?
- Is there a central or focal passage that can be said to sum up the entirety of the work?
- How do the rhythms and/or rhyme schemes of a poem contribute to the meaning or effect of the piece?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

Russian Formalism

- Victor Shklovsky
- Roman Jakobson
- Victor Erlich - *Russian Formalism: History - Doctrine*, 1955
- Yuri Tynyanov

New Criticism

- John Crowe Ransom - *The New Criticism*, 1938
- I.A. Richards
- William Empson
- T.S. Eliot
- Allen Tate
- Cleanth Brooks

Neo-Aristotelianism (Chicago School of Criticism)

- R.S. Crane - *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern*, 1952
- Elder Olson
- Norman Maclean
- W.R. Keast
- Wayne C. Booth - *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 1961

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Psychoanalytic Criticism (1930s-present)

Sigmund Freud

Psychoanalytic criticism builds on Freudian theories of psychology. While we don't have the room here to discuss all of Freud's work, a general overview is necessary to explain psychoanalytic literary criticism.

The Unconscious, the Desires, and the Defenses

Freud began his psychoanalytic work in the 1880s while attempting to treat behavioral disorders in his Viennese patients. He dubbed the disorders 'hysteria' and began treating them by listening to his patients talk through their problems. Based on this work, Freud asserted that people's behavior is affected by their unconscious: "...the notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware..." (Tyson 14-15).

Freud believed that our unconscious was influenced by childhood events. Freud organized these events into developmental stages involving relationships with parents and drives of desire and pleasure where children focus "...on different parts of the body...starting with the mouth...shifting to the oral, anal, and phallic phases..." (Richter 1015). These stages reflect base levels of desire, but they also involve fear of loss (loss of genitals, loss of affection from parents, loss of life) and repression: "...the expunging from consciousness of these unhappy psychological events" (Tyson 15).

Tyson reminds us, however, that "...repression doesn't eliminate our painful experiences and emotions...we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow us to 'play out'...our conflicted feelings about the painful experiences and emotions we repress" (15). To keep all of this conflict buried in our unconscious, Freud argued that we develop defenses: selective perception, selective memory, denial, displacement, projection, regression, fear of intimacy, and fear of death, among others.

Id, Ego, and Superego

Freud maintained that our desires and our unconscious conflicts give rise to three areas of the mind that wrestle for dominance as we grow from infancy, to childhood, to adulthood:

- id - "...the location of the drives" or libido
- ego - "...one of the major defenses against the power of the drives..." and home of the defenses listed above
- superego - the area of the unconscious that houses Judgment (of self and others) and "...which begins to form during childhood as a result of the Oedipus complex" (Richter 1015-1016)

Oedipus Complex

Freud believed that the Oedipus complex was "...one of the most powerfully determinative elements in the growth of the child" (Richter 1016). Essentially, the Oedipus complex involves children's need for their parents and the conflict that arises as children mature and realize they are not the absolute focus of their mother's attention: "the Oedipus complex begins in a late phase of infantile sexuality, between the child's third and sixth year, and it takes a different form in males than it does in females" (Richter 1016).

Freud argued that both boys and girls wish to possess their mothers, but as they grow older "...they begin to sense that their claim to exclusive attention is thwarted by the mother's attention to the father..." (1016). Children, Freud maintained, connect this conflict of attention to the intimate relations between mother and father, relations from which the children are excluded. Freud believed that "the result is a murderous rage against the father...and a desire to possess the mother" (1016).

Freud pointed out, however, that "...the Oedipus complex differs in boys and girls...the functioning of the related castration complex" (1016). In short, Freud thought that "...during the Oedipal rivalry [between boys and their fathers], boys fantasized that punishment for their rage will take the form of..." castration (1016). When boys effectively work through this anxiety, Freud argued, "...the boy learns to identify with the father in the hope of someday possessing a woman like his mother. In girls, the castration complex does not take the form of anxiety...the result is a frustrated rage in which the girl shifts her sexual desire from the mother to the father" (1016).

Freud believed that eventually, the girl's spurned advanced toward the father give way to a desire to possess a man like her father later in life. Freud believed that the impact of the unconscious, id, ego, superego, the defenses, and the Oedipus complexes was inescapable and that these elements of the mind influence all our behavior (and even our dreams) as adults - of course this behavior involves what we write.

Freud and Literature

So what does all of this psychological business have to do with literature and the study of literature? Put simply, some critics believe that we can "...read psychoanalytically...to see which concepts are operating in the text in such a way as to enrich our understanding of the

work and, if we plan to write a paper about it, to yield a meaningful, coherent psychoanalytic interpretation" (Tyson 29). Tyson provides some insightful and applicable questions to help guide our understanding of psychoanalytic criticism.

Typical questions:

- How do the operations of repression structure or inform the work?
- Are there any oedipal dynamics - or any other family dynamics - are work here?
- How can characters' behavior, narrative events, and/or images be explained in terms of psychoanalytic concepts of any kind (for example...fear or fascination with death, sexuality - which includes love and romance as well as sexual behavior - as a primary indicator of psychological identity or the operations of ego-id-superego)?
- What does the work suggest about the psychological being of its author?
- What might a given interpretation of a literary work suggest about the psychological motives of the reader?
- Are there prominent words in the piece that could have different or hidden meanings? Could there be a subconscious reason for the author using these "problem words"?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Harold Bloom - *A Theory of Poetry*, 1973; *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens*, 1976
- Peter Brooks
- Jacque Lacan - *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1988; "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud" (from *Écrits: A Selection*, 1957)
- Jane Gallop - *Reading Lacan*, 1985
- Julia Kristeva - *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 1984
- Marshall Alcorn - *Changing the Subject in English Class: Discourse and the Constructions of Desire*, 2002

Carl Jung

Jungian criticism attempts to explore the connection between literature and what Carl Jung (a student of Freud) called the “collective unconscious” of the human race: "...racial memory, through which the spirit of the whole human species manifests itself" (Richter 504). Jungian criticism, closely related to Freudian theory because of its connection to psychoanalysis, assumes that all stories and symbols are based on mythic models from mankind’s past.

Based on these commonalities, Jung developed archetypal myths, the *Syzygy*: "...a quaternion composing a whole, the unified self of which people are in search" (Richter 505). These archetypes are the Shadow, the Anima, the Animus, and the Spirit: "...beneath...[the Shadow] is the Anima, the feminine side of the male Self, and the Animus, the corresponding masculine side of the female Self" (Richter 505).

In literary analysis, a Jungian critic would look for archetypes (also see the discussion of

Northrop Frye in the Structuralism section) in creative works: "Jungian criticism is generally involved with a search for the embodiment of these symbols within particular works of art." (Richter 505). When dealing with this sort of criticism, it is often useful to keep a handbook of mythology and a dictionary of symbols on hand.

Typical questions:

- What connections can we make between elements of the text and the archetypes? (Mask, Shadow, Anima, Animus)
- How do the characters in the text mirror the archetypal figures? (Great Mother or nurturing Mother, Whore, destroying Crone, Lover, Destroying Angel)
- How does the text mirror the archetypal narrative patterns? (Quest, Night-Sea-Journey)
- How symbolic is the imagery in the work?
- How does the protagonist reflect the hero of myth?
- Does the “hero” embark on a journey in either a physical or spiritual sense?
- Is there a journey to an underworld or land of the dead?
- What trials or ordeals does the protagonist face? What is the reward for overcoming them?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Maud Bodkin - *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, 1934
- Carl Jung - *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Vol. 9, Part 1 of *Collected Works*. 2nd ed. Trans. R.F.C. Hull, 1968
- Bettina Knapp - *Music, Archetype and the Writer: A Jungian View*, 1988
- Ricahrd Sugg - *Jungian Literary Criticism*, 1993

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Marxist Criticism (1930s-present)

Whom Does it Benefit?

Based on the theories of Karl Marx (and so influenced by philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel), this school concerns itself with class differences, economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of the capitalist system: "Marxism attempts to reveal the ways in which our socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience" (Tyson 277).

Theorists working in the Marxist tradition, therefore, are interested in answering the overarching question, whom does it [the work, the effort, the policy, the road, etc.] benefit?

The elite? The middle class? And Marxists critics are also interested in how the lower or working classes are oppressed - in everyday life and in literature.

The Material Dialectic

The Marxist school follows a process of thinking called the material dialectic. This belief system maintains that "...what drives historical change are the material realities of the economic base of society, rather than the ideological superstructure of politics, law, philosophy, religion, and art that is built upon that economic base" (Richter 1088).

Marx asserts that "...stable societies develop sites of resistance: contradictions build into the social system that ultimately lead to social revolution and the development of a new society upon the old" (1088). This cycle of contradiction, tension, and revolution must continue: there will always be conflict between the upper, middle, and lower (working) classes and this conflict will be reflected in literature and other forms of expression - art, music, movies, etc.

The Revolution

The continuing conflict between the classes will lead to upheaval and revolution by oppressed peoples and form the groundwork for a new order of society and economics where capitalism is abolished. According to Marx, the revolution will be led by the working class (others think peasants will lead the uprising) under the guidance of intellectuals. Once the elite and middle class are overthrown, the intellectuals will compose an equal society where everyone owns everything (socialism - not to be confused with Soviet or Maoist Communism).

Though a staggering number of different nuances exist within this school of literary theory, Marxist critics generally work in areas covered by the following questions.

Typical questions:

- Whom does it benefit if the work or effort is accepted/successful/believed, etc.?
- What is the social class of the author?
- Which class does the work claim to represent?
- What values does it reinforce?
- What values does it subvert?
- What conflict can be seen between the values the work champions and those it portrays?
- What social classes do the characters represent?
- How do characters from different classes interact or conflict?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Karl Marx - (with Friedrich Engels) *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848; *Das Kapital*, 1867; "Consciousness Derived from Material Conditions" from The German Ideology, 1932; "On Greek Art in Its Time" from *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859

- Leon Trotsky - "Literature and Revolution," 1923
- Georg Lukács - "The Ideology of Modernism," 1956
- Walter Benjamin - "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 1936
- Theodor W. Adorno
- Louis Althusser - *Reading Capital*, 1965
- Terry Eagleton - *Marxism and Literary Criticism, Criticism and Ideology*, 1976
- Frederic Jameson - *Marxism and Form, The Political Unconscious*, 1971
- Jürgen Habermas - *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1990

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Reader-Response Criticism (1960s-present)

What Do You Think?

At its most basic level, reader response criticism considers readers' reactions to literature as vital to interpreting the meaning of the text. However, reader-response criticism can take a number of different approaches. A critic deploying reader-response theory can use a psychoanalytic lens, a feminists lens, or even a structuralist lens. What these different lenses have in common when using a reader response approach is they maintain "...that what a text is cannot be separated from what it does" (Tyson 154).

Tyson explains that "...reader-response theorists share two beliefs: 1) that the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and 2) that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature" (154). In this way, reader-response theory shares common ground with some of the deconstructionists discussed in the Post-structural area when they talk about "the death of the author," or her displacement as the (author)itarian figure in the text.

Typical questions:

- How does the interaction of text and reader create meaning?
- What does a phrase-by-phrase analysis of a short literary text, or a key portion of a longer text, tell us about the reading experience prestructured by (built into) that text?
- Do the sounds/shapes of the words as they appear on the page or how they are spoken by the reader enhance or change the meaning of the word/work?
- How might we interpret a literary text to show that the reader's response is, or is analogous to, the topic of the story?
- What does the body of criticism published about a literary text suggest about the critics who interpreted that text and/or about the reading experience produced by that text? (Tyson 191)

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Peter Rabinowitz - *Before Reading*, 1987
- Stanley Fish - *Is There a Text in This Class?-The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, 1980
- Elizabeth Freund - *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism*, 1987
- David Bleich
- Norman Holland - *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, 1968
- Louise Rosenblatt
- Wolfgang Iser - *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, 1974
- Hans Rober Jauss

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Structuralism and Semiotics (1920s-present)

Note: Structuralism, semiotics, and post-structuralism are some of the most complex literary theories to understand. Please be patient.

Linguistic Roots

The structuralist school emerges from theories of language and linguistics, and it looks for underlying elements in culture and literature that can be connected so that critics can develop general conclusions about the individual works and the systems from which they emerge. In fact, structuralism maintains that "...practically everything we do that is specifically human is expressed in language" (Richter 809). Structuralists believe that these language symbols extend far beyond written or oral communication.

For example, codes that represent all sorts of things permeate everything we do: "the performance of music requires complex notation...our economic life rests upon the exchange of labor and goods for symbols, such as cash, checks, stock, and certificates...social life depends on the meaningful gestures and signals of 'body language' and revolves around the exchange of small, symbolic favors: drinks, parties, dinners" (Richter 809).

Patterns and Experience

Structuralists assert that, since language exists in patterns, certain underlying elements are common to all human experiences. Structuralists believe we can observe these experiences through patterns: "...if you examine the physical structures of all buildings built in urban America in 1850 to discover the underlying principles that govern their composition, for

example, principles of mechanical construction or of artistic form..." you are using a structuralist lens (Tyson 197).

Moreover, "you are also engaged in structuralist activity if you examine the structure of a single building to discover how its composition demonstrates underlying principles of a structural system. In the first example...you're generating a structural system of classification; in the second, you're demonstrating that an individual item belongs to a particular structural class" (Tyson 197).

Structuralism in Literary Theory

Structuralism is used in literary theory, for example, "...if you examine the structure of a large number of short stories to discover the underlying principles that govern their composition...principles of narrative progression...or of characterization...you are also engaged in structuralist activity if you describe the structure of a single literary work to discover how its composition demonstrates the underlying principles of a given structural system" (Tyson 197-198).

Northrop Frye, however, takes a different approach to structuralism by exploring ways in which genres of Western literature fall into his four mythoi (also see Jungian criticism in the Freudian Literary Criticism resource):

1. theory of modes, or historical criticism (tragic, comic, and thematic);
2. theory of symbols, or ethical criticism (literal/descriptive, formal, mythical, and anagogic);
3. theory of myths, or archetypal criticism (comedy, romance, tragedy, irony/satire);
4. theory of genres, or rhetorical criticism (epos, prose, drama, lyric) (Tyson 240).

Peirce and Saussure

Two important theorists form the framework (hah) of structuralism: Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure. Peirce gave structuralism three important ideas for analyzing the sign systems that permeate and define our experiences:

1. "iconic signs, in which the signifier resembles the thing signified (such as the stick figures on washroom doors that signify 'Men' or 'Women';
2. indexes, in which the signifier is a reliable indicator of the presence of the signified (like fire and smoke);
3. true symbols, in which the signifier's relation to the thing signified is completely arbitrary and conventional [just as the sound /kat/ or the written word cat are conventional signs for the familiar feline]" (Richter 810).

These elements become very important when we move into deconstruction in the Postmodernism resource. Peirce also influenced the semiotic school of structuralist theory that uses sign systems.

Sign Systems

The discipline of semiotics plays an important role in structuralist literary theory and cultural studies. Semioticians "...appl[y] structuralist insights to the study of...sign systems...a non-linguistic object or behavior...that can be analyzed as if it were a language" (Tyson 205). Specifically, "...semiotics examines the ways non-linguistic objects and behaviors 'tell' us something.

For example, the picture of the reclining blond beauty in the skin-tight, black velvet dress on the billboard...'tells' us that those who drink this whiskey (presumably male) will be attractive to...beautiful women like the one displayed here" (Tyson 205). Lastly, Richter states, "semiotics takes off from Peirce - for whom language is one of numerous sign systems - and structuralism takes off from Saussure, for whom language was the sign system par excellence" (810).

Typical questions:

- Using a specific structuralist framework (like Frye's mythoi)...how should the text be classified in terms of its genre? In other words, what patterns exist within the text that make it a part of other works like it?
- Using a specific structuralist framework...analyze the text's narrative operations...can you speculate about the relationship between the...[text]... and the culture from which the text emerged? In other words, what patterns exist within the text that make it a product of a larger culture?
- What patterns exist within the text that connect it to the larger "human" experience? In other words, can we connect patterns and elements within the text to other texts from other cultures to map similarities that tell us more about the common human experience? This is a liberal humanist move that assumes that since we are all human, we all share basic human commonalities
- What rules or codes of interpretation must be internalized in order to 'make sense' of the text?
- What are the semiotics of a given category of cultural phenomena, or 'text,' such as high-school football games, television and/or magazine ads for a particular brand of perfume...or even media coverage of an historical event? (Tyson 225)

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Charles Sanders Peirce
- Ferdinand de Saussure - *Course in General Linguistics*, 1923
- Claude Lévi-Strauss - *The Elementary Structure of Kinship*, 1949; "The Structural Study of Myth," 1955
- Northrop Frye - *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 1957
- Noam Chomsky - *Syntactic Structures*, 1957; *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 1965
- Roland Barthes - *Critical Essays*, 1964; *Mythologies*, 1957; *S/Z*, 1970; *Image, Music, Text*, 1977
- Umberto Eco - *The Role of the Reader*, 1979

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Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Postmodernism (1966-present)

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The Center Cannot Hold

This approach concerns itself with the ways and places where systems, frameworks, definitions, and certainties break down. Post-structuralism maintains that frameworks and systems, for example the structuralist systems explained in the Structuralist area, are merely fictitious constructs and that they cannot be trusted to develop meaning or to give order. In fact, the very act of seeking order or a singular Truth (with a capital T) is absurd because there exists no unified truth.

Post-structuralism holds that there are many truths, that frameworks must bleed, and that structures must become unstable or decentered. Moreover, post-structuralism is also concerned with the power structures or hegemonies and power and how these elements contribute to and/or maintain structures to enforce hierarchy. Therefore, post-structural theory carries implications far beyond literary criticism.

What Does Your Meaning Mean?

By questioning the process of developing meaning, post-structural theory strikes at the very heart of philosophy and reality and throws knowledge making into what Jacques Derrida called "freeplay": "The concept of centered structure...is contradictorily coherent...the concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a freeplay which is constituted upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of the freeplay" (qtd. in Richter, 878-879).

Derrida first posited these ideas in 1966 at Johns Hopkins University, when he delivered “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”: "Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an 'event,' if this loaded word did not entail a meaning which it is precisely the function of structural-or structuralist-thought to reduce or to suspect. But let me use the term “event” anyway, employing it with caution and as if in quotation marks. In this sense, this event will have the exterior form of a rupture and a redoubling” (qtd. in Richter, 878). In his presentation, Derrida challenged structuralism's most basic ideas.

Can Language Do That?

Post-structural theory can be tied to a move against Modernist/Enlightenment ideas (philosophers: Immanuel Kant, Réne Descartes, John Locke, etc.) and Western religious beliefs (neo-Platonism, Catholicism, etc.). An early pioneer of this resistance was philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In his essay, “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense” (1873), Nietzsche rejects even the very basis of our knowledge making, language, as a reliable system of communication: “The various languages, juxtaposed, show that words are never concerned with truth, never with adequate expression...” (248).

Below is an example, adapted from the Tyson text, of some language freeplay and a simple form of deconstruction:

Time (noun) flies (verb) like an arrow (adverb clause) = Time passes quickly.

Time (verb) flies (object) like an arrow (adverb clause) = Get out your stopwatch and time the speed of flies as you would time an arrow's flight.

Time flies (noun) like (verb) an arrow (object) = Time flies are fond of arrows (or at least of one particular arrow).

So, post-structuralists assert that if we cannot trust language systems to convey truth, the very bases of truth are unreliable and the universe - or at least the universe we have constructed - becomes unraveled or de-centered. Nietzsche uses language slip as a base to move into the slip and shift of truth as a whole: “What is truth? …truths are an illusion about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions...” (On Truth and Lies 250).

This returns us to the discussion in the Structuralist area regarding signs, signifiers, and signified. Essentially, post-structuralism holds that we cannot trust the sign = signifier + signified formula, that there is a breakdown of certainty between sign/signifier, which leaves language systems hopelessly inadequate for relaying meaning so that we are (returning to Derrida) in eternal freeplay or instability.

What's Left?

Important to note, however, is that deconstruction is not just about tearing down - this is a common misconception. Derrida, in "Signature Event Context," addressed this limited view of post-structural theory: "Deconstruction cannot limit or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must…practice an overturning of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to intervene in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of nondiscursive forces" (328).

Derrida reminds us that through deconstruction we can identify the in-betweens and the marginalized to begin interstitial knowledge building.

Modernism vs Postmodernism

With the resistance to traditional forms of knowledge making (science, religion, language),

inquiry, communication, and building meaning take on different forms to the post-structuralist. We can look at this difference as a split between Modernism and Postmodernism. The table below, excerpted from theorist Ihab Hassan's *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1998), offers us a way to make sense of some differences between modernism, dominated by Enlightenment ideas, and postmodernism, a space of freeplay and discourse.

Keep in mind that even the author, Hassan, "...is quick to point out how the dichotomies are themselves insecure, equivocal" (Harvey 42). Though post-structuralism is uncomfortable with binaries, Hassan provides us with some interesting contrasts to consider:

Modernism vs Postmodernism	
Modernism	*Postmodernism*
romanticism/symbolism	paraphysics/Dadaism
form (conjunctive, closed)	antiform (disjunctive, open)
purpose	play
design	chance
hierarchy	anarchy
mastery/logos	exhaustion/silence
art object/finished work/logos	process/performance/antithesis
centering	absence
genre/boundary	text/intertext
semantics	rhetoric
metaphor	metonymy
root/depth	rhizome/surface
signified	signifier
narrative/*grande histoire*	anti-narrative/*petite histoire*
genital/phallic	polymorphous/androgynous
paranoia	schizophrenia
origin/cause	difference-difference/trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
determinacy	interdeterminacy
transcendence	immanence

Post-Structuralism and Literature

If we are questioning/resisting the methods we use to build knowledge (science, religion, language), then traditional literary notions are also thrown into freeplay. These include the narrative and the author:

Narrative

The narrative is a fiction that locks readers into interpreting text in a single, chronological manner that does not reflect our experiences. Postmodern texts may not adhere to traditional notions of narrative. For example, in his seminal work, *Naked Lunch*, William S. Burroughs explodes the traditional narrative structure and critiques almost everything Modern: modern government, modern medicine, modern law-enforcement. Other examples of authors playing with narrative include John Fowles; in the final sections of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles steps outside his narrative to speak with the reader directly.

Moreover, grand narratives are resisted. For example, the belief that through science the human race will improve is questioned. In addition, metaphysics is questioned. Instead, postmodern knowledge building is local, situated, slippery, and self-critical (i.e. it questions itself and its role). Because post-structural work is self-critical, post-structural critics even look for ways texts contradict themselves (see typical questions below).

Author

The author is displaced as absolute author(ity), and the reader plays a role in interpreting the text and developing meaning (as best as possible) from the text. In "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes argues that the idea of singular authorship is a recent phenomenon. Barthes explains that the death of the author shatters Modernist notions of authority and knowledge building (145).

Lastly, he states that once the author is dead and the Modernist idea of singular narrative (and thus authority) is overturned, texts become plural, and the interpretation of texts becomes a collaborative process between author and audience: "...a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue...but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader" (148). Barthes ends his essay by empowering the reader: "Classical criticism has never paid any attention to the reader...the writer is the only person in literature…it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148).

Typical questions:

- How is language thrown into freeplay or questioned in the work? For example, note how Anthony Burgess plays with language (Russian vs English) in A Clockwork Orange, or how Burroughs plays with names and language in Naked Lunch.
- How does the work undermine or contradict generally accepted truths?
- How does the author (or a character) omit, change, or reconstruct memory and identity?
- How does a work fulfill or move outside the established conventions of its genre?
- How does the work deal with the separation (or lack thereof) between writer, work, and reader?
- What ideology does the text seem to promote?
- What is left out of the text that if included might undermine the goal of the work?
- If we changed the point of view of the text - say from one character to another, or multiple characters - how would the story change? Whose story is not told in the text? Who is left out and why might the author have omitted this character's tale?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this

theory:

Theorists

- Immanuel Kant - "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?", 1784 (as a baseline to understand what Nietzsche was resisting)
- Friedrich Nietzsche - “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense," 1873; *The Gay Science*, 1882; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, A Book for All and None*, 1885
- Jacques Derrida - "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences," 1966; *Of Grammatology*, 1967; "Signature Even Context," 1972
- Roland Barthes - "The Death of the Author," 1967
- Deleuze and Guattari - "Rhizome," 1976
- Jean-François Lyotard - *The Postmodern Condition*, 1979
- Michele Foucault - *The Foucault Reader*, 1984
- Stephen Toulmin - *Cosmopolis*, 1990
- Martin Heidegger - Basic Writings, 1993
- Paul Cilliers - *Complexity and Postmodernity*, 1998
- Ihab Hassan - *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 1998; *From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The Local/Global Context*, 2001

Postmodern Literature

- William S. Burroughs - *Naked Lunch*, 1959
- Angela Carter - *Burning Your Boats*, stories from 1962-1993 (first published as a collection in 1995)
- Kathy Acker - *Blood and Guts in High School*, 1978
- Paul Auster - *City of Glass* (volume one of the New York City Trilogy), 1985 (as a graphic novel published by Neon Lit, a division of Avon Books, 1994)
- Lynne Tillman - *Haunted Houses*, 1987
- David Wojnarowicz - *The Waterfront Journals*, 1996

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins.
Summary:

This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy.

New Historicism, Cultural Studies (1980s-present)

It's All Relative...

This school, influenced by structuralist and post-structuralist theories, seeks to reconnect a work with the time period in which it was produced and identify it with the cultural and political movements of the time (Michel Foucault's concept of épistème). New Historicism

assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it. Specifically, New Historicism is "...a practice that has developed out of contemporary theory, particularly the structuralist realization that all human systems are symbolic and subject to the rules of language, and the deconstructive realization that there is no way of positioning oneself as an observer outside the closed circle of textuality" (Richter 1205).

A helpful way of considering New Historical theory, Tyson explains, is to think about the retelling of history itself: "...questions asked by traditional historians and by new historicists are quite different...traditional historians ask, 'What happened?' and 'What does the event tell us about history?' In contrast, new historicists ask, 'How has the event been interpreted?' and 'What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?'" (278). So New Historicism resists the notion that "...history is a series of events that have a linear, causal relationship: event A caused event B; event B caused event C; and so on" (Tyson 278).

New historicists do not believe that we can look at history objectively, but rather that we interpret events as products of our time and culture and that "...we don't have clear access to any but the most basic facts of history...our understanding of what such facts mean...is...strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact" (279). Moreover, New Historicism holds that we are hopelessly subjective interpreters of what we observe.

Typical questions:

- What language/characters/events present in the work reflect the current events of the author's day?
- Are there words in the text that have changed their meaning from the time of the writing?
- How are such events interpreted and presented?
- How are events' interpretation and presentation a product of the culture of the author?
- Does the work's presentation support or condemn the event?
- Can it be seen to do both?
- How does this portrayal criticize the leading political figures or movements of the day?
- How does the literary text function as part of a continuum with other historical/cultural texts from the same period...?
- How can we use a literary work to "map" the interplay of both traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the culture in which that work emerged and/or the cultures in which the work has been interpreted?
- How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Michel Foucault - *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, 1970; *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 1977
- Clifford Geertz - *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973; "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," 1992
- Hayden White - *Metahistory*, 1974; "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," 1982
- Stephen Greenblatt - *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 1980

- Pierre Bourdieu - *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977; *Homo Academicus*, 1984; *The Field of Cultural Production*, 1993

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins.
Summary:

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Post-Colonial Criticism (1990s-present)

History is Written by the Victors

Post-colonial criticism is similar to cultural studies, but it assumes a unique perspective on literature and politics that warrants a separate discussion. Specifically, post-colonial critics are concerned with literature produced by colonial powers and works produced by those who were/are colonized. Post-colonial theory looks at issues of power, economics, politics, religion, and culture and how these elements work in relation to colonial hegemony (western colonizers controlling the colonized).

Therefore, a post-colonial critic might be interested in works such as Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe where colonial "...ideology [is] manifest in Crusoe's colonialist attitude toward the land upon which he's shipwrecked and toward the black man he 'colonizes' and names Friday" (Tyson 377). In addition, post-colonial theory might point out that "...despite Heart of Darkness's (Joseph Conrad) obvious anti-colonist agenda, the novel points to the colonized population as the standard of savagery to which Europeans are contrasted" (Tyson 375). Post-colonial criticism also takes the form of literature composed by authors that critique Euro-centric hegemony.

A Unique Perspective on Empire

Seminal post-colonial writers such as Nigerian author Chinua Achebe and Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o have written a number of stories recounting the suffering of colonized people. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe details the strife and devastation that occurred when British colonists began moving inland from the Nigerian coast.

Rather than glorifying the exploratory nature of European colonists as they expanded their sphere of influence, Achebe narrates the destructive events that led to the death and enslavement of thousands of Nigerians when the British imposed their Imperial government. In turn, Achebe points out the negative effects (and shifting ideas of identity and culture) caused by the imposition of western religion and economics on Nigerians during colonial rule.

Power, Hegemony, and Literature

Post-colonial criticism also questions the role of the western literary canon and western

history as dominant forms of knowledge making. The terms "first-world," "second world," "third world" and "fourth world" nations are critiqued by post-colonial critics because they reinforce the dominant positions of western cultures populating first world status. This critique includes the literary canon and histories written from the perspective of first-world cultures. So, for example, a post-colonial critic might question the works included in "the canon" because the canon does not contain works by authors outside western culture.

Moreover, the authors included in the canon often reinforce colonial hegemonic ideology, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Western critics might consider Heart of Darkness an effective critique of colonial behavior. But post-colonial theorists and authors might disagree with this perspective: "...as Chinua Achebe observes, the novel's condemnation of European is based on a definition of Africans as savages: beneath their veneer of civilization, the Europeans are, the novel tells us, as barbaric as the Africans. And indeed, Achebe notes, the novel portrays Africans as a pre-historic mass of frenzied, howling, incomprehensible barbarians..." (Tyson 374-375).

Typical questions:

- How does the literary text, explicitly or allegorically, represent various aspects of colonial oppression?
- What does the text reveal about the problematics of post-colonial identity, including the relationship between personal and cultural identity and such issues as double consciousness and hybridity?
- What person(s) or groups does the work identify as "other" or stranger? How are such persons/groups described and treated?
- What does the text reveal about the politics and/or psychology of anti-colonialist resistance?
- What does the text reveal about the operations of cultural difference - the ways in which race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity - in shaping our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world in which we live?
- How does the text respond to or comment upon the characters, themes, or assumptions of a canonized (colonialist) work?
- Are there meaningful similarities among the literatures of different post-colonial populations?
- How does a literary text in the Western canon reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology through its representation of colonialization and/or its inappropriate silence about colonized peoples? (Tyson 378-379)

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

Criticism

- Edward Said - *Orientalism*, 1978; *Culture and Imperialism*, 1994
- Kamau Braithwaite - *The History of the Voice*, 1979
- Gayatri Spivak - *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 1987
- Dominick LaCapra - *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*,

1991
- Homi Bhabha - *The Location of Culture*, 1994

Literature and non-fiction

- Chinua Achebe - *Things Fall Apart*, 1958
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o - *The River Between*, 1965
- Sembene Ousman - *God's Bits of Wood*, 1962
- Ruth Prawer Jhabvala - *Heat and Dust*, 1975
- Buchi Emecheta - *The Joys of Motherhood*, 1979
- Keri Hulme - *The Bone People*, 1983
- Robertson Davies - *What's Bred in the Bone*, 1985
- Kazuo Ishiguro - *The Remains of the Day*, 1988
- Bharati Mukherjee - *Jasmine*, 1989
- Jill Ker Conway - *The Road from Coorain*, 1989
- Helena Norberg-Hodge - *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, 1991
- Michael Ondaatje - *The English Patient*, 1992
- Gita Mehta - *A River Sutra*, 1993
- Arundhati Roy - *The God of Small Things*, 1997
- Patrick Chamoiseau - *Texaco*, 1997

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins.
Summary:

This resource will help you begin the process of understanding literary theory and schools of criticism and how they are used in the academy.

Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)

S/he

Feminist criticism is concerned with "...the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson). This school of theory looks at how aspects of our culture are inherently patriarchal (male dominated) and "...this critique strives to expose the explicit and implicit misogyny in male writing about women" (Richter 1346). This misogyny, Tyson reminds us, can extend into diverse areas of our culture: "Perhaps the most chilling example...is found in the world of modern medicine, where drugs prescribed for both sexes often have been tested on male subjects only" (83).

Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious forms of marginalization such as the exclusion of women writers from the traditional literary canon: "...unless the critical or historical point of view is feminist, there is a tendency to under-represent the contribution of women writers" (Tyson 82-83).

Common Space in Feminist Theories

Though a number of different approaches exist in feminist criticism, there exist some areas of commonality. This list is excerpted from Tyson:

1. Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically; patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which they are kept so
2. In every domain where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values
3. All of western (Anglo-European) civilization is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, for example, in the biblical portrayal of Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world
4. While biology determines our sex (male or female), culture determines our gender (masculine or feminine)
5. All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality
6. Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not (91).

Feminist criticism has, in many ways, followed what some theorists call the three waves of feminism:

1. **First Wave Feminism** - late 1700s-early 1900's: writers like Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792) highlight the inequalities between the sexes. Activists like Susan B. Anthony and Victoria Woodhull contribute to the women's suffrage movement, which leads to National Universal Suffrage in 1920 with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment
2. **Second Wave Feminism** - early 1960s-late 1970s: building on more equal working conditions necessary in America during World War II, movements such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), formed in 1966, cohere feminist political activism. Writers like Simone de Beauvoir (*Le deuxième sexe*, 1972) and Elaine Showalter established the groundwork for the dissemination of feminist theories dove-tailed with the American Civil Rights movement
3. **Third Wave Feminism** - early 1990s-present: resisting the perceived essentialist (over generalized, over simplified) ideologies and a white, heterosexual, middle class focus of second wave feminism, third wave feminism borrows from post-structural and contemporary gender and race theories (see below) to expand on marginalized populations' experiences. Writers like Alice Walker work to "...reconcile it [feminism] with the concerns of the black community...[and] the survival and wholeness of her people, men and women both, and for the promotion of dialog and community as well as for the valorization of women and of all the varieties of work women perform" (Tyson 97).

Typical questions:

- How is the relationship between men and women portrayed?
- What are the power relationships between men and women (or characters assuming male/female roles)?
- How are male and female roles defined?
- What constitutes masculinity and femininity?

- How do characters embody these traits?
- Do characters take on traits from opposite genders? How so? How does this change others' reactions to them?
- What does the work reveal about the operations (economically, politically, socially, or psychologically) of patriarchy?
- What does the work imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a mode of resisting patriarchy?
- What does the work say about women's creativity?
- What does the history of the work's reception by the public and by the critics tell us about the operation of patriarchy?
- What role the work play in terms of women's literary history and literary tradition? (Tyson)

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Mary Wollstonecraft - *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792
- Simone de Beauvoir - *Le deuxième sexe*, 1972
- Julia Kristeva - *About Chinese Women*, 1977
- Elaine Showalter - *A Literature of Their Own*, 1977; "Toward a Feminist Poetics," 1979
- Deborah E. McDowell - "New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism," 1980
- Alice Walker - *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, 1983
- Lillian S. Robinson - "Treason out Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon," 1983
- Camile Paglia - *Sexual Personae: The Androgyne in Literature and Art*, 1990

Contributors: Allen Brizee, J. Case Tompkins.
Summary:

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Gender Studies and Queer Theory (1970s-present)

Gender(s), Power, and Marginalization

Gender studies and queer theory explore issues of sexuality, power, and marginalized populations (woman as other) in literature and culture. Much of the work in gender studies and queer theory, while influenced by feminist criticism, emerges from post-structural interest in fragmented, de-centered knowledge building (Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault), language (the breakdown of sign-signifier), and psychoanalysis (Lacan).

A primary concern in gender studies and queer theory is the manner in which gender and sexuality is discussed: "Effective as this work [feminism] was in changing what teachers

taught and what the students read, there was a sense on the part of some feminist critics that...it was still the old game that was being played, when what it needed was a new game entirely. The argument posed was that in order to counter patriarchy, it was necessary not merely to think about new texts, but to think about them in radically new ways" (Richter 1432).

Therefore, a critic working in gender studies and queer theory might even be uncomfortable with the binary established by many feminist scholars between masculine and feminine: "Cixous (following Derrida in *Of Grammatology*) sets up a series of binary oppositions (active/passive, sun/moon...father/mother, logos/pathos). Each pair can be analyzed as a hierarchy in which the former term represents the positive and masculine and the latter the negative and feminine principle" (Richter 1433-1434).

In-Betweens

Many critics working with gender and queer theory are interested in the breakdown of binaries such as male and female, the in-betweens (also following Derrida's interstitial knowledge building). For example, gender studies and queer theory maintains that cultural definitions of sexuality and what it means to be male and female are in flux: "...the distinction between "masculine" and "feminine" activities and behavior is constantly changing, so that women who wear baseball caps and fatigues...can be perceived as more piquantly sexy by some heterosexual men than those women who wear white frocks and gloves and look down demurely" (Richter 1437).

Moreover, Richter reminds us that as we learn more about our genetic structure, the biology of male/female becomes increasingly complex and murky: "even the physical dualism of sexual genetic structures and bodily parts breaks down when one considers those instances - XXY syndromes, natural sexual bimorphisms, as well as surgical transsexuals - that defy attempts at binary classification" (1437).

Typical questions:

- What elements of the text can be perceived as being masculine (active, powerful) and feminine (passive, marginalized) and how do the characters support these traditional roles?
- What sort of support (if any) is given to elements or characters who question the masculine/feminine binary? What happens to those elements/characters?
- What elements in the text exist in the middle, between the perceived masculine/feminine binary? In other words, what elements exhibit traits of both (bisexual)?
- How does the author present the text? Is it a traditional narrative? Is it secure and forceful? Or is it more hesitant or even collaborative?
- What are the politics (ideological agendas) of specific gay, lesbian, or queer works, and how are those politics revealed in...the work's thematic content or portrayals of its characters?
- What are the poetics (literary devices and strategies) of a specific lesbian, gay, or queer works?

- What does the work contribute to our knowledge of queer, gay, or lesbian experience and history, including literary history?
- How is queer, gay, or lesbian experience coded in texts that are by writers who are apparently homosexual?
- What does the work reveal about the operations (socially, politically, psychologically) homophobic?
- How does the literary text illustrate the problematics of sexuality and sexual "identity," that is the ways in which human sexuality does not fall neatly into the separate categories defined by the words homosexual and heterosexual?

Here is a list of scholars we encourage you to explore to further your understanding of this theory:

- Luce Irigaray - *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 1974
- Hélène Cixous - "The Laugh of the Medussa," 1976
- Laura Mulvey - "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 1975; "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 1981
- Michele Foucault - *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I, 1980
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick - *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1994
- Lee Edelman - "Homographies," 1989
- Michael Warner
- Judith Butler - "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 1991